

Subsistence Farmers' Mycotoxin Contamination Awareness in the SADC Region: Implications on Millennium Development Goal 1, 4 and 6

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ABSTRACT In this paper, the authors have explored small holder farm households' awareness regarding the possible effects of consuming fungal infected maize and discussed the implications of the former on the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 1, 4 and 6 in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The implications of climate change on mycotoxin contamination of staples in SADC have been discussed with special focus on Rungwe district, Tanzania and Makhatini area, South Africa. Data collected through interviewing 260 randomly selected small holder farm households in Rungwe district and secondary data for SADC region were used. Both, primary data collected from interviews and secondary data revealed that people used fungal infected staples for food, implying that people are not fully aware of health hazards associated with the ingestion of mycotoxins. Moreover, in the 2000s minimum temperatures increased by 2 - 7 °C and 3 - 8 °C in Rungwe and Makhatini, compared to 1979 and 1975 minimum temperatures, respectively. The existence of erratic rains across the SADC was also noted. It was concluded that current weather patterns propagate fungal infections and mycotoxin contamination of staples. This, together with farm households' unawareness of mycotoxins threaten the achievement of MDGs 1, 4 & 6 in SADC. Education and training to raise awareness of SADC smallholder farmers and consumers on mycotoxins are recommended.