

# Grain Mould Losses not Chicken Feed

A recent CPP project with the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) has laid the foundations for a sorghum grain mould research consortium with public and private sectors working together to raise funds for research and knowledge sharing. This is likely to have enormous benefits for sorghum producers, who often make up the poorest households and live in most marginal areas with few cropping alternatives.



*Clean grain (left) and dark, mouldy grain (right) - moulds on grain affect both grain yield and quality*

Grain mould threatens access to safe food and, through lower prices, reduces farm income. Conventional research has made little progress in controlling the mould. However, recent advances in molecular biology hold the promise of new management options through the breeding of resistant varieties.

In addition, the dynamics of the sorghum utilisation sector have changed radically with the emergence of private industry and its hunger for cheap grain, particularly in the poultry sector. This presents new incentives for mould management.

In the light of these developments, ICRISAT revisited options for grain mould management. A cluster of technical and marketing systems research and action research projects were identified, with private industry indicating it would commit its resources to collaborative efforts with the public sector. However, there was also the

recognition that a consortium of organisations was needed to sustain future research on sorghum utilisation, including issues related to grain mould.

While such research helps the private sector, it is also in the wider public interest in the sense that it helps develop markets for sorghum, a crop that is inextricably linked to the livelihoods of poor people in the semi-arid tropics of India.

The next step is to secure funding to establish a joint public-private research consortium. This would help link relevant public and private players through small technical proposals with joint private funding.

More importantly, by establishing a joint public-private forum, it presents the potential for a self-sustaining mechanism for funding and execution of research that sits at the interface of public and private interests.



*Grain moulds produce toxins which can be fatal to chickens, other livestock and humans*

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