Essential oils help control fungus growth in Argentinian corn

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Argentina is the second highest corn producing country in the world. But because of the slow drying process in corn kernels and wet weather conditions in Argentina, corn grown there can easily become infected with fungus. A new study in the *Journal of Food Science* published by the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) found that the essential oils from oregano can have an antifungal effect on corn.

Generally, fungicide is controlled with the use of synthetic chemicals. However, it may require greater synthetic chemical usage as resistant strains of pathogens increase. Essential oils are an alternative strategy to controlling the growth of fungus without a negative impact. Since only small amounts of oils are needed, they have a low toxicity to animals and they do not remain in water or soil for a long time (Isman, 2000).

Oregano proved to be the best antifungal agent because of the presence of thymol, but oils of peppermints and suico grown in Argentina may also be used as a natural alternative to control the presence of postharvest fungi in corn.

More information: Camiletti, B. X., Asensio, C. M., Pecci, M. d. l. P. G. and Lucini, E. I. (2014), Natural Control of Corn Postharvest Fungi Aspergillus flavus and Penicillium sp. "Using Essential Oils from Plants Grown in Argentina." *Journal of Food Science*, 79: M2499–M2506. doi: 10.1111/1750-3841.12700

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