A new Spanish peanut variety that packs high levels of healthful oleic acid has been released by USDA scientists and university cooperators. Called OLé, the new variety promises to provide producers and consumers with a peanut that has disease resistance, longer shelf life, and heart-healthy qualities.

Research biologist Kelly Chamberlin with the USDA-ARS in Stillwater, OK and collaborators at Oklahoma State University developed OLé, which will be available for commercial production in 2015. The variety’s disease resistance, field performance, and other characteristics are described in the May 2015 issue of the *Journal of Plant Registrations*.

The fatty acid composition of peanut seed has grown more important over time as people have realized that high levels of oleic acids slow the development of rancidity (i.e., improve shelf life) and boost peanut flavor. In the meantime, consumers are increasingly attracted to food products with high levels of these fatty acids, which are considered good for the heart.

For these and other reasons, the peanut industry now prefers high-oleic peanuts, and most of the peanuts grown in the southwestern United States are today high-oleic types. Plus peanut seed of the Spanish market-type—commonly eaten in candies and mixed-nut products—is in high demand.

According to Chamberlin, OLé is an important variety that will have a lot of impact on the peanut industry as a whole. Besides its potential for high yield and grade, OLé has resistance to *Sclerotinia* blight, a fungal disease that can cause yield loss and is a particular problem for peanut growers in Oklahoma, Texas, and the Virginia–North Carolina region. Depending upon the severity of infestation, yield losses due to such soil-borne diseases may be as high as 50%.

Sustainable peanut production in the U.S. Southwest demands that cultivars grown there possess certain characteristics, including a high-oleic/linoleic acid ratio, which increases peanut product shelf life, and resistance to multiple diseases, Chamberlin says. In tests at three locations in Oklahoma, she and her colleagues found that growing OLé reduced *Sclerotinia* blight infestation compared with OLin—the first high-oleic Spanish peanut cultivar, released in 2002. For example, in high-disease, unmanaged plots in 2009 to 2011, OLé’s incidence of *Sclerotinia* blight was just 3.7% compared with 11% for OLin.

Overall, field performance data suggest that growing OLé instead of OLin could save growers approximately $100 per acre in fungicide costs for *Sclerotinia* blight alone, Chamberlin says. OLé also has good pod rot resistance and produces higher peanut yields than OLin.

The OLé variety is now being grown for foundation seed before being made available commercially.