

High alert warning against plant pests

By Dr Gerhard Verdoorn

With an unprecedented outbreak of African armyworm in canola and wheat in the Western Cape, fears were triggered that an outbreak of plant pests may explode in the forthcoming growth season. In other parts of South Africa, reports of large numbers of moths caught in pheromone traps indicate a challenging season ahead for farmers.

South African farmers managed to beat the fall armyworm to a large extent during the previous summer, but it is likely that this invasive pest may emerge again in summer rainfall areas as well as in the Western Cape. Reports of the tomato leaf miner add to the problems farmers will be facing during the growth season.

CropLife South Africa urges producers to invest in scientific monitoring tools, such as pheromone traps, and to start pest vigilance programmes in all crops. Pests are likely to become bolder due to extreme climatic conditions and it is likely that pest outbreaks will also become more extreme due to climate change.

Early detection and prevention

Early detection of plant pests should become standard practice for all farmers to ensure that pests are effectively controlled before they inflict serious damage to crops. It is well known that larvae reaching their adult stages are very difficult, if not impossible, to control even with toxic insecticides.

Detecting pest invasions early gives farmers the opportunity to bring such pests effectively under control in an environmentally compatible



and cost-effective manner. Many maize farmers learnt these lessons last season when the fall armyworm invaded critically important maize areas in South Africa.

Pheromone traps for Lepidoptera and other pests are commercially available from CropLife South Africa members as well as South African Bioproducts Organisation members. Farmers should consult their CropLife South Africa accredited agents for pheromone traps and use them as early warning mechanisms against pest outbreaks.

Registered pesticides available

CropLife South Africa is working closely with the registrar of the *Fertilisers, farm feeds, agricultural remedies and stock remedies Act, 1947* (Act 36 of 1947) to find solutions to the pest problems that farmers are facing.



Farmers are advised to only use registered pesticides and to refrain from using products off-label, which means using it for purposes or in manners other than what the labels indicate. No registration holder will assume responsibility for product failure or crop damage if pesticides are not used strictly according to label instructions. Should non-registered

pesticides be available for a particular situation, the industry will work closely with the registrar to lodge and process emergency registration applications.

Pests to be on the lookout for include African bollworm on all crops including vegetable crops, African armyworm, fall armyworm, false armyworm, tomato leaf miner, oriental fruit fly, stalk borer, thrips and whitefly.

Farmers need to report any suspected outbreak of fall armyworm to their closest agriculture officials or send a picture via WhatsApp to CropLife South Africa on 082 446 8946. CropLife South Africa will report any confirmed fall armyworm infestations to the relevant authorities at the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Information about registered pesticides is available on the CropLife South Africa AgriIntel Database: www.agri-intel.com. A simple registration process will grant free access to the website for easy interrogation on the AgriIntel system. 🌱

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