



agriculture, land reform & rural development

Department:
Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Media statement

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A CALL FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE FALL ARMYWORM (*SPODOPTERA FRUGIPERDA*) IN SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE 2020/21 CROP PRODUCTION SEASON

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development hereby makes a clarion call to all maize and related host crops such as sorghum and sweet corn growers, including community members, to take precautionary measures in controlling the Fall Armyworm.

In South Africa, Fall Armyworm (FAW) is a regulated pest in terms of the Control Measures Relating to Fall Armyworm, R. 449 of 26 May 2017 of the Agricultural Pests Act, 1983 (Act No. 36 of 1983). FAW is a disastrous exotic pest with a wide host range and, if not properly controlled, it may lead to damage of the host crop and /or yield loss. FAW is present in all the provinces in South Africa; however, the level of infestation varies per province, district or area.

With early rains experienced in different parts of the country, high infestation levels of FAW can be expected. This will vary from the previous season 2019/2020, where there was limited to no rain, accompanied by reduced outbreaks of FAW.

Farmers and community members are advised to take precautionary control measures, which includes diligent/vigilant scouting for egg packs, leaf damage and caterpillars as well as trapping, to ensure early detection for effective control of FAW.

The moth can be caught in traps with a lure, which can also serve as an early warning of the presence of the pest. For agrochemical control, a list of registered agrochemicals is available on the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development's (DALRRD) website: <https://www.dalrrd.gov.za/News-Room/Media-release/Fallarmy>

Effective control of the FAW can be realised through integrated pest management practice. It is best to start agrochemical spraying while the caterpillars are smaller than one centimeter (1 cm) long. Big caterpillars (over 1 cm) crawl deep into the leaf whorls of maize plants and that makes it difficult to reach them when agricultural chemicals are applied.

The main concern with this pest is that it can rapidly develop resistance to agrochemicals, thus it is highly recommended to rotate the agricultural chemicals within the cropping season in accordance with the resistance group and mode of action.

The European Union has extended emergency import measures for hosts of FAW such as sweet corn, peppers and eggfruit. Growers must ensure they comply with these measures before they apply for a phytosanitary certification with DALRRD.

Farmers and community members are encouraged to do regular scouting of FAW, particularly in younger plantings. They can call the nearest Local Agriculture Centre for technical advisory.

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