Bt-maize offers additional protection this season

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"Producers who planted YieldGardII® Bt-maize containing Monsanto's MON89034-technology this year, will have an additional advantage as it also offers protection against infestations of the Fall Armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*)," according to Kobus Steenekamp, Managing Director Monsanto SA.

"YieldGard®II maize hybrids which have been commercially available to South African growers since 2010 are genetically modified maize hybrids that have been developed to provide protection against caterpillar pests, including the maize stalk borers *Busseola fusca* and *Chilo partellus*. YieldGard®II hybrids have also been shown to provide protection against damage by Fall Armyworm in South Africa and other countries such as the U.S and Brazil. YieldGard®II hybrids can be an important tool in Integrated Pest Management programs, utilizing combinations of technologies and agronomic practices, to help protect maize crops against Fall Armyworm infestations in South Africa.

"This protection against the Fall Armyworm by YieldGard®II has recently been confirmed by Prof. Johnnie van den Berg, an entomologist of the North-West University. They are in the process of determining the various levels of control between the different Bt-technologies.

"According to feedback received from farmers and our field personnel, Fall Armyworm infestations are found in the northern parts of the county in Limpopo, North-West and Mpumalanga. It is important that farmers monitor their fields daily and contact our field personnel or agronomists, or the chemical representative, immediately if they suspect that they have an infestation of the Fall Armyworm. It is especially important to monitor the fields in cases where Roundup Ready® or conventional maize has been planted.

"Although no products have been registered for control of the Fall Armyworm, CropLife SA with the support of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, recommended that products registered to control other Lepidoptera species in maize, be used in the interim. It is, however, of the utmost importance that farmers involve the assistance of their chemical representatives. Chemical control will also only be effective if the larvae are controlled before they reach the maize cobs. It is therefore important to control the larvae in the early stages of development.

“I would like to assure our clients that Monsanto will do our utmost best to gather all information on this pest from our colleagues in other parts of the world so that we can share it. Our local team of agronomists are currently in the fields collecting information and assisting farmers with monitoring and identification of the Fall Armyworm.”

“The moths can travel over long distances with the wind which explains the fast outbreak over vast distances. The pest also caused a great deal of damage in maize fields in Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi, and it seems that it has been seen in Namibia as well.

“Prof. Johnnie van den Berg, is a member of a group of scientists researching the prevalence, control and damage caused by the Fall Armyworm. This group will soon do trials to determine if the same control methods used on the African Armyworm would be effective in the control of the Fall Armyworm.

“The planting of refuge areas will continue to play an important role in the prevention of resistance and farmers are remined of to keep to this practice,” says Kobus Steenekamp.

“Farmers who see these worms in their fields, must please contact their nearest Monsanto sales representative or agronomist. They can also contact Prof. Johnnie van den Berg directly at 072 348 8431 or 012 319 6384, or they can contact Jan Hendrik Venter from DAFF at 012 319 6384 or 072 348 8431 or at janhendrikv@daff.gov.za. Dr Gerhard Verdoorn, a well-known toxicologist, can also be contacted at 082 446 8946 or visit the website of Croplife SA at www.croplife.co.za/images/croplife/initiatives/InsecticidesAugust2016.pdf of www.agri-intel.com

Ends

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