



agriculture, forestry & fisheries

Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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PEST ALERT: DETECTION OF *SPODOPTERA FRUGIPERDA* (FALL ARMY WORM) FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SOUTH AFRICA

Members of the media

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for your presence.

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) recently (03 February 2017) received a diagnostic report from the Agricultural Research Council, Plant Protection Research Institute (ARC PPRI) which confirms that the Fall Army Worm was positively identified from samples collected in the Limpopo Province. The samples were jointly collected by scientists from the ARC Grain Institute and the North West University. These were caterpillars that had to pupate and emerge as moths before a positive identification could be done. In addition moths were collected on Friday 3 February from the northern parts of Gauteng and positively identified as Fall Army Worm.

Fall Army Worm is native to South and Central America and also occurs in the southern states of the USA. The first detection of Fall Army Worm in Africa was notified in January 2016 when it was reported from Nigeria. From there it spread to several other West African countries and to Central Africa by April 2016. Media reports from Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi indicated an outbreak of this pest during December 2016. DAFF informed commodity and research organisations of a possible threat and encouraged producers to report suspicious pest damage. This initiated possible pest reports which led to sample collection and positive identifications.

The Fall Army Worm is a strong flyer and could be distributed by prevailing winds over large distances. The department realises that transboundary pests and diseases, especially

migratory pests threaten food security and that coordinated regional efforts are important to address these risks. The department will therefore participate at the upcoming engagement hosted by the Food and Agricultural Organization, which claims to strengthen and align efforts strengthen controls of plant and animal pests and diseases. We will equally continue to our engagement with SADC to ensure early warnings of these biological threats are in place.

The South African Emergency Plant Pest Response Plan is already in motion which deals with new pest detections in South Africa. The actions implemented depend on the pest, the extent of the spread and extent of the damage. Now that there is a positive identification, DAFF will continue with assessment of spread and damage, awareness actions to provide farmers with accurate technical information and control options. Pheromone traps will be imported into South Africa to determine the exact extent of the spread and the specific strain of FAW present in South Africa. Diagnostic support has been increased to deal the bulk of sample identification.

As the Fall Army Worm is a new pest to South Africa, no pesticide was previously registered to be used against it. A process of emergency registration of agricultural chemicals is ongoing with two active ingredients are already registered to be applied against this pest. As with all agricultural remedy applications the label instructions must be followed in accordance to the supplier's recommendations.

Having received various reports of the incidence of the pest, and having undertaken sample collection in Limpopo and Gauteng, the department will now undertake a more comprehensive survey to determine the spread of the pest. In parallel to this, damage assessment will be done and, as appropriate, the necessary actions undertaken to manage the pest. An awareness campaign has been rolled out to all provinces to provide technically correct information regarding the management of the pest. Extensive information on this pest is available from other parts of the world. We have identified specific research focus areas in South Africa that will allow for a deeper understanding of the behaviour and biology of the pest. This will enable the improvement of relevant management and control strategies.

DAFF has also initiated a plant pest action group which consists of members from provincial Departments of Agriculture, researchers, several producers associations and industries

which may be affected by this pest. The group will meet regularly to evaluate progress and results.

The presence of the pest will be notified on the International Plant Protection Convention's portal in terms of South Africa's international pest reporting obligations. SADC member countries will also be notified and regional control measures will be discussed.

I appreciate the support already expressed from Grain SA and the South African National Seed Organizations, the ARC and North West University to assist with the pest surveillance.

I will be visiting some of the affected areas this coming Friday.

Crop producers are encouraged to report suspected presence of this pest to the Department.

Thank you

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