

Department 'in control' of fall armyworm scourge

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EDWARD WEST

FARMERS should ideally first identify the presence of the fall armyworm in their crops before considering the use of a pesticide, KZN Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's (Dard) Head of Department Siphiwe Mkhize said this week. He spoke at a briefing in Durban this week, where the department announced that the pest had been found on farms in the Amajuba, uThukela, uMkanyakude and Zululand districts.

The pest, which originates in Brazil and has moved south from Zambia, was first detected in Limpopo in December 2016, before moving to farms in Mpumalanga.

Last Friday, the department said that the pest had been found on crops in the uThukela and uMkanyakude districts, but, at a meeting of regional ward managers on Monday, it emerged that the worm had also been found on farms in two more districts, said Mkhize.

The impact of the worm on sugar cane crops is not yet known, although the pest has been known to attack soya bean, ground nut, potato and cotton crops, said Mkhize.

He said pesticides are available to buy commercially, and the department will distribute pesticides to



Department of Agriculture and Rural Development MEC Themba Mthembu said this week the department is in control of the fall armyworm that has become a pest in crops in four districts in KwaZulu-Natal, and that pesticides were available in the market for purchase, while subsistence farmers could get pesticides from the department.

PHOTO: SUPPLIED

subsistence farmers who have detected the worm in their fields.

An emergency Plant Pest Response Plan is in motion, he said. Dard MEC Themba Mthembu said teams were

NINE CHEMICALS TO CURB SPREAD

THE following nine chemical active ingredients have been registered for use against the fall armyworm in South Africa:

- Indoxacarb
- Chlorantraniliprole
- Emamectin Benzoate
- Flubendiamide
- Lufenuron
- Methomyl
- Indoxacarb/novaluron
- Malathion
- Chlropyrifos
- Others pending registration

Control guidelines for fall armyworm in South Africa can be found on the DAFF website:

www.daff.gov.za/daffweb3/News-Room/Media-release/Fall-army-outbreak-update

- Buy according to the proportion of the infestation, and use according to dosage rates recommended on the labels.
- Apply chemicals only against young instar larvae that are less than one centimetre long.
- Application against older larvae is not successful as they feed deep inside the leaf whorls of plants and are therefore protected from contact with pesticide.

SOURCE: Department of Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries.

out pest scouting, collecting and reporting on the spread and damage, an education and awareness programme would be launched, and additional resources would be solicited to procure agrochemicals and traps.

Although the department had made manpower available to report and scout for the worm, there would however, be no funds specifically made available to counter the pest, because the infestation had not yet reached a stage where it could be con-

sidered a national disaster.

"We hope to catch it before it reaches the stage of a national disaster," said Mkhize.

What differentiates the worm from some other agricultural pests, although it produces similar crop symptoms as the stalk borer, which is a common pest in this province, is that the fall armyworm can lay up to 250 eggs a day, it moves in droves, and can travel up to 100 km during its lifespan.

Firm shows products to KZN farmers

EDWARD WEST

NEARLY 100 farmers travelled from all over KwaZulu-Natal last week to see the results of soya bean and maize trials done by Germany-based chemical multi-national BASF on Frans Putz's farm near Winterton.

The event was one of many to be held by BASF across South Africa, and is conducted in a region where the other agriculture chemical multi-national, Monsanto, holds a relatively long market presence, considering that Monsanto is the owner of Pioneer Seeds, which is based in Johannesburg.

BASF South Africa regional manager Steve Genis said BASF has a "farmer-focused strategy" and the event had



Nearly 100 farmers travelled from all over KwaZulu-Natal last week to see the chemical agriculture products that are available from Germany-based chemical multi-national BASF on a farm near Winterton.

PHOTO: EDWARD WEST

the aim of making farmers more aware of the chemical agriculture products that are available from BASF, and to demonstrate from BASF's demonstration crops, how the group's herbicides

and fungicides work.

Genis said they also have a farmer loyalty programme, which, depending on a variety of factors such as the type of crop and size of farm, involves a re-

payment to the farmer at the end of their season. A number of farmers in northern KZN had benefitted to the tune of more than R1,2 million from the farmer loyalty programme.