

Namibia faces fresh armyworm outbreak

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The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry have warned that the country is likely to experience its second armyworm outbreak in a row, following last year's outbreak.



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Pheromone traps show moth still around

"According to the data that was collected from pheromone traps on the number of Fall armyworm (FAW) moths, FAW is still around and as soon as the host plants are available the moths will start producing egg masses on the plant leaves," said the PS of agriculture, water and forestry, Percy Misika.

According to Misika, the traps were set up in all crop growing regions from the onset of the cropping season to monitor and to ensure early detection of the armyworms that devour entire crop fields.

The pheromone traps were procured by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and were distributed to southern African countries including Namibia.

Other countries currently affected by the outbreak during the 2017/18 cropping season are Malawi, South Africa and Zambia of which about 55,000 hectares are affected altogether.

Ready for the outbreak

In Namibia, armyworm last year caused extensive damage to households in the North-eastern region. They damaged 13% of the maize planted in the communal areas and 6% of the maize in the commercial areas. Similarly, 6% of pearl millet and 2% of sorghum grain was lost as a result of armyworm.

The ministry has assured that it is ready for the outbreak and has procured pesticides, which have already been distributed to all the crop growing regions in the country. The Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry is also in the process of procuring more pesticides to top up the available pesticides.

"It is not safe to say that the government has procured enough pesticides as the quantity of pesticides required depends on the level of infestation experienced and environmental factors like temperature and rain can influence the presence of the pest in the area," Misika explained. The ministry of agriculture has also trained its staff so that they are able to train farmers to enable them to identify the pest and make prompt decisions.

The ministry encouraged farmers to scout regularly to be able to detect the presence of larva on their plants and to spray plants while the larva is still young as it is the only stage in which they are still susceptible to chemicals.

Apart from the pesticides procured by government, the pesticides are also available in local markets with registered dealers.

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