

Farmers urged to take precautions against Fall Armyworm

The Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development has urged maize crops, sorghum and sweetcorn growers and the public to take precautionary measures to control the Fall Armyworm (FAW).



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In a statement, the department said in South Africa, the 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 of 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.

Farmers and community members are advised to take precautionary control measures, which include diligent 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," said

the Department.

For agrochemical control, a list of registered agrochemicals is available on the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) website:

Effective control of FAW, said the department, can be realised through integrated pest management practice.

"It is best to start agrochemical spraying while the caterpillars are smaller than 1cm long. Big caterpillars (over 1cm) 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 rotating the agricultural chemicals within the cropping season according to resistance group and mode of action is highly recommended to avoid resistance," the department said.

The European Union has extended emergency import measures for hosts of FAW such as sweetcorn, peppers and eggfruit.

"Growers must ensure they can comply with these measures before they apply for a phytosanitary certification with DALRRD," said the department.

The department further advised farmers and community members to do regular scouting of FAW and to call their nearest Local Agriculture Centre for technical advice.

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