

SITUATIONAL REPORT ON OUTBREAK OF PESTS SUSPECTED TO BE ARMYWORM ON SOME COCOA AND MAIZE FARMS IN THE ASHANTI REGION

BACKGROUND:

Worm infestation has become an annual phenomenon in the Ashanti Region mostly affecting both cash and food crops. Even though these outbreaks occur annually, the degree of havoc year-on-year is not on the same scale. The invasion of armyworms on cereals and other crop fields with attendant massive destruction of these crops in the Region has been observed to occur cyclical over a three to four year period.

INTRODUCTION:

On Monday 24th April 2017, the Ashanti Regional NADMO Director (Hon. Kwabena Nsenkyire) received a distress call about a suspected Armyworm invasion of some cocoa farms in the Ejisu-Juaben Municipal. He quickly put up a team of officials from NADMO and the Plant Protection and Regulatory Services Department (PPRSD) of MOFA and visited some of the affected cocoa fields in the Municipal on Tuesday 25th and Wednesday 26th April 2017 to assess the situation. Accompanying the team were media persons from U TV and Atinka TV stations.

The pests according to some of the farmers were first seen on the cocoa farms on the 21st April 2017 or much earlier except that some of the farmers considered it to be the usual case where they only appear for a while and fizzle out.

COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:

Affected cocoa farms visited included those from the following communities:

Juaben, Amanpama, Atia, Juaben-Foase, Abetirem and Abesiwase. Other Communities affected include Achiase, Bomfa, Wabre, Amangoase, Pamenase, Adumasa, Anobuom, Koforidua-Ketiwa.

In all, Two thousand small-to-medium farm holders have been affected. Initial assessment put the total acre of cocoa farmland affected at three thousand five hundred (3,500) but the number destroyed is yet to be established.

Similar complaints and reports have been made about the presence of these army worm invasion on some maize farms in several Communities within the following Districts. Sekyere East, Sekyere Central, Ejisu-Juaben, Sekyere South, Sekyere Kumawu, Sekyere Afram Plains, Asnate Akim South, Afigya Kwabre, Offinso North and Mampong Municipal. The timely intervention by way of the application of chemicals on some of these maize farms is helping to turn around an otherwise precariously bad situation. Some of the maize farmers in Mampong Municipal are also reploughing their farms in addition to the spraying as a control measure.

OBSERVATION:

The situation appeared quite alarming and devastating as many acres of cocoa farms could visibly be seen ruining due to the level of destruction caused by the pests.

Initial discussions with some of the Chief farmers in the area together with their chairman (Opanin Kofi Mpiani) in a meeting at the Ejisu Agric Department on 26th April, 2017 reveal that many of them had been negatively impacted by the armyworm invasion and only an immediate supply of needed pesticides would avert an inability to meet imminent huge financial indebtedness to their bankers.

The team observed that most affected cocoa pods were within the maturity period. They were mostly bitten or chewed by the worms. Some of the cocoa trees had also just started flowering but suffered serious setbacks as a result of the biting and chewing carried out by the pests. The worms practically feed on the crops leaving black spots on them with the young pods experiencing stunted growth.

During the visit to the farms, it was observed that some farmers had sprayed their farms with the Akate Master provided by the Regional Office of the Cocoa Bod Division. This would certainly yield positive results. The problem is that many of the farms including those undergoing spraying would require more of the chemicals to complete the spraying exercise.

The team learnt that only five cartons were supplied to the Juaben farmers following a TV3 telecast of the situation but this obviously is woefully inadequate since the interest should also be towards preventing the spread to other farms.

RECOMMENDATION:

In order to contain and control the spread of these pests and halt the damage they are wrecking on the crops, we make the following recommendations:

Immediate supply of appropriate systemic chemicals (Akate Master, Confidor, Buffalo, Concider etc.) in sufficient quantities for the cocoa farms.

In the case of the maize farms, we are contending here with calamity pests, therefore the timely dispatch and receipt of appropriate chemicals would go a long way to prevent loss of livelihoods and likely food shortages.

Adequate supply of PPEs (i.e. Nose masks, goggles, head gear, mouth covers, Long gowns, wellington boots for use by the spraying gangs.

Most of the communities have very few spraying gangs some of which have been observed to be dormant. Once there appears to be a crisis on hand, more gangs should be formed and adequately trained to assist in the effort to combat the armyworm attack.

CONCLUSION:

A technical report on the devastation from the Plant Protection and Regulatory Services (PPRS) of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA) is herewith attached provides the technical details missing in this report.

COMPOSITION OF TEAM:

HON. KWABENA NSENKYIRE (ASHANTI REGIONAL NADMO DIRECTOR)

MADAM GIFTY BOAKYE (DIRECTOR, PPRSD OF MOFA)

ABDUL-BASSIT ABDULAI (ASH. REG. NADMO OPERATIONS AND DISASTERS)

MR. ATTAKORA KODUA ED (ASHANTI NADMO REGIONAL SECRETARIAT)

PRESENT:

MR. HENRY CRENTSIL JNR. (EJISU-JUABEN MUNICIPAL DIRECTOR, AGRIC)

OPANIN KOFI MPIANI (CHIEF FARMER – JUABEN DISTRICT)

MR. KWABENA SARFO KANTAKA (NPP CONSTITUENCY CHAIRMAN – JUABEN)

PREPARED BY:

SIGNED

ABDUL-BASSIT ABDULAI

(ASHANTI REGIONAL OPS/ DISASTERS)

REPORT ON THE FALL ARMY WORM (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) DEVASTATION IN THE ASHANTI REGION AS AT THURSDAY, 26TH APRIL, 2017.

Introduction

Fall army worm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) is a tropical pest which is gradually gaining a calamity status in Ghana. It has a wide host range including; orange, papaya, lucerne (alfalfa), soybean, rice, sorghum, cocoa and maize (which is regularly damaged). As at now, the pest has been identified in about fifteen (15) districts and municipalities (namely; Afigya Kwabre, Atwima-Nwabiagya, Atwima Mponua, Adansi North, Adansi South, Asante-Akyem North, Asante-Akyem Central, Sekyere-Kumawu, Sekyere South, Sekyere-Afram Plains, Offinso North, Bekwai, Mampong and Obuasi Municipalities and Kumasi Metropolis) in the region.

Extent of Damage

An estimated 6,400 hectares cocoa plantations for about 4,000 farmers in the Sekyere Central, Ejisu-Juabeng and Mampong Municipality have been seriously affected by the outbreak. The larvae feed completely on cherelles (immature cocoa pods) and also cause lesions on matured pods, thus damaging the beans (**Fig. 1**).



Fig. 1: Fall army worm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) damaging cocoa pods and causing lesions

Pictures by: Elvis Opoku, PPRSD-Ashanti

The pests have also affected 360 hectares of maize at various stages of development for about 1000 small holder farmers in the region. The pests infest the whorl of maize plants and feed on leaves as well (**Fig. 2**)



Fig. 2: Fall army worm (*Spodoptera frugiperda*) defoliating maize plant.

Pictures by: Michael Kumah, PPRSD-Ashanti

Control measures

COCOBOD has supplied 5 cartons of insecticide (approximately 60 litres) which happens to be woefully inadequate for complete eradication of the pest in the region. Farmers that are well to do have started with the control exercise. However, when adjoining farms close to the sprayed cocoa plantations are not sprayed then the problem will resurface. About 40 acres (16 hectares) of the cocoa plantations have been sprayed so far with more plantations yet to be sprayed.

The regional PPRSD team also embarked sensitization programme for farmers in the affected districts and municipalities but the office is also heavily constrained logistically.

Conclusion

An estimated 16,000 litres of insecticide (approximately 1,334 cartons) will be required to subside the problem in the region. All MMDAs and other stakeholders are therefore entreated to collaborate with the PPRSD and provide the necessary assistance for effective control of the menace.



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**HON. REGIONAL MINISTER
REGIONAL CO-ORDINATING COUNCIL
KUMASI - ASHANTI**

Sir,

**SUBMISSION OF SITUATIONAL REPORT ON SUSPECTED
FALL ARMYWORM INVASION ON SOME MAIZE AND
COCOA FARMS IN THE ASHANTI REGION**

Please find attached a situational report from the Secretariat and a technical perspective from the Plant Protection and Regulatory Services Department on the above caption for your information and necessary action.

Thank you.

SIGNED

**HON. KWABENA NSENKYIRE
(REGIONAL DIRECTOR)**