



MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, WATER AND FORESTRY

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Media response – the Patriot

Background: The Ministry of Agriculture, Water & Forestry dispatched technical teams to assess, identify and determine the extent of the damage. The identified other worms such as Stalk borers, Boll worms and fall armyworms. However, fall armyworms are the ones which are prominent, destructive and difficult to control due to pesticide resistance.

1. Does the Ministry of Agriculture, Water & Forestry have enough pesticides in place to deal with the armyworm outbreak?

No, MAWF does not have enough pesticides in stock to combat the outbreak. The armyworm outbreak does not happen every year, but outbreaks occurrence can happen after many years. As such keeping stockpiles of pesticides to prepare for outbreak is not conducive. As a result the Ministry only stocks minimum quantity of pesticides that can be used within a recommended time frame. Consequently the MAWF does not keep large amount of pesticides, due to the fact that, it could result into obsolete pesticides, should there be no outbreaks.

2. Is there a budget in place to tackle armyworm outbreak?

Yes, though funds are limited based on the aforementioned reasons. However, due to the fast spread of the pest and the damage it poses, the Ministry is working on modalities to source more funds by through a Cabinet, although the outbreak has not yet been declared as a National emergency.

3. Was the armyworm outbreak detected early enough to be contained?

No, Armyworms often go unnoticed in the field until damage is severe. This is because they primarily feed at night. An infestation is hard to detect as these caterpillars migrate to new feeding areas in the cool of the night. In most cases larvae usually go unnoticed until they are approximately an inch long. Infestation to other fields is with the aid of wind, whereby the moth can fly for several kilometres away from where they emerged to other places which makes containment difficult.

4. Is armyworm a threat to food security in Namibia?

Yes, since armyworms larva feed on the foliage of the plant in severe cases especially when plants begins to tassel and cobs are forming, large larva normally feeds on maize cobs. Damage to the cobs is normally much more severe than foliage damage which poses a food security challenge. If cobs are damaged there will be no harvest at all hence food security is threatened.

5. Is there a reason for the public to panic as a reason of the armyworm outbreak?

No there is no need to panic, since government is working hard to combat the outbreak by advising and supporting farmers through provision of recommended chemicals. Area wide spray is also recommended with strict measures to be followed to avoid resistance.

6. What measures have been implemented by the Ministry since Armyworm outbreak?

The Ministry dispatched technical teams to the Regions to assess the extent of the damage spread and to identify the pest and came up with mitigation measures. The Ministry has embarked on facilitating the procurement of effective chemicals and additional spraying machines as well as engaging in bilateral consultation with various stakeholders, such as (NNFU, NAB, AgriBusDev, AMTA, and Commercial farmer's representative, chemical suppliers) to come up with solution to combat the outbreak, hence to facilitate procurement and distribution of chemicals to both communal and commercial farmers.

7. How big is the threat caused by Armyworm outbreak to food security?

Armyworms are considered to be pests of economic importance due to their high mobility, reproduction, and their ability to develop resistance to pesticides. The larva normally burrows inside the plant hence destroying the growing point of a plant and makes it difficult for the chemical to be in contact with the larva. They affect food security in the country, as they are capable of destroying the entire field in a matter of days and they spread very fast with the aid of wind.

Yours sincerely,

Percy W. Misika

Permanent Secretary

Cc. Hon. J. Mutorwa, Minister

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