



Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations

## Fall Armyworm in Africa: FAO Position on the Use of Pesticides

Pesticides play an important role in managing pests such as the fall army worm, however they can also pose unacceptable risks to human health and the environment. Pesticide risk reduction and risk management are essential to the responsible use of pesticides.

The FAO/WHO International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management provides a framework on pesticide management for all public and private entities engaged in, or associated with, production, regulation and management of pesticides. The Code provides standards of conduct and serves as a point of reference in relation to sound pesticide life cycle management practices, in particular for government authorities and the pesticide industry. The Code emphasizes the importance of the role of Integrated Pest Management or IPM<sup>1</sup> where pesticides are considered as the only one of the options available.

IPM emphasizes the growth of a healthy crop with the least possible disruption to agro-ecosystems and encourages natural pest control mechanisms. IPM programmes have demonstrated that it is possible to significantly reduce pesticide use without reducing crop yield or farmer profit.

FAO's is developing a long-term IPM-based strategy for the sustainable management of fall armyworm, which includes forecasting, crop monitoring, use of biological control options, resistant varieties and promotion of good agricultural practices and, as a last resort option, the use of pesticides.

The inappropriate use of pesticides can result in adverse effects on agricultural production, health and the environment. It can also result in pesticide residue levels in treated commodities that represent a hazard to consumers and that constrain the marketability of products both on domestic and export markets.

Where pesticides are used to combat Fall Army Worm they should be managed in accordance with the national legislation and with international norms, such as the Code of Conduct and its technical guidelines. Only pesticides that are nationally registered and labelled according to national standards should be used.

If pesticide use is deemed necessary, preference should be given to pesticides that are target-specific, degrade rapidly into innocuous metabolites after use and are of low risk to humans and the environment. Due consideration should be given to the use of bio-pesticides. Microbials,

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<sup>1</sup> IPM means the careful consideration of all available pest control techniques and subsequent integration of appropriate measures that discourage the development of pest populations and keep pesticides and other interventions to levels that are economically justified and reduce or minimize risks to human and animal health and/or the environment - FAO/WHO Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management.

botanicals or insect hormones as well as predators or parasitoids can help reduce Fall Armyworm population densities.

Clear instructions and training in the proper use of pesticides are required. This should include: handling and use according to label instructions; emphasizing that products should be used only for those crops and pests the product has been approved for; respecting of pre-harvest intervals; appropriate use of adequate protective gear; proper application; cleaning of application equipment and proper disposal of empty containers and left-over product, etc. In many cases, overall volumes of pesticides used can be reduced significantly through better selection, maintenance and calibration of application equipment.