

Press Release

Dated: 30.12.10

CHECK PAPAYA MEALY BUG WITH PARASITIDS TAMIL NADU FARMERS ADVISED

The papaya mealy bug (*Paracoccus marginatus*) infestation was observed in Tamil Nadu during July, 2008. In the beginning, the incidence of mealy bug was found in crops like papaya, tapioca, cotton, red gram, sunflower and vegetables. The pest being invasive to our region has no specific and effective natural enemies. In the absence of natural enemies, the pest assumed serious proportions in the subsequent years affecting several crops and weeds posing a threat to farmers.

The pest occurs in groups and sucks the sap of the plant resulting in total drying and wilting of the plant with complete failure of the crop. The extent of damage in various crops ranged 30 – 80 per cent. As the pest proliferates quickly with several overlapping generations per year, the use of chemical pesticides to check the pest is only temporary, which requires repeated sprays at frequent intervals. Hence in order to control the mealy bug population effectively and to sustain the mealy bug control, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has undertaken initiatives to import parasitoids from foreign countries in collaboration with ICAR, New Delhi.

During the month of September, 2010, three species of papaya mealy bug parasitoids namely *Acerophagus papayae*, *Pseudleptomastix mexicana* and *Anagyrus loecki* were imported from Puerto Rico through USDA, America in collaboration with National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Insects (ICAR), Bangaluru and released in the fields of (Orchard) TNAU by Honorable Minister for Agriculture, Thiru. Veerapandi S. Arumugam on 7.10.2010 for the first time in India in the presence of Vice Chancellor, Agricultural Production Commissioner, Directors of line departments and board members. These parasitoids were found promising as they are able to parasitize the mealy bugs and successfully multiply acclimatizing with our climatic conditions. This was evident by the presence of parasitoid activities in the mealy bug infested crops in the unreleased fields also.

Mass multiplication of these parasitoids are being undertaken in seven Agriculture Colleges, 36 Research Stations and 14 Krishi Vigyan Kendras of TNAU which are present across Tamil Nadu. These parasitoids are supplied to the farmers of Tamil Nadu on free of cost.

Therefore, the farmers from different parts of Tamil Nadu are requested to utilize this opportunities in getting the parasitoids from nearby Colleges / Research Stations / Krishi Vigyan Kendras of TNAU and release in their fields. This will enable the complete check of the papaya mealy bug within three to four months in Tamil Nadu.

for *Sarathi P*
Director 30.12.10.

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