

## Eco friendly measure to control papaya mealybug

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Chemical measures to control the outbreak of papaya mealybug in Tamil Nadu did not yield success because of wider host range including many weed species and trees, presence of thick protective waxy coating over the body and mainly development of resistance to the chemical insecticides.

### Past lesson

Based on the lesson learnt from other countries like Guam, Palau, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, U.S. (Florida) etc where the pest was suppressed successfully by classical biological control programme, National Bureau of Agriculturally Important Insects (NBAII) Bangalore functioning under Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) imported three effective exotic parasitoids namely *Acerophagus papayae*, *Anagyrus loecki* and *Pseudleptomastix mexicana*, mass multiplied and released them in hot spot zones jointly with Agricultural Universities of different states as well as Central Silk Board. The pest was completely brought under control. Recent survey in Tamil Nadu indicated reappearance of papaya mealybug in a few areas of Salem, Namakkal, Erode, Coimbatore, Virudunagar and Thirunelveli districts. The incidence is also recorded on other plant species including hibiscus, sorrel leaves, tomato, brinjal etc. Though the population of the pest recorded below economic injury level, incidence of this pest is found to be increased in the locations facing severe drought and hot climate. Past experience revealed that spray of insecticides induced the outbreak of the bug rather than control because of its resistance and destruction of natural enemies as they are highly sensitive to the chemicals.

Release of above said exotic parasitoids at 200 individuals per location alone is sufficient to manage the pest. If incidence of papaya mealybug is noticed, farmers may approach nearby agriculture universities or field units of Central Silk Board for help.

### Contact

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