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To
The Editor,
Sir,

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I request that the following message may kindly be published in your esteemed daily:

TNAU, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre, Mexico and State Department of Agriculture organised Interactive Field days

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore and Plant Health Initiative, International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre, Mexico, along with the State Department of Agriculture Sulur and Sultan pet blocks of Coimbatore District organised Interactive Field days at Mr.Devarajan field, Lakshminaickenpalayam village and Mr.Balasubramanian field, Akkanaickenpalayam village, Sultanpet blocks. The demonstrations were laid out in one acre plots with different treatments viz., botanicals, biological control, Integrated Pest Management chemical control and Farmers' practice under field conditions. The impact of treatments were evaluated under Participatory Evaluation by farmers and extension personnel in these two fields.

During this program, Dr.P.S.Shanmugam, Associate Professor (Agrl.Entomology), invited the gathering and informed the farmers that, in recent years, maize has become the victim of the invasive fall armyworm. He narrated the packages of IPM for maize fall armyworm and explained the various components displayed in the exhibition.

During the inaugural address, the Director of the Centre for Plant Protection Studies, Dr.M.Shanthi, informed that maize fall armyworm was spotted in 2018 in Tamil Nadu. Intensive research by the Department of Entomology, CPPS, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, resulted in the development and validation of IPM strategies that have been widely advocated to the farmers. In this context, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre, Mexico, has agreed for funding to demonstrate the Integrated Pest and Disease Management strategies for the management of maize fall armyworm and other diseases occurring in maize through a participatory evaluation program involving farmers and the State Department of Agriculture extension personnel. A leaflet on maize Integrated Pest and Disease Management was also released.

Dr.M.Murugan, Professor and Head, Dept. of Agrl.Entomology, in his special lecture, informed that, due to climate change, the fall armyworm is spreading to different countries and entered India too. The damage due to this pest is severe as the natural enemies for this pest are low currently. However, farmers will be able to control this pest effectively by following IPM strategies in a community based manner. Further, he requested the farmers to monitor the spread of this pest to other crops. Dr.K.Angappan, Professor and Head (Plant Pathology), opined that maize is not attacked frequently by diseases. Under conducive environmental conditions, collar rot, blight, leaf spot, etc. can occur in maize and can be managed by recommending appropriate fungicides.

Tmt.K.Kannamani, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Sulur block addressed the farmers about the schemes of the Department of Agriculture and requested the University to devise improved management strategies for tackling the fall armyworm menace, effectively.

Dr.V.Paranidharan, in his technical address, discussed the disease management strategies for containing maize collar rot, blight and leaf spot diseases. Dr.P.S.Shanmugam, Associate Professor (Entomology) explained the procedure for recording fall armyworm infestation under field conditions to the farmers and extension personnel. Later, Dr.T.Elaiyabharathi, Associate Professor (Entomology), provided the IPM strategies to be followed for managing maize fall armyworm. This includes application of neem cake @ 250 kg/ha at the time of last ploughing, seed treatment with cyantraniliprole 19.8% +thiamethoxam19.8% FS @ 4 ml/kg seed, border cropping with cowpea, gingelly/red gram or sunflower in garden land conditions and fodder sorghum in dryland conditions @ three rows of selected crop, monitoring of FAW adults using pheromone traps @ 12/ha and window based application of insecticides viz., Chlorantraniliprole 18.5 SC @ 0.4 ml/ lit (or) flubendiamide 480 SC @ 0.5 ml/lit at early stage (15 - 20 DAE) followed by azadirachtin 1500 ppm @ 5 ml/lit on need basis at 15-20 days after emergence, Metarhizium anisopliae (TNAU-MA-GDU isolate) @ 2.5 kg/ha (or) emamectin benzoate 5 SG @ 0.4 g/lit or novaluron 10 EC @ 1.5 ml/lit or spinetoram 11.70 SC @ 0.5 ml/lit at 35 -40 DAE and any of the late whorl stage insecticides during cob formation stage. In this IPDM Participatory evaluation programme, about 20 extension personnel and 50 progressive farmers participated to inspect the IPM fields and benefitted by the programme.

Public Relations Officer