



Samora Machel Building, No. 7 Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Extension 2, Mbombela, 1200,
Mpumalanga Province, Private Bag X 11219, 1200
Tel: +27 (013) 766 6067/8, Fax: +27 (013) 766 8295, Int. Tel: +27 (13) 766 6067/8, Int. Fax: +27 (13) 766 8295

Litiko Letekulima, Kutfufukiswa
Kwetindzawo Tasemakhaya, Temhlaba
Netesimondzawo

Departement van Landbou,
Landelike Ontwikkeling,
Grond en Ongewing Sake

umNyango weZelimo
UkuThuthukiswa kweeNdawo zemaKhaya,
iNarha neeNdaba zeBhoduluko

MEDIA STATEMENT

For Immediate Release
Attention: All Media Houses
Date: 26 February 2025

FARMERS WARNED OF AFRICAN ARMYWORM OUTBREAK

The Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs (DARDLEA) is warning both livestock and crop producers to be on high alert after a confirmed outbreak of the African armyworm (*Spodoptera Exempta*) in the Chief Albert Luthuli Local Municipality in Mpumalanga. The pest has also been confirmed in several farms Lydenburg, Emalahleni, also in Bronkhorstspuit in Gauteng and in Limpopo. The African armyworm feeds predominantly on grasses, but may also feed on grains such as maize and millet.

The national Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD), in collaboration with the DARDLEA promptly reacted to the outbreak, confirmed on February 16th, and organised a workshop for local farmers in Elukwatini and its surroundings on Friday, 21 February 2025. The gathering also saw the distribution of PPEs, chemicals and spraying pumps, including demonstrations and tips on the use of the chemicals and the pumps.

Sporadic African armyworm outbreaks are very common and mostly occur in the grassland biome which covers the Northwest, Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal as well as parts of Limpopo. So far, outbreaks generally follow the onset of wet seasons when dry grasslands produce new growth and cereal crops are planted. All farmers are therefore advised to be on alert, and should African armyworms be identified; they must inform the Departments through their Extension and Agric Advisors about the occurrence. They can send good-quality images with details of their location.

FARMERS WARNED OF AFRICAN ARMYWORM OUTBREAK

Speaking to scores of farmers in Elukwatini, DALRRD Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction directorate's Mr Nakana Kekgotswe cautioned farmers to be careful when applying the chemicals on the affected pastures, as overuse may also impact negatively on the environment, including livestock. "Even though pastures were most at risk, livestock farmers need to be on high alert as well because the overuse of the chemicals can make the grass toxic to cattle. A general prevention measure to avoid further poisoning of cattle, is to remove them from the affected pastures for a period of at least 14 days.

African armyworms are carried by winds, and during their invasion they lay eggs and breed, but die out before winter. These armyworms are generally blackish in colour but can be brown to green. Unlike the Fall armyworm, the African armyworm lacks the clear spots and from images received, this is clearly the black one, identified by the black head. They are usually found in masses on grasses and do not hide in crops during daytime like the Fall armyworm. The species can be particularly damaging to cultivated grazing fields and natural veld, but seldom has an economic impact on perennial and cash crops.

-ENDS-

Issued by the Mpumalanga Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Land and Environmental Affairs

Media Enquiries please contact: Ms Zanele Shabangu (Head: Communication Services) on 013 766 6133 / 072 089 9556