

Fall Armyworm – a Biological Approach

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Fall armyworm has many natural enemies – predators, parasites and pathogens. Some of these biological control agents are available commercially. These can be strategically introduced to fast-track establishment and improve control of this difficult pest.

Two of the most promising biological control actions include:

Fawligen – a biological insecticide based on a viral pathogen specific to Fall Armyworm. This product is produced by AgBiTech and is now available under permit for use in maize (and sorghum, for grain or forage). It is ideal for use in an Integrated Pest Management program as it is completely safe to all beneficial species.

Trichogramma – a tiny wasp parasite that targets the egg stage. Early research shows that this species can induce significant mortality. The female Trichogramma wasp lays her eggs into the eggs of Fall Armyworm. The wasp maggot develops within the moth egg ultimately killing it. The next generation of wasps that emerge will mate and continue the cycle.

Fall armyworm remains a challenging pest and we still have much to learn about how Trichogramma and other commercially available biocontrol agents may be used to best advantage. No one biocontrol agent will be a silver bullet. A diverse mix of natural enemies will always give the best results. ■■



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