Soap controls aphids in beans

Recognize the problem
Black aphids, or "ume" in Kikuyu, feed on field beans. The aphids weaken the beans and reduce yields. Aphids are very small insects. A single aphid is almost too small to see, but groups of aphids can be easily seen.

Background
Aphids suck the juice from the plant. If aphids are not controlled they can multiply very quickly in just a week. Aphids live mainly underneath the leaves, in groups of a few to several hundreds. Aphid numbers can recover quickly after control measures have been taken. Aphids are often killed by other insects and turn into 'mummies'. The mummies are light brown, and swollen and bigger than living aphids.

Management
• Look for aphids under the leaves. Look at 20 to 30 plants in different parts of the field. If two or three of those plants have at least two groups of aphids then you must act.
• If you see many aphid mummies, you may not need to spray.
• Spraying with soap is a cheap, safe and effective control because it washes away the protective coat on the aphid's skin.
• Fill a bucket with water and dissolve half a finger length of a bar of soap (about an inch, or 10-15 tablespoons of liquid soap). Stir well until bar is gone.
• Put the soapy water in a sprayer and spray both sides of the leaves, particularly the undersides, entirely covering all plants in field. The spray must contact aphids to kill them.
• Spray in early morning or in evening so the spray does not dry quickly. Spraying when it is cool also keeps the sun from burning the leaves.
• Inspect your field at least once a week and spray as and when needed.
• Stop spraying two weeks before harvest to let the soap disappear.
• If the soap does not control the aphids enough, seek further advice.

Scientific name(s) > *Aphis fabae*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Ghana, Kenya

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