Maize stem borer

Recognize the problem
The stem borer makes holes in the maize stem. When you split open an infected stem you may see the stem borer inside the stalk. The stem borer makes a tunnel inside the stem. Sometimes the tunnel goes as far as the ear. The maize leaves turn yellow and the stem gradually rots. When crops are damaged a strong wind can blow them over.

Background
The borer eats and grows for three to five weeks. The borer hatches from eggs which are laid by yellowish brown moths with spots on their wings. The moth lays eggs in clusters in the leaf sheath. The stem borer lives in the dead stalk and stubble from one year to the next. When the plant is two feet high, the eggs hatch and the young borers collect in the funnel.

Management
• Burn the stubble after harvesting the crop. This will kill the stem borers living inside the stalks. You may also kill the stem borers by cutting up the stalks and feeding them to animals.
• Do not grow maize year after year in the same field. After harvesting maize, plant something else the following years, like beans or groundnuts which are not attacked by the stem borer.
• At funnel, spray Deltamethrin 25EC at a rate of half a litre per hectare when the plant is less than two feet tall.

Scientific name(s) > Sesamia inferans

When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval.