Armyworms on Brassica

Recognize the problem
Armyworms vary in colour and stripe patterns, but are usually a shade of olive green with many fine coloured stripes down their back and sides. The body surface is smooth with almost no hairs. They feed on any succulent foliage such as leaves. After finishing one food supply, they move as an "army" to new plants.

Background
They mainly build up during warm or hot weather. They destroy seedlings by eating large portions of leaves leading to delayed growth. The worms may be found along farm borders or in farms with weeds. In large numbers, they cause serious economic damage.

Management
Non-chemical control
• Conserve natural enemies by supplying flowering plants (which serve as a food source for adult syrphids) and avoid spraying pesticides when there are enough natural enemies in the field to reduce the number of armyworms.
• Remove host weeds from around the field to avoid armyworm build up.
• Hand pick and destroy larvae in small plots.
• Infested seedlings should not be planted in the main field.
• Spray with Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt).
Chemical control
• The effective chemical products used against armyworms include Deltamethrin, Indoxacarb and Methoxyfenozide.

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.

Scientific name(s) > Spodoptera exigua

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: many countries where this pest or problem is present.

Authors: This factsheet is based on information written for "The Brassica Farming Handbook", first published by KENGAP Horticulture 2011.
Kengap Horticulture Ltd, P.O Box 12898-00400 Nairobi, Kenya
tel: +254 722 575544; +254 723 491549 email: books@kengap.co.ke;
www.kengap.co.ke

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