Bacterial Soft Rot on Brassica

Recognize the problem
Soft rot is a disease among brassicas causing them to turn soft and rot with a bad smell. It is also known as bacterial soft rot or bacterial root rot. Soft rot is often a problem after harvest but affects the cabbage and Chinese cabbage in the field. On turnip and rutabaga the disease may be found in the field but is most severe during storage. The infected heads are watery and often have a complete head rot. The affected area becomes soft and mushy and turns dark in colour. Eventually the bacteria, which cause the rot, decay the entire plant.

Background
The infection occurs on leaf stock which is in contact with the soil, and then moves to the head. The bacterium is spread by water splashes or contaminated tools such as hoes or knives. It also spreads in waterlogged soils and contaminated water. Warm and moist conditions favour the development of the disease. When other diseases such as black rot and damping off damage the crop, it is easier for soft rot to get into the crop.

Management
Non-chemical control
- Hands and tools should be washed and disinfected regularly during and after harvesting.
- Harvesting should not be done in warm and moist conditions.
- Frequent irrigation during head formation should be avoided to allow heads to dry.
- Prevent other diseases like black rot and damping off.
- Planting on ridges, raised beds or well drained soils prevents water logging around the plants.
- Harvest healthy heads early when heads are tight and put in crates that are washed thoroughly and disinfected.
- Crop rotation should be practiced and the use of clean water should be practiced.

No chemical control measures are recommended.

Scientific name(s) > Pectobacterium carotovorum subsp. carotovorum

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

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