Scouting for Bollworm and Budworm pests in Cotton

Recognize the problem
Numbers of insect pests can increase rapidly and the farmer may not act quickly enough as they are unaware of the severity of the problem. This leads to greater expense to control the pest later when numbers have built up.

Background
Cotton insect scouting is the regular and systematic inspection of cotton for insects and their damage. Its purpose is to obtain an accurate estimate of the types and numbers of important insects and their damage in the field by checking a limited number of plants or plant parts. Judgments are made about managing insects in the whole field from these representative samples. Scouting involves looking for and counting the eggs, larvae, damaged squares, and bolls at each sample site. The whole plant must be searched; many of the eggs and young larvae are found in terminal areas early in the season. Later, eggs are laid on squares and blooms lower in the plant. Larval damage to squares and bolls is indicated by a feeding hole in the side of the fruiting structure.

Management
Early detection is important in managing this pest. Scout by going out into the field on a weekly basis and carefully examining 50 plants from all areas of the field. Numbers of eggs and larvae should be recorded. Use pheromones if they are available.

If the following threshold levels during the various stages of growth have been met or surpassed, treatment with recommended insecticide will be required to remove the pest population. Look out for egg parasites which are black, compared to normal eggs which are whitish yellow.

Pre-bloom stage: 15 budworms per 100 terminals or 10 budworms per 100 squares have been observed.
Post-bloom stage: 3 live larvae per 100 terminals.

Scientific name(s) > Helicoverpa zea, Heliothis virescens

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Barbados

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