Recognize the problem
Tomato leaf miner is a devastating pest of tomatoes. It is also known as *Tuta absoluta*, Tomato moth, or kidomozi wa nyanya in Kiswahili. Tomato leaf miner adults are small silver-grey moths with black spots on their inner wings. They are about ½ cm long and have wings of about 1 cm if spread. They hide under leaves in the daytime. Young larvae in the tunnels are creamy-greenish with a dark head but later turn pinkish-green. They are tiny and feed in tunnels (galleries) through young leaves and into young fruits. The larvae destroy leaves and fruits. Note that single ½ cm holes on upper part of tomato fruits are caused by bollworms not by *Tuta*.

Background
The life cycle of *Tuta* only takes about 1 month so they can multiply 10 to 12 times per year. The moth lays more than 200 eggs from which the damaging larvae hatch. The larvae must be controlled because they are so destructive. Foliar sprays of biological or synthetic pesticides might help. Sprays may only help against young larvae so act when you first see symptoms. Pupation of larvae happens in the soil below the plants so pupae are hidden from treatment.

Management
- Spray early in the morning when the larvae of leaf miners are not active and are still on the leaves
- Preferably, use biopesticides like the microbial sprays of *Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki* over synthetic pesticides like Imidacloprid because they are less dangerous to you and to tomato consumers
  - There are several products based on *Bacillus thuringiensis* such as BN3 WP, Ascopel WP and others. They are also called BT products. Follow instructions on the product label for dosages.
  - If needed, spray twice per season but with at least 1 week interval between sprays. Do not enter the field for a day after spraying.
  - Do not spray the day before a harvest
- If you still experience infestation, then use products with the active ingredient Imidacloprid such as Hotshot 70WG and Imax 700WDG
  - They are often mixed at 10ml product per 20 litres water sprayed per acre but double-check with product labels, because products have different concentrations and formulations
  - Spray only once per season
  - Do not spray later than 3 days before harvest, and do not enter the field for 1 day after spraying, as the product is toxic
- Regardless of bio or synthetic pesticide, you must wear gloves, mask, googles, overcoat, gumboots during mixing, spraying and cleaning

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) > *Tuta absoluta*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Tanzania

Tunneling of Tuta larva. (Photo by Virginia Tech OIA, via Flickr)

Damage by *Tuta* larvae. (Photo by Shakir Al-Zaidi)