Recognize the problem
The papaya mealybug feeds on the sap of plants by inserting its stylets into the epidermis of the leaf, fruit and stem. In doing so, it injects a toxic substance into the plant. The result is chlorosis, plant stunting and leaf deformation. It excretes honeydew, attracting ants which come to feed on it. The ants will protect the mealybug and help to move it around. The heavy buildup of honeydew results in sooty mold all over the plant. Heavy infestations are capable of rendering fruit inedible. Papaya mealybug also transmits viruses.

Background
Papaya mealybug infestations are typically observed as clusters of cotton-like masses on the plants. The adult female is yellow and is covered with a white waxy coating. Adult females are approximately 2.2 mm long and 1.4 mm wide. A series of short waxy caudal filaments less than 1/4 the length of the body exist around the margin.

Management
- Monitoring and scouting to detect early presence of the mealybug.
- Prune infested leaves and destroy (burn) them.
- Completely remove and bury/burn crop residues.
- Remove weeds/alternate host plants like Hibiscus, etc. in and nearby crop.
- Avoid the movement of planting material from infested areas to other areas.
- Prevent the movement of ants and destroy of already existing ant colonies.
- Sanitization of farm equipment before moving it to the uninfected crop.
- Apply recommended chemical insecticides as the last resort, e.g. of insecticides :- buprofezin 25 EC (2 ml/litre), thiomethoxam 25 WG (0.6 g/litre), imidacloprid 17.8 SL (0.6 ml/litre), etc. Need to include a wetter or sticker to the insecticide for better penetration, as the mealybugs have a waxy layer.

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) > *Paracoccus marginatus*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Cambodia

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