Diplodia cob rot of maize  
*Stenocarpella maydis* Ear rot, stalk rot

### Prevention
- Use a resistant variety if available
- Ensure the recommended distance between plants is used, about 40 cm between plants and 80 cm between rows (depends on hybrid variety). Dense planting can spread the disease
- Treat seeds with hot water at 50°C (hot but bearable for the hand) for 10 minutes before sowing to help kill the pathogen
- Avoid mechanical damage that may be caused by insects and birds because it helps entry of the pathogen into the cob
- Make sure fertilization of soil is well balanced, using ammonium as a nitrogen source to reduce cob rot and maintaining potassium levels
- Rotate maize with wheat, soyabean or groundnut for at least two years after a severe outbreak
- Maintain optimal irrigation levels so that maize does not get stressed and become vulnerable to disease
- Ensure that bins are cleaned before storage to prevent disease spreading from previously infected cobs

### Monitoring
- Crop should be visited twice a week from early silking stage to 2-3 weeks after silking. Monitor particularly closely when dry weather is followed by frequent rainfall after silking.
- Look for whitish powdery like material on corn grains by removing the husks. This rots the ears during warm and dry weather
- Look for very small, black specks scattered on husks or embedded in cob tissues and kernels
- Leaves will suddenly and become greyish-green
- The crop stand may suffer from lodging
- Apply control measures when 10 out of 100 ears are damaged and a quarter of the cob is infected
- Check for insect damage to ears which can cause the disease to develop
- Check for the stalk rot phase of this disease which can occur before ears get diseased
- If more than 5-15 % of plants have stalk and/or ear rots then consider harvesting early as crop losses could be high
- Symptoms are similar to *Stenocarpella macrospora* which is prevalent in warm, humid regions, as opposed to *S. maydis* which is prevalent in cool, humid temperature regions
- Disease caused by *S. maydis* can be distinguished from other stalk rots by the formation of small dark-coloured spots (pycnidia) on stalk internodes late in the season. If unsure about pathogen identity then send to a lab for analysis

### Direct Control
- Remove infected cobs as soon as possible (do not feed to livestock) to remove disease from field
- Harvest early to reduce losses due to lodging following crop maturity
- If there has been a severe outbreak of Diplodia cob rot, destroy crop residues by grazing, burning, baling or ploughing in crop remains to a depth of 20 cm

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Note: Pesticides may be available to control this pest. Please check with the Ministry of Agriculture in your country to find out which pesticides are registered in your country and the local restrictions for their use.

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