

Push-pull of maize stalk borer

Recognize the problem

The maize stalk borer is a caterpillar. It eats inside the maize stem, the top of the maize plant wilts and turns yellow. The top of the plant dries out and dies. Sometimes the stalk borer chews round holes into the stem. If you split the stem open you will see the droppings of the stalk borer. The inside of the stem has turned yellow or brown. You might also see the stalk borer in the hollow stem.

The maize stalk borer is a caterpillar that lives and grows inside the maize stem.



Background

The stalk borer hatches from an egg which is laid by a moth. The moths do not like the smell of a plant called Desmodium. The moths like the smell of thara, or napier grass. The moths will lay their eggs on **thara**, even though the stalk borer can get trapped and die on the sticky thara leaves.

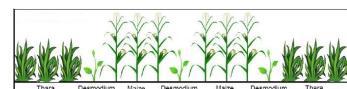
Desmodium and thara are both good to feed to cattle. Desmodium may be more difficult to find, but it is available locally at KARI.

Management

Insecticide or "**dawa**" does not always control the stalk borer, because it is hidden inside the plant. It may be better to prevent the stalk borer from entering the maize. Push the stalk borer away from the maize with Desmodium. Pull the stalk borer to the edge of the field with thara.

When the rains start, plant one row of Desmodium between every three rows of maize.

Maize crop plan with thara and Desmodium.



- First, transplant Desmodium vines into their rows. Plant them before the maize, so they begin to push away the stalk borer before the maize comes up. Plant them at the same distance you plant maize.
- Second, plant the maize in the remaining rows.
- Third, transplant thara cuttings in approximately three rows around the crop.

The moth will lay many of its eggs on the thara and not on the maize.

Scientific name(s) > ***Busseola fusca***

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Ghana, Kenya

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