

Striga

Recognize the problem

Striga known as "Rwona" or "Kurisuka" in Kinyarwanda is a parasitic weed of different cereal species such as maize and sorghum, and grasses. Striga plants produce typical purple ('umwura' in Kinyarwanda) flowers while its leaves are narrow and long with an intense green colour.

Background

Striga seeds in the soil germinate only when host plants are growing which stimulate its germination; otherwise, they remain dormant for up to 20 years. One Striga plant can produce up to 50,000 minute seeds. Seed dispersal is by wind, water, animals, human beings, farm tools and use of contaminated host seeds. The roots of Striga attach to the roots of host plants and suck nutrients and water from the host plant/crop, thus reducing growth and yield. The plants may be killed under severe attack.

Management

- Uproot and burn all the striga plants; early and continuous uprooting and burning of striga plants before flowering.
- Stimulating massive germination of the existing seed bank by planting host plants at a high density.
- Plant '*false host*' plants (e.g. soybean, groundnut, beans) which normally stimulate striga seeds to germinate but the weed fails to attach to the host and dies (suicidal germination)
- Do not plant seeds produced from affected areas.
- Practice crop rotation and intercropping with false hosts to enhance suicidal germination of Striga seeds.
- Avoid grazing of animals in Striga infested fields.
- Improve soil fertility by applying mineral and organic fertilizer.

Striga weed parasitizing sorghum. (Photo by Hakizamungu Leon)



Uprooted striga in a pit. (Photo by A. Mbwaga)



Scientific name(s) > *Striga hermontheca*

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



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