Maize crop management part 2

Yields in maize can be greatly reduced if weeds, pests and diseases are not effectively managed.

Some of the most common pests of maize include stem borers, larger grain borer, grasshoppers, locusts, termites, maize aphids, angoumois grain moth, spider mites, white grabs, African boll worm, African army worm, maize lady bird beetle and the maize leaf hoppers.

Maize pest control

To control the pests, ensure the maize crop is as healthy as possible to be able to fight the pests.

Plant early to avoid the high insect populations experienced with late sowing, monitor pest levels and control them when they begin to cause economic damage and also preserve beneficial organisms that act as biological control agents.

Strategically use pesticides if required and rotate pesticide groups to minimise the risk of pests developing resistance to specific chemical groups.

Carry out crop rotation but avoid alternate hosts in the rotation programme, plant a trap crop to concentre the pest away from the maize and reduce the area of pesticide application and planting varieties that show some good pest resistance.

Maize disease control

Disease identification is very important in disease management. The common maize diseases are maize lethal necrotic disease, fusarium wilt, stalk and ear rot, leaf blight, grey leaf blight, common rust and head smut.

To control he diseases, do constant scouting in the field and take action when needed, practice crop rotation, use clean certified seed, ensure maize field is clean and free of weeds.

Weed control

Weeds reduce yield by competing for essential growth requirements. Consider weed management before the crop is sown and control weeds by integrated weed management which include feeding the weeds to livestock, use weed free seed with high germination percentage and timely weeding.