Scouting for fall armyworms

When you know how to recognize and remove fall armyworms it is easier to control them.

Fall armyworms often hide deep inside the maize whorl where pesticides can’t find them. Therefore, farmers have to search for them to protect their harvest. Fall armyworms prefer to eat maize leaves, but are also able to live on other plants. They first start eating little windows into the leaves and continue with big holes.

Life cycle

A moth can fly long distances and can leave up to 200 eggs on one leaf. After a moth has left behind her egg masses, you can recognize these eggs because they are up to a thumbnail big and covered in whitish, soft hairs.

After three days the armyworms hatch. While first crawling along the leaves, the insects leave little windows. Within the next three days the young animals are searching for a maize whorl to hide. In this time the windows are becoming holes, because the fall armyworms grow. When you open whorls you usually will find just one of the insects, because they eat each other to avoid food competition.

After two to three weeks the fall armyworms exit the maize and fall down to the soil. There they ditch in less then a finger deep and build a dark brown cocoon.

Two weeks later a moth results, which flies away and soon start laying new eggs.

Killing by hand

In the first six weeks you should visit the field every three days in the morning. Then you look for any damage and signs.

If you find egg masses fold the leaves together and press with your hand upwards and downwards.

You can also add one spoon of soil, ash or sand to the whorl, to kill fall armyworms.