THE CURRENT GLOBAL SITUATION AND CHALLENGES OF RED PALM WEEVIL MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

Romeno Faleiro[1]

1. Mariella, Arlem-Raia, Salcette, Goa 403 720, India

Abstract

Red Palm Weevil (RPW) *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus* (Olivier) (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) is indigenous to South and South East Asian countries where it is a major pest of coconut. It is one of the world's major invasive pest species attacking around 40 palm species and has rapidly expanded its geographical range in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) region during the last three decades after it was first detected in the Gulf region during the mid-eighties, posing a severe threat to date palm and the Canary Island palm. RPW has a significant socio-economic impact on the date palm production sector and livelihoods of farmers in affected countries.

Currently the pest is being managed by a pheromone based Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategy where early detection of infested palms through periodic visual observations is crucial for its successful control. However, the cryptic/hidden nature of RPW makes it difficult to detect infested palms and calls for the development of an efficient and easy to use early detection device. Besides, mass trapping of adult weevils using pheromone traps, periodic inspection of palms to detect infestations, preventive and curative chemical treatments, adopting strict phyrosanitary/quarantine regulations is also necessary to sustain control levels and prevent the spread of RPW through infested planting material. Although in most of the NENA countries quarantine regulations exist, implementation of these regulations is weak. Efficient and timely decision making is vital in achieving high levels of control/eradication of RPW as seen in the Canary Island RPW control program where the pest was eradicated. In this context collection, transmission and management of data generated on the major RPW-IPM parameters including weevil captures in traps, infestation reports and treatments applied etc. could be achieved by developing GIS based user friendly applications for use by farmers and other personnel involved in the control operations in the field.

Limited efficiency of the on-going management program resulting from weakness of human and financial potentials, absence of effective biological control agents, labor intensive control and high cost, lack of farmer's and stakeholder's cooperation are the other challenges facing the management practices.