

**RESEARCH NEWS**

**HITHERTO UNRECORDED PEST OF RICE PANICLES IN SRI LANKA**

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In Sri Lanka, nearly 10-20 % of the annual rice production is lost due to insect pests such as thrips, brown planthopper, leaf folder, gall midge, stem borer, and paddy bug (Nugaliyadda et al., 2000). Hitherto unrecorded pest infesting rice panicles were observed at Rice Research Station, Labuduwa, Galle and several other places in Galle district in Sri Lanka during the major season 2010/11. The pest is small moth and body is 6mm in length. The forewings are brownish with several black spots, elongated and sharply pointed. The rear edges of the fore wings and hind wings have long fringes. Characteristic feature of the moth is long antennae placed alongside of the fore wings.

Pupation takes place between spikelets within the rice panicle at the field. Spikelets are bound together due to whitish cocoons webbed around the pupal case. Usually 1-4 pupal cases can be observed within each panicle. However, pupa are not visible by externally. Infested rice panicles can be easily detected due to their compact appearance. The moth is identified as near *Sitotroga cerealella* (Olivier) [Angoumois grain moth] . *Sitotroga cerealella* (Olivier) which belongs to family Gelechiidae attacks cereal grains including rice in the storage and field both while pupation takes place within the grains in large grains and between the grains in small grains.

The grains adjacent the pupal case of the pest turns dark brown or blackish. Although no quantitative losses observed, the discoloured grains reduce the quality of the grains. The compact nature of the panicle may favor fungi and bacteria which cause the discoloration. Number of infected panicles was 13 % in average from the samples taken at 20 locations each having 20 hills at the one acre infested field of Rice Research Station, Labuduwa with the standard deviation of 4.28. The damage may extend to the storage since adult moths could emerge after harvesting.

**REFERENCES**

- Nugaliyadda, L., D. M. N. Dissanayake and A. S. K. Abesekera. 2000. Towards new dimensions in pest management in rice. Proceedings of Rice Congress 2000. Department of Agriculture, Peradeniya, Sri Lanka. Pp109-124.