

## CSIRO researcher issues dire warning for Australian agriculture industry after fall armyworm found on mainland

18 February 2020 | ABC

A CSIRO researcher studying an invasive moth species, known as fall armyworm, has said Australia may struggle to eradicate it if it gets a hold on the mainland.

Biosecurity Queensland yesterday confirmed to the ABC that a single armyworm moth had been detected at Bamaga at the tip of Cape York.

The detection of the species on the Australian mainland comes less than a week after authorities revealed the pest had been found on Saibai and Erub islands in the northern Torres Strait

The CSIRO's Dr Wee Tek Tay said if one moth had reached the mainland, it was highly probable that others had made it that far.

"It can fly 100 or 200 kilometres quite easily, especially with the right conditions and prevailing winds," he said.

The fall armyworm is native to the Americas and since 2016 has spread through 65 countries across Africa and Asia.

Dr Tay said none of the 65 countries the fall armyworm had successfully invaded had attempted to eradicate it, largely because of the difficulty of doing so.

"Australia, however, has very advanced scientific research and good coordination between government and industry bodies so [successful eradication] all depends on the rate that the pest is establishing," he said.

It is known to damage more than 350 different plant species, including maize, sorghum, wheat and fruit and vegetable crops. In India, it has caused losses of up to 20 per cent of sugarcane crops.

For more information, including pictures and how to identify fall armyworm, visit [Biosecurity Queensland](#)

