



Queensland
Government

Media release

Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

The Honourable Mark Furner

Government and industry united in tackling fall armyworm

Integrated pest management practices and regimes will be at the cornerstone of combined Queensland Government and agriculture industry efforts to combat the invasive pest, fall armyworm.

Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries Mark Furner said the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries had acted spontaneously in response to the first detections of fall armyworm moth on the Australian mainland but a coordinated approach with industry was needed to manage the serious threat it posed.

"Today's industry roundtable was a productive starting point in the fight against fall armyworm providing a forum to update industry on the situation, inform them of what the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries is doing in response and discuss what the next steps are," Mr Furner said.

"It was also an important opportunity to hear from representatives of peak industry groups including Canegrowers, Growcom, AgForce and AusVeg, about their concerns and priorities and what they were already doing in response to this invasive pest.

"Key issues identified during the roundtable included identifying suitable control products, determining what industry needs are, monitoring the spread of the pest, and market access.

"On Monday 9 March 2020, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries will meet with research and development experts to explore short, medium and long term management solutions to minimise the potential impacts of fall armyworm."

Mr Furner said the Government recognised the serious threat posed by the fall armyworm moth to Queensland's agriculture industry.

"Fall armyworm is an invasive pest that is voracious and is not a fussy eater," Mr Furner said.

"It feeds on more than 350 plant species, and impacts economically important crops such as maize, rice, sorghum, sugarcane and wheat, as well as fruit and vegetable and cotton crops.

"The wide host range of the adult moth and its voracious larvae means it has the real potential to cause significant production losses across a number of industries.

"As the national technical committee that oversees the management of plant pest and disease incursions has determined that it is not technically feasible to eradicate this pest from Australia, it is imperative we are on the front foot to minimise the potential impacts of fall armyworm."

Mr Furner said it was anticipated that a great deal of work would be required to help industry and other stakeholders prepare for and manage the impacts of fall armyworm as it spreads.

"Already, traps have been established at Coen, Mossman, Port Douglas, Cairns, the Atherton Tableland and Innisfail and Biosecurity Queensland is establishing a taskforce to ensure effective and up to date communication with industry," Mr Furner said.

"In the short term, it is important that we work with industry to spread the word about the risk of this pest and also provide advice on control strategies that are available to them.

"In the medium to long term, the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries will identify the crops most favoured by the pest, assist affected industries gain access to appropriate chemical controls, help industry manage any pesticide resistance, and research possible biological controls."

Mr Furner said producers should already have strong on-farm biosecurity measures to protect their crops from pests and diseases.

"I urge producers to monitor crops for signs of unusual levels of caterpillar damage leading to defoliation of the crop and report suspected sightings to assist with early detection, and potential treatment.

"Producers should also implement good farm hygiene for weed control to remove hosts that could build populations.

"Producers who are likely to come across fall armyworm are strongly encouraged to photograph and report suspect sightings to Biosecurity Queensland on 13 25 23 or to their local ranger, biosecurity officer or environmental health worker."

More information is available at daf.qld.gov.au

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