

Pink bollworm infestation detected in Yavatmal district, third confirmed attack in Maharashtra

Rahul Wadke, Mumbai | Updated on August 05, 2019



The latest pink bollworm infestation on cotton crop in Maharashtra has been detected in Yavatmal district of Vidarbha region. On Friday, agriculture scientists spotted the pests in Hiwari village.

This is the third confirmed attack in the state. Earlier, the pests were found in 8-10 farms in Vidarbha's Akola district and in 16 farms in Dhule district of northern Maharashtra.

The pests in Hiwari village were detected by entomologist Dr PN Magar and Senior Scientist Dr PU Nemade of the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Yavatmal.

Central and State agencies are monitoring the situation, as they do not want a repeat of the 2017 tragedy, when the attack of the pink bollworm was detected very late by the state machinery.

Due to the massive pink bollworm attack, farmers resorted to large-scale spraying of pesticides, which led to the death of 21 farmers and farm labourers and around 1,000 had to undergo medical treatment for toxic poisoning symptoms.

In 2018, the deaths on account of pesticide poisoning dipped from 22 to 0 in Yavatmal due to the free distribution of over 25,000 safety kits, which included breathing masks, gloves and synthetic aprons.

Dr Magar told *BusinessLine* that the situation is not alarming but precautions need to be taken. Farmers can control the attack with the right use of bio and chemical pesticides, pheromone traps and spacing between the crop rows, which will prevent dense canopy.

KVK along with the State Agriculture Department conducted field visits and surveyed the fields at Borisinh, Bham Raja and Hiwari villages of Yavatmal district.

“At Hiwari village, one farmer who had sown cotton in the first week of June and the duration of standing crop was 50 to 55 days, had recorded 20 per cent infestation of pink bollworm,” Dr Magar said.

Cotton flowers were plucked and observed for pink bollworm infestation. In some flowers, pink bollworms were found and in others, bollworms along with larvae were found.

Dr Magar said in the Yavatmal district where the planting of the cotton was conducted after June 15, no bollworm attack has been detected till date.

Usually, in Yavatmal, farmers plant before the onset of the monsoon season, but this year, due to the delayed onset of the season, the sowing of cotton seeds was postponed by two to three weeks.

He also observed that in Gujarat the pink bollworm was detected in 2014, but it took three years to control the menace. He noted that in Maharashtra, it was controlled in one year.