



Armyworm Attack

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Why in News

The **Directorate of Agriculture** has reported an **armyworm attack** on the standing crops in the northeastern **Dhemaji district of Assam**.

The pest attack has added to sorrows of the already worried farmers, due to the **Covid-19** pandemic.

Key Points

- The **armyworm caterpillar** is the **larval stage** of several species of **moths**.
- It has a **huge appetite** and can **feed on more than 80 species of plants** according to the **entomologists**.
 - **Entomology** is a branch of **zoology** which involves the **scientific study of insects**.
- **Challenges:**
 - The **weather is a factor** because there are **no pre-monsoon rains** in Assam yet and the **temperature is very high now**. The armyworm can cause more damage in the absence of rain.
 - Another major issue is **reaching out to farmers**. All the roads and gaps have been blocked due to the fear of contracting coronavirus.
- **Other Concerns:**
 - Officials are **afraid of the winter crop cycle getting affected** if the lockdown continues beyond 14th April, 2020.
 - **April-May** is the time when paddy farmers in Assam clear weeds and manure the fields for transplanting the seedlings of the **winter crop** from the nursery. The process takes 35-40 days.
 - According to the farm experts, if the cycle is pushed back by more than a month it **could impact yield** because the sowing and maintenance phase of the crops would be very close to the **flood timings of Assam**.

Armyworm



- Its scientific name is **Spodoptera frugiperda** and also commonly referred as **Fall Armyworm (FAW)**.
- It is a **dangerous transboundary insect** with a high potential to spread rapidly due to its **natural distribution capacity** and opportunities presented by **international trade**.
- FAW represents a **real threat to food security and livelihoods** of millions of smallholder farmers by spreading across all of **sub-Saharan Africa, the Near East and Asia**.
- **Control and Elimination:**
 - Farmers need significant support to manage FAW sustainably in their cropping systems through **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** activities.
 - FAW **cannot be eliminated**.
- The **Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)** has launched a **Global Action for FAW Control** as a response to the international threat posed by the armyworms.

Source: TH