What is Fall Armyworm and how can I scout for it in my field?

1. Begin scouting your field soon after maize has emerged. Fall Armyworm prefers to feed at night. For this reason, scouting very early in the morning is best.

2. Check plants for damage from Fall Armyworm.

3. Egg masses are small and white colored. Newly hatched and young larvae are about between 1 mm long. They grow to up to 45 mm as adults. You will have more success in controlling Fall Armyworm when they are young.

4. Leaf damage from young Fall Armyworm looks like small windows or pinholes chewed into leaves.

5. Older larvae bore directly into maize cobs, but it is very hard to control them at this stage.

6. Keep looking at least every 10 days for signs of Fall Armyworm damage.

Fall Armyworm is a serious pest that can feed on over 80 plants but prefers to eat maize. Fall Armyworm is now found in South and South East Asia and requires careful management to avoid crop damage.

By counting the number of maize plants with signs of damage, you can decide how to protect your crop.
Look for signs of Fall Armyworm damage in 5 different places in your field.

Examine 10 plants

If more than 10 out of 50 young plants out have signs of fresh Fall Armyworm damage, consult with an extension agent or CIMMYT for pest management advice.

In each of the 5 places in your field, carefully examine 10 plants for signs of new Fall Armyworm damage. Next, count up the total number of plants out of 50 that have signs of new damage.

When maize is older, examine the top three leaves or cobs for signs of Fall Armyworm damage.

If more than 20 out of 50 older plants have counted have fresh Fall Armyworm damage, consult with an extension agent or CIMMYT. Be sure to only count plants with new damage.

If you have found enough Fall Armyworm damage in your field, consult with an extension agent for advice.

Ask the extension agent if it you have enough Fall Armyworm damage to justify use of insecticides. Only use insecticides as a last option. If rain is forecasted in the coming days, spraying may not be needed. But if you do choose to spray, only use insecticides that minimize environmental damage and risk to human health.