

Why pests are a big cause of worry

Agriculturalists define pests as living organisms that damage crops, affecting both their quality and quantity. These pests can cause crop diseases that sometimes lead to the destruction of entire fields. Farmers often invest considerable amounts of money to control pests, which can significantly reduce their profits. To combat these pests, they may purchase pesticides or hire labourers, both of which increase production costs.

Some farmers struggle to read and understand all the pesticide application guidelines, leading to incorrect application methods on their crops. Pesticides are toxic substances designed to kill insects that harm crops, whether in the field or during storage. Improper use of pesticides poses a significant health risk to consumers who may unknowingly consume contaminated crops. Unfortunately, some farmers prioritise the preservation of their crops over the health of the consumers.

Irresponsible pesticide use can result in severe negative impacts on the environment and biodiversity. For instance, pesticides can also kill beneficial insects, such as bees, which are essential for pollination.



Michael J. Ssali

Farmer's Say

Many pests create physical damage to crops, such as maize and beans, by drilling holes that decrease their quality. Crops with visible holes are less likely to be purchased, causing financial losses for farmers. Additionally, certain pests introduce harmful germs and toxins into the crops, making them dangerous for consumption. A common pathogen associated with this is aflatoxin. When pests drill into seeds, they hinder germination and complicate storage efforts for farmers.

Some pests, such as the black coffee twig borer, invade the plant's growth areas and consume water or plant sap, resulting in wilting of

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twigs or even whole branches, causing significant losses for the farmer. Others, such as rodents, nematodes, and termites, attack the roots of plants. Interestingly, individuals who trespass into neighbouring fields to steal crops are also classified as pests, causing similar losses as rodents.

Additionally, pests such as caterpillars and locusts feed on leaves, while some, such as the maize stem borer, specifically target the stems. Birds and human thieves are known to consume fruits, further impacting farmers.

A common feature among many pests is their tendency to target specific crops. For example, banana weevils do not attack coffee or maize. It is also important to note that not all pests can be eliminated with chemical treatments. In fact, some pests, particularly certain viruses, currently have no known chemical cure.

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