PADDY PEST CONTROL - A REVIEW OF RESEARCH IN RICE ENTOMOLOGY IN SRI LANKA

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This attempts to review briefly the progress in research on pests of rice in Sri Lanka. It covers over two decades of investigations on various aspects of the bionomics of the major pests of rice - stemborers, gall midges, plant - hoppers, thrips, leaffolders, paddy bugs, molerats and storage pests - and such minor pests as caterpillars, stemflies, whorlmaggots and pentatomid bugs.

The earlier studies concentrated on distribution morphology, biology and damage symptoms of various pest species. However, as a chemical control is the first line of defence against major insect attacks, screening of insecticides for efficacy in controlling pests, evaluation of formulations and methods of application and the timing of control measures for quick containment of the pest are on going programs. Surveys and investigations on the natural biotic controls of a few major pests and effect of agronomic practices on pest status are yielding a great deal of information on their population dynamics.

Devising of sampling techniques is a recurrent feature in many of these investigations. These include the use of light traps, suction traps, plant examinations or dissection and habitat investigations Currently, the sex pheromone of the leaffolder is being tested as a survey tool.

Research emphasis in recent years has been on the search for sources of resistant genetic material. Supporting studies on pest biotypes semisynthetic diets and culture techniques are under way.

Reference is also made in this paper to areas which additional knowledge could lead to better pest control strategies.