

B-93: Pests of sweet potato

M G Dhanapala

(Reg Agric Res Centre, Bandarawela)

Sweet potato (*Ipomoea batatas*) is an important root crop in Sri Lanka and thought to be free from pest damage. A survey was carried out on pests of sweet potato from 1991 to 1994 at Giradurukotte, Mawanella, Bandarawela and Pelmadulla. Specimens were reared in the laboratory to assess their damage on sweet potato.

Thirty two species of pests belonging to six families viz. Lepidoptera, Coleoptera, Thysanoptera, Hemiptera, Heteroptera, Orthoptera were collected and identified. These pest species could be classified into 2 groups such as stem and tuber feeders (sweet potato weevil, vine borer etc.) and foliage-feeders, leaf folders, (leaf eating caterpillars, grasshoppers and beetles etc.).

Of the above species, major damage was caused by sweet potato weevil (*Cylas formicarius*) followed by thrips (*Thrips palmi*) and stem borers (*Omphisa anastomosalis*). Weevil damage occurred throughout the year but was serious during dry period of the year. Thrips caused damage in dry months. Stem borer population was very high during the rainy period. Only sweet potato weevil needs some degree of control.

Financial assistance through Research Grant 12/32 from CARP is acknowledged.