

## Data Sheets on Quarantine Pests

*Spodoptera littoralis* and *Spodoptera litura***IDENTITY**

**Taxonomic position:** Insecta: Lepidoptera: Noctuidae

**Notes on taxonomy and nomenclature:** The two Old World cotton leafworm species *S. litura* and *S. littoralis* are allopatric, their ranges covering Asia and Africa, respectively. Many authors have regarded them as the same species. Though *S. littoralis* just enters the EPPQ region while *S. litura* does not, they present virtually a common phytosanitary risk, requiring the same phytosanitary measures. They can conveniently be considered together in one data sheet.

- ***Spodoptera littoralis***

**Name:** *Spodoptera littoralis* (Boisduval)

**Synonyms:** *Hadena littoralis* Boisduval

**Common names:** Cotton leafworm, Egyptian cottonworm, Mediterranean brocade moth (English)  
Noctuelle méditerranéenne (French)  
Afrikanischer Baumwollwurm (German)  
Rosquilla negra (Spanish)

**Bayer computer code:** SPODLI

**EPPQ A2 list:** No. 120

**EU Annex designation:** I/A2

- ***Spodoptera litura***

**Name:** *Spodoptera litura* (Fabricius)

**Synonyms:** *Prodenia litura* Fabricius

**Common names:** Cotton leafworm, tobacco cutworm (English)  
Asiatischer Baumwollwurm (German)

**Bayer computer code:** PRODLI

**EPPQ A1 list:** No. 42

**EU Annex designation:** I/A1

**HOSTS**

Both species are totally polyphagous (Brown & Dewhurst, 1975; Holloway, 1989). The host range of each species covers over 40 families, that for *S. littoralis* containing at least 87 species of economic importance (Salama *et al.*, 1970). Among the main crop species attacked by *S. litura* in the tropics are *Colocasia esculenta*, cotton, flax, groundnuts, jute, lucerne, maize, rice, soyabeans, tea, tobacco, vegetables (aubergines, *Brassica*, *Capsicum*, cucurbit vegetables, *Phaseolus*, potatoes, sweet potatoes, *Vigna* etc.). Other hosts include ornamentals, wild plants, weeds and shade trees (e.g. *Leucaena leucocephala*, the shade tree of cocoa plantations in Indonesia). In most of the EPPQ region, outdoor crops are not likely to be attacked, so the principal potential hosts are ornamentals under glass. In the south of the region, cotton, lucerne, soyabeans, *Trifolium* and vegetables are hosts for *S. littoralis*, which is already present, and potentially also for *S. litura*.

## GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

The ranges of the two species do not currently overlap and neither has extended its range (except in the special case of glasshouses in Europe).

- ***Spodoptera littoralis***

**EPPO region:** Widespread in Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Spain; locally established in Greece, Italy (outdoors in the south and in glasshouses in the north), Portugal (south only), Tunisia; found but not established in Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, UK (England). Also reported from Lebanon, Syria and Turkey.

**Asia:** Bahrain, Cyprus, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen.

**Africa:** Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Botswana, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Réunion, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, St. Helena, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zaire, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

**EU:** Present.

**Distribution map:** See CIE (1967, No. 232).

- ***Spodoptera litura***

**EPPO region:** Russia (Far East), UK - found under glass in 1973 and eradicated (Aitkenhead *et al.*, 1974).

**Asia:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, China (widespread), Christmas Island, Hong Kong, Indonesia (widespread), India (widespread), Iran, Japan (widespread), Korea Democratic People's Republic, Korea Republic, Lao, Maldives, Malaysia (widespread), Myanmar, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Viet Nam.

**Africa:** Réunion.

**North America:** USA (Hawaii only).

**Oceania:** American Samoa, Australia (Northern Territory, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia), Cocos Islands, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Niue, Norfolk Island, Northern Mariana Islands, Micronesia, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna Islands.

**EU:** Absent.

**Distribution map:** See IIE (1993, No. 61).

## BIOLOGY

Between 2 and 5 days after emergence, females lay 1000-2000 eggs in egg masses of 100-300 on the lower leaf surface of the host plant (Miyahara *et al.*, 1971). The masses are covered by hair-like scales from the end of the insect's abdomen. Fecundity is adversely affected by high temperature and low humidity (about 960 eggs laid at 30°C and 90% RH and 145 eggs at 35°C and 30% RH). Newly laid eggs of one strain of *S. littoralis* were reported to survive exposure to 1°C for 8 days. Partially developed eggs survived longer than newly laid ones under equivalent conditions.

The eggs hatch in about 4 days in warm conditions, or up to 11-12 days in winter. The larvae pass through six instars in 15-23 days at 25-26°C. At lower temperatures, for example *S. littoralis* on glasshouse chrysanthemums in Europe, larvae often go through an

extra instar, and maturation may take up to 3 months. The young larvae (first to third instar) feed in groups, leaving the opposite epidermis of the leaf intact. Later, the (4th to 6th instar) larvae disperse and spend the day in the ground under the host plant, feeding at night and early in the morning.

The pupal period is spent in earthen cells in the soil and lasts about 11-13 days at 25°C. Longevity of adults is about 4-10 days, being reduced by high temperature and low humidity. Thus, the life cycle can be completed in about 5 weeks. In Japan (Nakasuji, 1976), four generations develop between May and October, while in the humid tropics there may be eight annual generations. In the seasonal tropics, several generations develop during the rainy season, while the dry season is survived in the pupal stage.

The development thresholds and thermal requirements of *S. litura* have been specified by Rao *et al.* (1989). For more information, see Bishara (1934), Schmutterer (1969), Salama *et al.* (1970), Cayrol (1972), Nasr (1973), Baker & Miller (1974), Shutova & Cheknonadskikh (1974), Cunningham & Broadley (1975).

## DETECTION AND IDENTIFICATION

### Symptoms

On most crops, damage arises from extensive feeding by larvae, leading to complete stripping of the plants.

#### On cotton

Leaves are heavily attacked and bolls have large holes in them from which yellowish-green to dark-green larval excrement protrudes.

#### On tobacco

Leaves develop irregular, brownish-red patches and the stem base may be gnawed off.

#### On maize

The stems are often mined and young grains in the ear may be injured.

### Morphology

#### Eggs

Spherical, somewhat flattened, 0.6 mm in diameter, laid in batches and covered with hair scales from the tip of the abdomen of the female moth. Usually pale orange-brown or pink in colour (*S. litura*) or whitish-yellow (*S. littoralis*).

#### Larva

Attains 40-45 mm in length; hairless, variable in colour (blackish-grey to dark-green, becoming reddish-brown or whitish-yellow); sides of body with dark and light longitudinal bands; dorsal side with two dark semilunar spots laterally on each segment, except for the prothorax; spots on the first and eighth abdominal segments larger than others, interrupting the lateral lines on the first segment. Though the markings are variable, a bright-yellow stripe along the length of the dorsal surface is characteristic of *S. litura* larvae.

#### Pupa

15-20 mm long, red-brown; tip of abdomen with two small spines.

#### Adult

Moth, with grey-brown body, 15-20 mm long; wingspan 30-38 mm. The forewings are grey to reddish-brown with a strongly variegated pattern and paler lines along the veins (in males, bluish areas occur on the wing base and tip); the hindwings are greyish-white with grey margins, often with dark veins in *S. litura* but without in *S. littoralis*. The variability and similarity of the two species often make it difficult to distinguish them visually. On dissection of the genitalia, ductus and ostium bursae are the same length in female *littoralis*, different lengths in *litura*. The shape of the juxta in males is very characteristic, and the ornamentation of the aedengus vesica is also diagnostic.

For more information on the morphological discrimination between the adult, pupal and larval stages of the two species, see Mochida (1973). See also Schmutterer (1969), Cayrol (1972), Brown & Dewhurst (1975).

## MEANS OF MOVEMENT AND DISPERSAL

The moths have a flight range of 1.5 km during a period of 4 h overnight, facilitating dispersion and oviposition on different hosts (Salama & Shoukry, 1972). They can accordingly fly quite long distances. In international trade, eggs or larvae may be present on planting material, cut flowers or vegetables. The introduction of *S. litura* into the UK was on aquatic plants imported from Singapore (Aitkenhead *et al.*, 1974). *S. littoralis* has been trapped outside its normal range in Europe (Hachler, 1986), presumably as a result of entry on imported commodities.

## PEST SIGNIFICANCE

### Economic impact

*S. litura* is an extremely serious pest, the larvae of which can defoliate many economically important crops. In controlled experiments on soyabeans in India, crops chemically protected from *S. litura* and other pests yielded over 42% more than crops which were not sprayed (Srivastava *et al.*, 1972). On tobacco, in India, it was estimated that two, four and eight larvae per plant reduced yield by 23-24, 44.2 and 50.4%, respectively (Patel *et al.*, 1971). On *Colocasia esculenta*, an average of 4.8 4th-instar larvae per plant reduced yield by 10%, while 2.3 and 1.5 larvae reduced yield of aubergines and *Capsicum* in glasshouses by 10% also (Nakasuji & Matsuzaki, 1977).

*S. littoralis* is similarly one of the most destructive agricultural lepidopterous pests within its subtropical and tropical range. It can attack numerous economically important crops all the year round. On cotton, the pest may cause considerable damage by feeding on the leaves, fruiting points, flower buds and, occasionally, also on bolls. When groundnuts are infested, larvae select primarily the young folded leaves for feeding but, in severe attacks, leaves of any age are stripped off. Sometimes, even the ripening kernels in the pods in the soil may be attacked. Pods of cowpeas and the seeds they contain are also often badly damaged. In tomatoes, larvae bore into the fruit which is thus rendered unsuitable for consumption. Numerous other crops are attacked, mainly on their leaves.

In Europe, damage due to *S. littoralis* was minimal until about 1937. In 1949, there was a catastrophic larval population explosion in southern Spain. The main crops affected were lucerne, potatoes and other vegetable crops. At present, this noctuid is of great economic importance in Cyprus, Israel, Malta, Morocco and Spain (but not in the north, e.g. Cataluña). In Italy, it is especially important on protected crops of ornamentals and vegetables (Inserra & Calabretta, 1985; Nucifora, 1985). In Greece, *S. littoralis* causes slight damage in Crete on lucerne and *Trifolium* only.

### Control

The chemical control of *S. littoralis* has been extensively reported in relation especially to cotton in Egypt, and of *S. litura* in relation to various crops in India. Until 1968, *S. littoralis* was held in check by methyl-parathion, but then resistance to this compound developed. Since then, numerous other organophosphorus, synthetic pyrethroid and other insecticides have been used, with appearance of resistance and cross resistance in many cases (Issa *et al.*, 1984a; 1984b; Abo-El-Ghar *et al.*, 1986). However, compulsory limitation of the application of synthetic pyrethroids to one per year on cotton in Egypt has stopped the appearance of new resistance (Sawicki, 1986). Chemicals used against *Spodoptera* spp. also include insect growth regulators. There is interest, especially in India,

in various antifeedant compounds or extracts, and in natural products such as azadirachtin and neem extract.

Numerous studies have been carried out on possible biological control of the two species. Parasites (braconids, encyrtids, tachinids, ichneumonids) and predators have been extensively documented. A nuclear polyhedrosis virus has been evaluated against *S. litura*, while fungi and microsporidia have also been recorded as parasites. Parasitic nematodes such as *Neoaplectana carpocapsae* have also been evaluated. However, direct use of these biocontrol agents has not apparently passed into practice. Treatment with *Bacillus thuringiensis* has been used (Navon *et al.*, 1983), but only some strains are effective since *S. littoralis* is resistant to many strains (Salama *et al.*, 1989).

Integrated pest management techniques, favouring beneficial arthropods, are applied especially against *S. littoralis* on cotton in Egypt. These involve hand collection of egg masses, use of microbial pesticides and insect growth regulators and slow-release pheromone formulations for mating disruption. If these measures are taken, relatively few applications of conventional insecticides are necessary (Campion & Nesbitt, 1982; Hosny *et al.*, 1983; Champion & Hosny, 1987). Damage thresholds have been established by Hosny *et al.* (1986). Pheromones have also been used for mass trapping by the lure and kill technique (McVeigh & Bettany, 1987) and for monitoring populations. Das & Roy (1985) review the use of pheromones against *S. litura*. Souka (1980) has experimented with irradiation for sterile-insect release, but this technique does not appear to have been applied.

### **Phytosanitary risk**

EPPO has listed *S. litura* as an A1 (OEPP/EPPO, 1979), and *S. littoralis* as an A2 quarantine pest (OEPP/EPPO, 1981). CPPC, NAPPO and OIRSA also consider the two species of quarantine significance. *S. littoralis* is already fairly widespread in Mediterranean countries and does not present a phytosanitary risk there. Since *S. litura* is very similar and attacks essentially the same host plants, it is not obvious that it could establish in the presence of *S. littoralis* or present an additional risk. So the real phytosanitary risk for both species is their possible introduction into glasshouses in most parts of Europe, where they may damage many ornamental and vegetable crops. Although control with insecticides is possible, there have been many cases of resistance. In addition, there is no immediately available biological control method, which means that introduction of *Spodoptera* spp. could require insecticide treatments that might interfere with existing biological control of other pests.

### **PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES**

For planting material, EPPO recommends (OEPP/EPPO, 1990) absence of the pests from the place of production during the last 3 months, or treatment of the consignment. For cut flowers, pre-export inspection is considered sufficient.

Cold storage of chrysanthemum and carnation cuttings for at least 10 days at a temperature not exceeding 1.7°C will kill all stages of *S. littoralis*, and presumably also *S. litura*, but may damage the plants. Storage at slightly higher temperatures or shorter durations does not eradicate *S. littoralis*, but differences in response to cold have been observed both between strains and within developmental stages of the pest (Powell & Gostick, 1971; Miller, 1976). The standard treatment now used in the UK is cold storage for 2-4 days at less than 1.7°C, followed by methyl bromide fumigation at 15-20°C with a CTP of 54 g h m<sup>3</sup> (Mortimer & Powell, 1988). This has been adopted as an EPPO quarantine procedure (OEPP/EPPO, 1984). Irradiation has been investigated as a treatment for cut flowers (Navon *et al.*, 1988). For cut chrysanthemum flowers, Wang & Lin (1984)

suggest enclosing buds in perforated polythene bags to exclude the pest and dipping the cut stems in insecticide solutions.

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