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Eco-friendly management of Fall armyworm, *Spodoptera frugiperda* (J.E. Smith) on maize ecosystem in Meghalaya

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ABSTRACT

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Maize (Zea mays L.) is the most versatile crop among cereals which belongs to the family Poaceae. Fall armyworm (FAW) is an important and destructive pest causing heavy damage to maize crops throughout the India and world. The extensive and indiscriminate use of conventional insecticides for pest management has led to several problem like resurgence of pests, reducing of beneficial organism, pesticides residues in corn. Hence, the present experiments were taken on "Eco-friendly management of Fall armyworm, Spodoptera frugiperda (J.E. Smith) on Maize ecosystem in Meghalaya" was conducted at CPGS-AS experimental Farm at CoA, Kyrdemkulai, CAU (I), Meghalaya during Kharif 2023. The experiment was carried out in randomized block design with seven treatments viz. Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurustaki @ 10ml/lit, Beauveria bassiana @ 5ml/lit, Metarhizium anisopliae @ 5ml/lit, Lecinicilium lecenii @ 5ml/lit, Neem oil 0.03%, Emamectin benzoate 5 SG @ 0.4g/lit and control replicated thrice. The evaluation of different biopesticides and chemical insecticide show that Emamectin benzoate 5% SG was found most effective against the S. frugiperda with highest yield (6.62 t/ha). Among the evaluated biopesticides, Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurustaki was found to be superior in reducing percent infestation of Fall armyworm and had significantly higher yield (5.20 t/ha) followed by Neem oil 0.03% (4.88 t/ha) and Metarhizium robertsii (4.71 t/ha) which can be safely used for management of fall armyworm in Maize ecosystem.

1. Introduction

Maize (*Zea mays* L.) is the most versatile crop among cereals which belongs to the family Poaceae. Maize, known as 'Queen of cereals', is the third most important cereal crop of the world and is cultivated in more than 170 countries spanning over the tropical and subtropical regions. Fall armyworm (FAW) *Spodoptera frugiperda* (J.E. Smith) is native to the America and it is a key pest of Maize (*Zea mays* L.). *S. frugiperda* has been reported for the first time in 2018 in Africa, in Nigeria, Sao Tome in Benin and Togo causing significant damages to Maize and it has great potential for further spread and economic damage. In maize, FAW mainly attacks on all the stages of the plant from seedling to tasseling and earing by causing defoliation and killing young plant, results in grain damage and subsequently reduce quantity and quality of yield. The occurrence of this new invasive pest FAW in Maize was reported for the first time in India from Shivamogga district in the state of Karnataka during May, 2018 (Sharanabasappa *et al.*, 2018) and subsequently spread to most parts of the Maize growing region of the subcontinent

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(Ganiger et al., 2018). In Northeast India, this devastating pest appeared in large numbers during March-May 2019 in Mizoram, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh (Firake et al., 2019). Neonate larvae mainly feed on leaf tissues whereas the second and third instars feed on the leaf making holes in leaves, typical damage symptoms of FAW. The FAW is a highly voracious polyphagous pest (Murúa et al., 2009). FAW feeds on all growth stages of Maize but most frequently in the whorl of young plant up to 45 days old. Mostly, young larvae usually feed on leaves, creating a characteristic windowing effect. Larvae usually consume a large amount of foliage and sometimes destroy the growing point of the plant. The crop of maize serves as food for every larval instar. Larvae in their first instar phase skeletonize the leaf lamina by feeding on the tissues of leaves from one side. After creating holes in the leaves, the second and third instars feed on the edges of the leaves. Larvae in their fourth to sixth instars tunnel into the growing point, severing the whorl like to damage caused by rats. Yield reductions in Maize due to feeding of the S. frugiperda have been reported as high as 34%. (Deole and Paul, 2018). In India, 33-36% yield losses have been attributed to this pest as per the preliminary reports (Balla et al., 2019). This pest could result in maize yield reduction up to 70 % (Ayala et al., 2013; Hruska, 2019). Chemical pesticides have led to harm many beneficial insects and decline in their population as well as environment. Increasing use of biopesticides and reducing chemical pesticides application is safe to ecosystem. Bio-pesticide approaches are eco-friendly and safely used for management of fall armyworm in Maize ecosystem

2. Materials and Methods

The present study was carried out under Department of Entomology, School of Crop Protection, College of Post Graduate Studies in Agricultural Sciences, CAU (Imphal), Umiam, Meghalaya during *Kharif* season 2023 in a uniform sized plots of $3.0 \text{ m} \times 2.0 \text{ m}$ in Randomized Block Design (RBD) with seven treatments and three replications. Maize variety "RCM 1-76" was grown in the prepared field with spacing of $60 \text{ cm} \times 20 \text{ cm}$. The experiment was conducted with the treatment of one entomopathogenic bacteria, three entomopathogenic fungi, one Botanical, one chemical insecticide and untreated control. were taken against *S. frugiperda*, Details of treatment are given in Table 1.

Application of the biopesticide and chemical insecticide

The biopesticide and chemical insecticide were sprayed three time using Knapsack sprayer at 15, 30 and 45 days after sowing, to compare the efficacy of biopesticides with chemical insecticides Emamectin benzoate (5% SG).

Observations

Pre-treatment observations were taken from 10 randomly selected plants per plot at one day before application of biopesticides and post-treatment observations were recorded at 1, 3, 7, 10 and 14 days after spraying. Pest infestation was calculated by given formula;

Per cent plant infestation

 $= \frac{\text{Number of infested plants per plot}}{\text{Total number of plants per plot}} \times 100$ (Gowrish *et al.*, 2015)

Yield

Mature Maize cobs were harvested from each plot separately and yield data were recorded.

Statistical Analysis

The statistical analysis of the field experiments involved the utilization of a Two-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) with a Randomized Complete Block Design

Table 1. Treatment details for the management of Fall armyworm on Maize

| Treatment | Common name | Trade name | Dose | |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|---------|--|
| T1 | Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurustaki | Green Larvicide | 10 ml/l | |
| T2 | Beauveria bassiana | UmBir | 5ml/l | |
| Т3 | Metarhizium robertsii | UmMet | 5 ml/l | |
| T4 | Lecanicilium lecanii | UmLec | 5 ml/l | |
| Т5 | Neem oil (0.03%) | Nimbecidine | 3 ml/l | |
| Т6 | Emamectin benzoate (5% SG) | Heraclaim | 0.4 g/l | |
| T7 | Control | - | - | |

(RCBD). Tukey's HSD Test were applied to compare different treatments for their efficacy against fall armyworm. Significant or non-significant result of the variance due to treatment effect were determined by calculating the respective F values. Whenever, variance ratio (F) is significant CD is reported at 5% level. Tukey's HSD was applied to compare different treatments for their efficacy against Fall armyworm.

3. Results

Efficacy of different biopesticides on Percent infestation of Fall armyworm during *Kharif* season 2023

The efficacy of different biopesticides in controlling Fall armyworm infestation in Maize crop. The evaluation was based on the average percentage infestation observed on one day before of spraying and 1, 3, 7, 10 and 14 days after the spraying.

The data collected one day before the spraying revealed that the fall armyworm percent infestation was non significantly different and ranged from 70.00% to 73.33% infestation in all the treatments (Table 2). After first spray, the treatments Emamectin Benzoate 5% SG @ 0.4g/l was the most effective, with only 36.80%% followed by Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki (46.40%), Neem oil 0.03% (44.67%) and *M. robertsii* (51.60%) which was at par with *B*. bassiana (48.00%). Similarly, after second spray Emamectin Benzoate 5% SG treatment registered lowest the infestation (22.27%), followed by B. thuringiensis var. kurustaki (35.87%), Neem oil 0.03% (40.80%) which was at par with M. robertsii (42.67%) and B. bassiana (44.67%) (Table 3). After the third spray, percent infestation due to FAW was recorded the least (10%) in plot treated with Emamectin Benzoate 5% SG (Table 4). Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki (24.13% infestation) emerged as the next effective treatment followed by Neem oil 0.03% (29.07%) and M. robertsii (33.60%).

Yield of Maize

The maximum yield of the grains was found in T6 (6.62 t/ha) treated with Emamectin benzoate, followed by T1 (5.20 t/ha) treated with *B. thuringiensis* var. *kurustaki*, Neem oil 0.03% (4.88 t/ha) which was at par with *M. robertsii* (4.71 t/ha) However, the lowest grain yield was observed in the Control, where only 2.96 t/ha was obtained. (Table 5).

4. Discussion

The present results are similar with Wayal *et al.* (2021) who reported that *B. thuringiensis* 85% was most

effective among the biopesticides for reduction of FAW infestation followed by M. robertsii, B. bassiana, N. rileyi, and Azadirachtin@1500ppm. Grijalba et al. (2018) reported 57% reduction in damage of plants which showed the potential of M. rileyi formulated as control for S. frugiperda in Maize. Dhobi et al. (2020) showed that minimum damage percent recorded on M. rilevil (15.345) followed by B. thuringiensis (17.70%). Moreover, Ramanujam et al. (2020) revealed 70% and 60% reduction in FAW infestation by using M. anisopliae strain (ICAR - NBAIR Ma-35) and B. bassiana strain (ICAR - NBAIR Bb-45), respectively during 2019. Wale et al. (2022) reported that Chlorantaniliprole 18.5 SC @ 0.4 ml/l was found most effective with 5.00-24.17% infestation followed by Emamectin benzoate 5% SG @ 0.4 g/l water with 8.33-23.33% infestation as compared to 94.17-98.33% infestation in untreated control.

Yield of Maize

These results are similar to the work of Deshmukh *et al.* (2020) who reported highest acute toxicity of Emamectin benzoate against *S. frugiperda* and gave higher grain yields as compared to control followed by Chlorantraniliprole and Spinetoram. Similarly, Babendreier *et al.* (2020) concluded FAW larvae were controlled by the insecticide Emamectin benzoate and increases yield with reduction of crop damage. Likewize, Thumar *et al.* (2020) who reported Emamectin benzoate caused reduction of larval population, plant and cob damage in Maize crop and it was found more effective against *S. frugiperda.* Varshney *et al.* (2020) also found that yield of biocontrol based IPM field (32.3 q/acre) was higher than farmer's practice (22.7 q/acre) during *Kharif* season.

5. Conclusion

Based on the present findings, it can be concluded that the *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurustaki* was most effective for controlling the FAW followed by Neem oil 0.03% and *M. robertsii*. with highest yield and BCR. Among the biopesticides, *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurustaki* was superior for management of FAW, which can be safely used for management of fall armyworm in Maize ecosystem.

6. Acknowledgements

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| | | Percentage infestation of Fall armyworm | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|--|--|--|--|
| | Treatments | | First spray | | | | | | | | | |
| | i reatments | 1DBS | 1 DAS | 3 DAS | 7 DAS | 10 DAS | 14 DAS | Mean | | | | |
| T ₁ | Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurustaki | 72.00±1.15ª (58.05) | 70.67 \pm 0.67 ^{ab} (57.21) | 40.00±1.15 ^d (39.23) | 35.33±0.67 ^d (36.47) | 41.33±0.67 ^e (40.01) | 44.67±0.67° (41.94) | 46.40 | | | | |
| T ₂ | Beauveria bassiana | 70.67±0.67ª (57.21) | 70.00±0.00 ^b (56.79) | 48.00±1.15° (43.85) | 44.67±0.67° (41.94) | 48.00±0.00° (43.85) | 51.33±0.67° (45.76) | 52.40 | | | | |
| T ₃ | Metarhizium robertsii | 72.67±0.67 ^a (58.480 | 72.00 \pm 0.00 ^{ab} (58.05) | 46.67±0.67° (43.09) | 42.67±0.67° (40.78) | 46.67±0.67 ^{cd} (43.09) | 50.00±1.15 ^{cd} (45.00) | 51.60 | | | | |
| T ₄ | Lecanicilium lecanii | 73.33±0.67ª (58.91) | 73.33±0.67 ^a (58.91) | 55.33±1.76 ^b (48.06) | 51.33±1.76 ^b (45.76) | 59.33±0.67 ^b (50.38) | 63.33±0.67 ^b (52.73) | 60.53 | | | | |
| T ₅ | Neem oil (0.03%) | 71.33±0.67 ^a (57.63) | 70.67 \pm 0.67 ^{ab} (57.21) | 44.67±0.67 ^{cd} (41.94) | 41.33±0.67° (40.01) | 44.00±0.00 ^{de} (41.55) | 47.33±0.67 ^{de} (43.47) | 49.60 | | | | |
| T ₆ | Emamectin benzoate 5% SG | 70.67±0.67ª (57.21) | 58.67±0.67° (49.99) | 32.67±1.76° (34.86) | 26.67±1.76° (31.09) | 31.33±1.33 ^f (34.04) | 34.67±0.67 ^f (36.07) | 36.80 | | | | |
| T ₇ | Control | 71.33±0.67 ^a (57.63) | 71.33±0.67 ^{ab} (57.63) | 72.00±0.00 ^a (58.05) | 72.67±0.67 ^a (58.48) | 72.67±0.67ª (58.48) | 73.33±0.67ª (58.91) | 72.40 | | | | |
| | F stat | Nsig | Sig | Sig | Sig | Sig | Sig | | | | | |
| | CD @ 5 % | 1.44 | 1.12 | 1.75 | 1.99 | 1.13 | 1.36 | | | | | |
| | SE(m) ± | 0.47 | 0.36 | 0.57 | 0.64 | 0.37 | 0.44 | | | | | |

Table 2. Effect of different bio-pesticides on Percent infestation of Fall armyworm during Kharif season 2023

Data represented by alphabet are calculated by Tukey's HDS

Data followed by same alphabets are statistically at par

DBS- Days before spray DAS- Days after spray

| | | Second spray Percentage infestation of Fall armyworm | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-------|--|--|
| | Treatments | | | | | | | | |
| | | 1 DAS | 3 DAS | 7 DAS | 10 DAS | 14 DAS | Mean | | |
| T ₁ | Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurustaki | 43.33±0.67 ^d (41.17) | 36.00±0.00° (36.87) | 31.33±0.67° (34.04) | 33.33±0.67° (35.26) | 35.33±0.67° (36.47) | 35.87 | | |
| T ₂ | Beauveria bassiana | 50.67±0.67° (45.38) | 44.67±0.67° (41.94) | 42.00±1.15° (40.40) | 45.33±1.76° (42.32) | 47.33±0.67° (43.47) | 46.00 | | |
| T ₃ | Metarhizium robertsii | 49.33±0.67° (44.62) | 42.67±0.67 ^{cd} (40.78) | 38.67±0.67 ^{cd} (38.45) | 41.33±0.67 ^{cd} (40.01) | 43.33±0.67 ^d (41.17) | 43.07 | | |
| T ₄ | Lecanicilium lecanii | 62.67±0.67 ^b (52.34) | 52.67±0.67 ^b (46.53) | 49.33±0.67 ^b (44.62) | 53.33±0.67 ^b (46.91) | 55.33±0.67 ^b (48.06) | 54.67 | | |
| T ₅ | Neem oil (0.03%) | 46.00±0.00 ^d (42.71) | 40.67±0.67 ^d (39.62) | 36.67±0.67 ^d (37.27) | 39.33±0.67 ^d (38.84) | 41.33±0.67 ^d (40.01) | 40.80 | | |
| T ₆ | Emamectin benzoate 5% SG | 28.67±0.67 ^e (32.37) | 21.33±0.67 ^f (27.51) | 18.00±1.15 ^f (25.10) | 20.67±0.67 ^f (27.04) | 22.67±0.67 ^f (28.43) | 22.27 | | |
| T ₇ | Control | 73.33±0.67 ^a (58.91) | 75.33±0.67 ^a (60.22) | 76.67±0.67ª (61.12) | 74.00±0.00 ^a (59.34) | 73.33±0.67ª (58.91) | 74.53 | | |
| | F stat | Sig | Sig | Sig | Sig | Sig | | | |
| | CD @ 5 % | 1.12 | 1.15 | 1.57 | 1.48 | 1.14 | | | |
| | SE(m) ± | 0.36 | 0.37 | 0.51 | 0.48 | 0.37 | | | |

Table 3. Effect of different bio-pesticides on Percent infestation of Fall armyworm during Kharif season 2023

Data represented by alphabet are calculated by Tukey's HDS

Data followed by same alphabets are statistically at par

DBS- Days before spray DAS- Days after spray

| | | Percentage infestation of Fall armyworm | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|-------|--|--|
| | Treatments | Third spray | | | | | | | |
| | | 1 DAS | 3 DAS | 7 DAS | 10 DAS | 14 DAS | Mean | | |
| T ₁ | Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurustaki | 32.00±1.15 ^e (34.45) | 26.67±0.67 ^e (31.09) | 22.67±0.67° (28.43) | 19.33±0.67 ^d (26.08) | 20.00±1.15° (26.57) | 24.13 | | |
| T ₂ | Beauveria bassiana | 46.00±1.15° (42.71) | 42.00±1.15° (40.40) | 36.67±0.67° (37.27) | 32.67±0.67° (34.86) | 33.33±0.67° (35.26) | 38.13 | | |
| T ₃ | Metarhizium robertsii | 41.33±0.67 ^d (40.01) | 37.33±0.67 ^{cd} (37.66) | 32.67±1.33 ^{cd} (34.86) | 28.00±1.15° (31.95) | 28.67±0.67 ^d (32.37) | 33.60 | | |
| T ₄ | Lecanicilium lecanii | 54.00±1.15 ^b (47.29) | 50.00±1.15 ^b (45.00) | 46.67±0.67 ^b (43.09) | 43.33±0.67 ^b (41.17) | 44.00±0.00 ^b (41.55) | 47.60 | | |
| T ₅ | Neem oil (0.03%) | 38.67±0.67 ^d (38.45) | 34.00±1.15 ^d (35.67) | 28.00±1.15 ^d (31.95) | 22.00±1.15 ^d (27.97) | 22.67±0.67° (28.43) | 29.07 | | |
| T ₆ | Emamectin benzoate 5% SG | $18.67{\pm}0.67^{\rm f}$ (25.60) | 13.33±0.67 ^f (21.42) | 8.67±0.67 ^f (17.12) | 4.67±0.67° (12.48) | 5.33±0.67 ^f (13.35) | 10.13 | | |
| T ₇ | Control | 72.00±0.00ª (58.05) | 70.67±0.67ª (57.21) | 69.33±0.67ª (56.37) | $\begin{array}{c} 68.67{\pm}0.67^{a} \\ (55.96) \end{array}$ | 68.00±0.00ª (55.55) | 69.73 | | |
| | F stat | Sig | Sig | Sig | Sig | Sig | | | |
| | CD @ 5 % | 1.66 | 1.82 | 1.87 | 1.82 | 1.54 | | | |
| | SE(m) ± | 0.54 | 0.59 | 0.61 | 0.59 | 0.50 | | | |

Table 4. Effect of different bio-pesticides on Percent infestation of Fall armyworm during Kharif season 2023

Data represented by alphabet are calculated by Tukey's HDS

Data followed by same alphabets are statistically at par

DBS- Days before spray DAS- Days after spray

| | Treatments | Eff | Yield (t/ha) | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------|------------------------|
| | | First spray | Second spray | Third spray | Overall Mean | |
| T ₁ | Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurustaki | 46.40 | 35.87 | 24.13 | 35.47 | 5.20±0.12 ^b |
| T_2 | Beauveria bassiana | 52.40 | 46.00 | 38.13 | 45.51 | 4.36±0.03 ^d |
| T ₃ | Metarhizium robertsii | 51.60 | 43.07 | 33.60 | 42.76 | 4.71±0.03° |
| T ₄ | Lecanicilium lecanii | 60.53 | 54.67 | 47.60 | 54.27 | 3.58±0.04 ^e |
| T ₅ | Neem oil (0.03%) | 49.60 | 40.80 | 29.07 | 39.82 | 4.88±0.04° |
| T ₆ | Emamectin benzoate 5% SG | 36.80 | 22.27 | 10.13 | 23.07 | 6.62±0.04ª |
| T ₇ | Control | 72.40 | 74.53 | 69.73 | 72.22 | 2.96±0.03 ^f |
| | CD @ 5 % | | | | | 0.06 |
| | SE(m) ± | | | | | 0.18 |

Table 5. Effect of different bio-pesticides on Percent infestation of Fall armyworm during Kharif season 2023

Data represented by alphabet are calculated by Tukey's HDS

Data followed by same alphabets are statistically at par

DBS- Days before spray DAS- Days after spray

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