

GALL INSECT PROBLEM IN EUCALYPTUS

Eucalypts are rather hardy species and affected only by a few insect pests in India. Recently, a severe attack by a new invasive gall insect was noticed by the Andhra Pradesh Forest Development Corporation and referred to the Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), Coimbatore, a regional Institute of Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education.



The Pest

The scientists at the IFGTB after long observation found that the causative insect in *Leptocybe invasa*, a tiny wasp measuring 1.1 to 1.4 mm. Though the pest is presumed to have originated from Australia, in 2000 its occurrence was reported from the Middle East and subsequently it has spread to most Mediterranean countries and Northern and Eastern Africa. In India it was first noticed in 2002 at Marakkanam, Villupuram District, Tamilnadu. The occurrence was restricted to a small pocket and attack was not observed to be serious.



Severely affected coppice

Currently the insect attack assumed greater significance since it has spread to other parts of the country. In order to assess the spread of the pest problem, three teams led by entomologists of IFGTB have carried out extensive surveys in the States of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Puducherry during February to March, 2007. The survey revealed that the pest is spreading to newer areas. If the problem is unattended it may become severe in all the eucalyptus growing areas.

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The following interim measures are suggested to manage the pest problem.

- Periodic monitoring of the infestations in nurseries and plantations.
- Mechanical removal of severely affected plants/plant parts and burning.
- Avoid production, planting of highly susceptible clones.
- Pre-pone singling or pruning of coppice in harvested plots.
- Application of systemic insecticides such as rogor or metacid 50 (i.e. 2ml/1 liter water) on foliage at fortnightly intervals.



Branch with infested Petiole and midrib



Severely infested seedling

To discuss and decide about the future course of action and to arrive at long term strategies a field visit cum meeting of leading Entomologists of the Country from the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) institutions including FRI, Dehra Dun, Institute of Wood Science and Technology (IWST) Bangalore, Tropical Forest Research Institute (TFRI) Jabalpur, Arid Forest Research Institute (AFRI), Jodhpur, Rain Forest Research Institute (RFRI), Jorhat, Forest Research Center (FRC), Hyderabad, States Agriculture Universities, other Research Institutes, Subject experts and plantation managers from Forest Development Corporations, Wood based Industries will be held at Chennai on 17th April, 2007.