GreenariA
Go Green, Learn Green
An Agricultural Monthly e-Magazine

Volume 02, Issue 08, 2024
ISSN: 2584-153X
Article ID: G-24-0807

ECO-FRIENDLY PEST CONTROL: THE IMPACT OF NATURAL ENEMIES ON CAULIFLOWER INSECT PESTS

Vasanthan E

PG Scholar, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru College of Agriculture and Research Institute, Karaikal, U. T. of Puducherry, 609603.

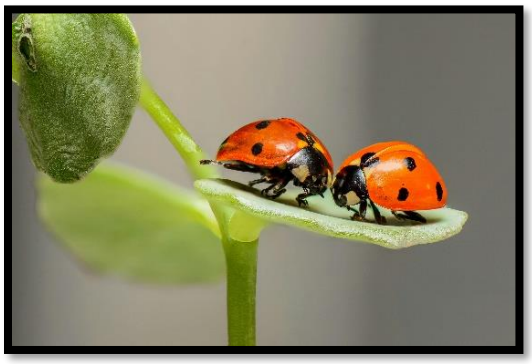
Corresponding Author Mail ID: vasanthanagri@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The extensive use of chemical pesticides threatens the ecosystem, harming various aquatic species, beneficial insects, and non-target hosts, and poses risks to human health. Introducing biocontrol agents into agriculture can reduce reliance on chemical pesticides, aligning with sustainable agriculture principles to create more resilient and environmentally balanced farming systems. Biocontrol methods are non-toxic, cost-effective, reduce chemical and pesticide usage, control pest populations, and have no harmful side effects. However, they also have drawbacks: they take longer to be effective, their impacts might not be immediately visible, and they may not completely eradicate pests. Implementing an effective biological control system requires significant time, resources, and patience. Since biocontrol agents are living organisms, including bacteria, fungi, and viruses, it's essential to establish the right conditions for their success.

PREDATORS

Generally speaking, an animal that feeds on other species is referred to as a "predator." Predators are used in agriculture as a component of integrated pest management (IPM) techniques.



Ladybird beetle

Lacewing fly

Often put into crops, predatory insects like ladybirds, lacewings, and predatory beetles help manage populations of damaging pests including aphids, mites, and caterpillars. By eating the pests, these predators help control the pest population. However, the introduction of predators haphazardly into areas without a suitable plan may not be effective in suppressing insect populations. Prior to using predators to eliminate pests,

there are a few things that may be done to help the effectiveness of the hunt.

IDENTIFICATION OF PREDATORS

It is crucial to correctly identify pests and distinguish them from natural enemies since introduced pests are more detrimental to plants than natural enemies (predators).

Behaviour of Prey: For predators, comprehending the behaviour of prey species is essential. Hunting success may be aided by environments where prey exhibit patterns or are predictable.

Abundance of Prey: Predators require a large number of prey species in their population. Prey availability guarantees a steady and enough food supply, enabling the predator to satisfy its energy requirements.

Climate Compatibility: Predators frequently adjust their physical attributes and behavioural patterns to suit particular conditions. While certain predators are perfectly suited to the frigid north, others flourish in scorching deserts. It is essential to provide a conducive living space with easy access to food.

Suitable Territory Size: To guarantee a steady supply of food, predators usually mark out areas that are manageable in size, allowing them to patrol and protect it.

Reducing Chemical Pesticide Usage: It's best to avoid using pesticides and use them sparingly when they are at a location where predators utilise them to manage pests because chemicals may hurt predators.

PARASITOIDS

These are insects that eventually kill their host by depositing their eggs within or on top of other insects. *Trichogramma* wasps, for instance, offer a natural pest control method by parasitizing the eggs of insects that harm crops. A series of mechanisms known as parasitism allow parasitoids to find, pick, parasitize, and modify host physiology in order to facilitate the development of their progeny in the chosen hosts. For example, one type of wasp that deposits its eggs inside aphid species is the *Aphidius colemani*. The aphid dies as a result of the larvae stealing its energy.

Trichogramma wasp parasitizing host egg

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE PARASITOID EFFICIENCY

Pest Identification: Selecting the appropriate parasitoid for a given pest is crucial, as distinct parasitoids specialise in consuming particular types of pests.

Surveillance and Monitoring: Maintain a regular eye on fields and conduct surveys to evaluate the dynamics of pest and natural enemy populations, especially parasitoids. This aids in establishing the frequency and duration of parasitoid discharges.

Natural Enemy Conservation: Establish conditions that provide the natural habitat and resources needed for parasitoids to flourish.

Augmentative Releases: When pest populations are at a sensitive stage, introduce vast numbers of parasitoids into the field.

Selective Use of Pesticides: Selective pesticides with little effect on parasitoids should be used if pesticides are required. Broad-spectrum pesticides should not be used as they may damage beneficial insects.

Understanding Life Cycles: When the pest is at its most susceptible, release parasitoids to ensure that the population of pests is efficiently controlled.

Monitoring Effectiveness: Depending on how well the parasitoids control pest populations, modify the release rates and timings.

FUNGI

The application One of the elements of quick biocontrol techniques is entomopathogenic fungus (EPF), which is environmentally safe. Insect-infecting bacteria are a useful asset in integrated pest management systems because of their ability to kill insects.

Identifying Target Pests: EPF primarily targets insects and has little threat to non-target species, including as people and other animals. They are also host-specific. The primary uses of *Beauveria bassiana* are the control of mosquito larvae, beetles, mealybugs, aphids, thrips, and whiteflies.

Entomopathogenic fungi, *Beauveria bassiana* and *Metarhizium anisopliae*, on the Red Palm Weevil (*Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*).

Selecting Entomopathogenic Fungi (EPF): Based on the target pest, select the proper entomopathogenic fungal species. Among the common fungi used in biological control are Metarhizium anisopliae and *Beauveria bassiana.*

Understanding EPF Mode of Action: Through a variety of techniques, including direct penetration of the insect's cuticle, entomopathogenic fungi can infect insects. Therefore, it is preferable to use EPF as contact poison.

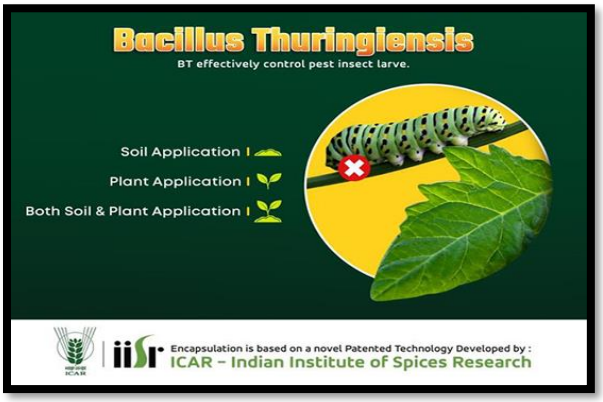
Timing of Application: When the target pest is most vulnerable is when to apply the entomopathogenic fungus. This is frequently the case when pest populations are growing or in the early phases of pest growth. For example, Spodoptera litura is more vulnerable during its first instar than during its later stages.

Application Methods: Environmental elements including humidity, temperature, and UV radiation can have an impact on the effectiveness of entomopathogenic fungus. Extensive research is being conducted to enhance application techniques and formulations for better performance in various scenarios. The effectiveness of EPF is influenced by formulation, according to numerous research. This may entail creating spore formulations in the form of liquid suspensions, granules, or powders that are wettable. Because they are easier to apply, commercially available formulations are frequently utilised.

Suitable Environmental Conditions: The effectiveness of entomopathogenic fungi can be influenced by environmental factors, including temperature and humidity. At 40°C, many entomopathogenic fungi become

inactive and are more effective in environments with high humidity.

BACTERIA



Biological pest control, also referred to as biopesticides, is the use of microbes to manage pests. Beneficial bacteria are used in this strategy to control or get rid of pests that can harm crops or cause other issues. There are numerous methods for using microorganisms to manage pests: For example, soil-dwelling bacteria called Bacillus thuringiensis are used to control a variety of insects. The most effective method is to employ Bt as a systemic poison, which is applied to plant parts like leaves and roots. Bt damages insects' digestive systems since it is a stomach toxin.

CONCLUSION

Effective biocontrol agents can be established for insect pest control with proper planning and management. The application of these natural enemies, such as predators, parasitoids, and pathogens, offers many advantages, but there are drawbacks to using biocontrol agents, including variable efficacy, time lag, specificity, environmental sensitivity, and logistical challenges.