

# Physical and visual diagnosis: Identification of Fall Armyworm

Spot the Pest, Stop the Damage

This technology provides a simple, standardized way to tell Fall armyworm apart from other similar caterpillars before any advice or product is given. It teaches farmers and service providers to confirm key markers in the field—most notably the inverted “Y” on the larva’s head and the sawdust-like frass deep in the maize whorl—so look-alikes (such as African armyworm, cutworms, and stem borers) are not mistaken for Fall armyworm.



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Commodities

Sustainable Development Goals



Categories

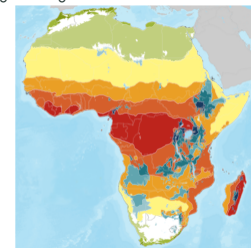
Production, Practices, Pest Identification

Tested/adopted in



Where it can be used

This technology can be used in the colored agro-ecological zones.



Target groups

Farmers, Advisory and Extension Services

This technology is **pre-validated**.

9-9



Scaling readiness: idea maturity 9/9; level of use 9/9



Open source / open access

## Problem

- **Misdiagnosis causes waste:** If farmers cannot reliably distinguish FAW from other caterpillars, they purchase and apply the wrong inputs, leading to wasted resources.
- **Customer trust erodes:** A lack of quick, reliable identification at the farmgate undermines product efficacy and leads to customer dissatisfaction when products fail to control the actual, unknown pest.
- **Market demand is uncertain:** Without identification certainty, businesses cannot ensure effective demand for appropriate control solutions.

## Solution

- Equipping agents with standardized diagnostics (e.g., recognizing the inverted “Y” mark and frass) to confirm the pest accurately on-farm.
- Enhancing product efficacy and customer trust by ensuring farmers apply the correct control solutions at the optimal time for maximum impact.
- Creating a value-added advisory service by integrating pest identification tools (like mobile app features) and training alongside input sales.

## Key points to design your business plan

For a private sector investor, integrating FAW identification is a strategic move to build brand credibility, enhance service quality, and drive informed demand for agricultural inputs.

- **Standardize Staff Expertise:** Invest in a thorough and mandatory training program for all field agents and sales representatives, ensuring they are experts in identifying FAW using the standardized procedures and cues detailed in the **FAW Field Handbook**. This prevents misdiagnosis, maximizing the efficacy of products sold and establishing the business as a trusted authority.
- **Integrate Identification as a Value-Added Service:** Bundle the open-access identification knowledge with commercial offerings. For example, include simplified FAW ID pamphlets or quick identification demonstrations as a free service whenever seeds or crop protection products are sold, positioning the business as a knowledge partner in crop protection.
- **Leverage Digital Diagnostics:** Integrate or utilize digital identification support, such as a mobile app with an image recognition feature, to provide quick, reliable diagnostics to clients remotely. This differentiates the business and allows staff to quickly confirm pests, ensuring farmers purchase the appropriate solution at the optimal time.
- **Promote Credibility through Knowledge:** Use the credible, verified information from the Handbook in marketing and outreach campaigns (e.g., flyers, community field days). By sharing accurate knowledge on how to spot the pest, the business builds trust with farmers and drives sales of products that fit into an effective, identified pest management strategy.



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<https://taat.africa/eec>

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