

# Maize farmers worried as worms attack farms

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Uncertainty looms among maize farmers in the North Rift region following infestation of armyworms leading to increased cost of production and anticipated low yield this season. The armyworms have destroyed hundreds of acres of maize crops in the country's food basket, with most farmers complaining of incurring huge costs to contain them.



Farmers in 11 counties have confirmed the infestation.

"The infestation of this pest in maize plantation in this region signals a tough economic season for farmers since we had not anticipated it in our farming budget," said the Trans Nzoia Chairman of the Kenya National farmers Federation (KENAFF) William Kimosong.

Kimosong said a broad spectrum of pesticides recommended by the Ministry of Agriculture is very costly with the cheapest being sold at Sh20,000 per litre for an acre of maize plantation.

## This spells doom for us

"This spells doom for us when coupled with the high cost of farm inputs, the drought in some parts of the region and the unstable maize market in the country," said Andrew Rotich, a farmer from Cherang'any.

The worms have also infested Bumula, Kabuchai, Kimilili, Webuye East and West and Kanduyi in Bungoma County. According to the County Director of Agriculture, Fredrick Wotia, the new type of armyworms is from North and South America.

He called on farmers to contact agricultural extension officers on the type of pesticide they can use to kill the worms.

Agriculture Cabinet Secretary Willy Bett has said that the worms pose a great danger to the country's food security with the Kenya Seed Company also having a challenge in producing seeds.

"We cannot run away from the fact that this challenge is almost becoming a national disaster since some parts of the country known for maize production have also been hit with drought," said Bett in Trans Nzoia.

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