

# Short rice varieties against stalk-eyed shoot fly

## Recognize the problem

Stalk-eyed shoot flies, also called stalk-eyed borers or *Nzi wa virungu* in Kiswahili, are small (less than 1 cm) brown insects. Their eyes are found on two long stalks coming out from their head. The larvae of the flies feed inside the leaves of seedlings and young rice plants. The damaged leaves become dry and die. This reduces the grain production.

## Background

Stalk-eyed shoot flies attack the plants at a young stage and lay eggs on the upper growing shoot of the leaves or on the leaf sheath of tall plants. These eggs develop into larvae which enter the growing shoot of the plant and damage the crop. Short rice varieties are more tolerant to stalk-eyed shoot flies than long varieties. This is because short varieties grow early, before most eggs hatch. On older plants, damage from shoot flies is less of a problem.

## Management

- Use short rice varieties such as TXD 306 or TXD 88
- These varieties are available in Agriculture Research Centres, such as Dakawa or Kilombero, in some Agro-input dealer shops and at TANSEED International Limited
- Short rice varieties are grown like any other variety
- Early transplanting of the seedlings within 14 days of germination will also help to reduce the multiplication of the stalk-eyed shoot fly
- Transplant seedlings in rows with a spacing of 20 x 20 cm to reduce damage because the shoot flies do not like such wide space
- Remove weeds before and immediately after transplanting to avoid attraction of the shoot flies
- Avoid panicle-only harvesting, which will harbour the eggs of the pest. Harvesting by cutting the whole stem is preferred.
- After harvest, burn the straws or plough them deeply to destroy the eggs which may have been laid late by the shoot flies

Small less than 1 cm stalk-eyed shoot fly. (Photo by A.M Varela)



Short rice variety (TXD 306). (Photo by TANSEED)



Scientific name(s) > *Diopsis spp.*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Tanzania



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