

Conservation of natural enemies of pests of vegetables

Recognize the problem

As a tropical country with a high biodiversity in our ecosystems we have natural enemies in abundance. They perform a very useful role in the management of pests in vegetable crops. However, due to indiscriminate use of pesticides, they are being destroyed. Conserving natural enemies provides a cost-free and eco-friendly way of managing the pests in vegetable cultivation.

Background

In their natural habitat, natural enemies feed on phytophagous insects, nectar, pollen & other plant saps. If undisturbed, these conditions are highly favourable for natural enemy population growth. The natural enemies in the agro-ecosystem do not allow pest populations to build up to very high levels.

Management

- Prevent unnecessary spraying of insecticides at the first phase of the crop
- Maintain some undisturbed natural vegetation in bunds, surroundings, etc. If any weeds act as a host to the main pest(s) affecting the crop, these weeds should be removed.
- Do not burn stubble after harvest unless it is affected with pests such as bacterial wilt
- Mix organic manure into soil
- Practise multiple cropping rather than mono-cropping

Field surrounded by natural vegetation. (Photo by S.S. Weligamage)



Natural vegetation on bunds with clean plots. (Photo by S.S. Weligamage)



The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Sri Lanka



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