

## Armyworms ravaging African staple crops: GM insect resistant crops offer a solution

*[Editor's note: The following is an interview with Kenneth Wilson, professor at the Lancaster Environment Centre, Lancaster University.]*

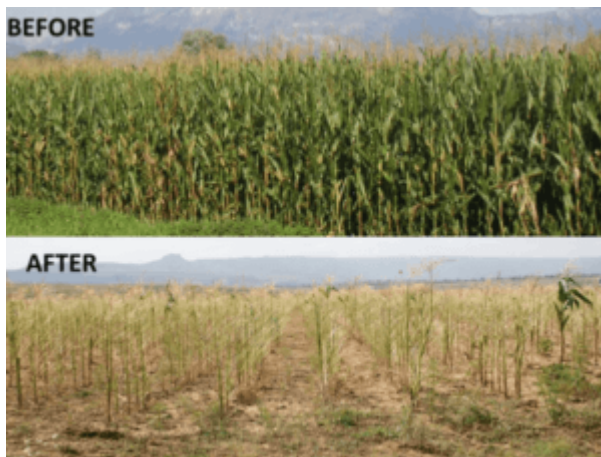
A combination of native African armyworms and Fall armyworms from the Americas are ravaging staple crops [across southern Africa](#). If uncontrolled, they have the potential to cause major food shortages.

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Chemical pesticides can be effective against both armyworm species. But resistance to many chemicals is an issue for the Fall armyworm throughout [its native range](#). It's not known whether there is pesticide resistance in the Fall armyworms blighting southern Africa.

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Research is needed to work out which chemical is the best to control the strain of Fall armyworm in southern Africa.



The top photo shows a mature maize field before pests arrive. The bottom photo shows a similar field following an armyworm attack. Top: Ken Wilson; Bottom: FAO Lesotho

But there are alternative approaches.

In parts of their native range in the Americas, genetically-modified Bt maize is grown to combat the Fall armyworm. This may also be an option for South Africa and some other countries where GM crops are already grown. But many parts of Africa do not allow or welcome GM varieties. And Fall armyworm has also evolved resistance to some Bt toxins, with some evidence for cross resistance.

There are non-chemical, [biological pesticides](#) that could also be effective.

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Only time will tell what the full impact of this armyworm invasion will have.

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Armyworms are wreaking havoc in southern Africa. Why it's a big deal](#)**