

## Farmer Fact Sheet 2: Black Sigatoka



### What is it?

The disease is caused by a fungus that infects bananas and plantains. It is called Black Sigatoka after a Fiji town where it was found. The scientific name is *Mycosphaerella*.

### What damage does it do?

Leaves die early. Instead of lasting 200 days, leaves last only 50 days. Bunches are small: a third to a half normal size, depending on the seriousness of the disease. Fruits ripen early, and the taste is poor. Cavendish varieties are very susceptible. Spores develop in the dead, grey areas and are spread by wind and/or rain splash.

### How do I identify it?

Red-brown and yellow streaks develop rapidly (photo, right); the leaves dry from the margins back to the mid-rib (photo, left), and they die early.

### How do I manage black Sigatoka?

#### Cultural control:

- Allow air into the plantation to dry the leaves; if old leaves are dry, fewer spores will develop and, if healthy leaves are dry, spores cannot infect;
- Remove leaves or parts of leaves, when they are more than half infected; plant at wide spacings; weed regularly; cut out suckers, leaving 3-4 of different sizes per plant; remove and burn old infected leaves; use a mulch to improve plant health.

#### Resistant varieties:

- Many plantains in Solomon Islands have resistance. Test FHIA varieties imported by MAL for Cavendish-like quality. (See MAL extension officer.)

#### Chemical control:

Fungicides are only recommended for commercial plantations.

- Protectant fungicides: dithiocarbamates (e.g., mancozeb); or banana misting oil;
- Systemic fungicides: triazoles (e.g., propiconazole and flusilazole); strobilurins (e.g., azoxystrobin). Rotate fungicides in the different groups to prevent build up of resistance. In drier times, use only mancozeb. (See MAL extension officer).