

Farmer Fact Sheet 28: Sweet Potato Leaf Folder



What is it?

It is an insect that feeds on the leaves of sweet potato. It also feeds on wild relatives of sweet potato, as well as *Mikania*. The scientific name is *Herpetogramma*.

What damage does it do?

Caterpillars do the damage. They fold the leaves with webbing. The young caterpillars eat the surface of the leaf; older ones eat through the leaf making small windows. There is no information about leaf damage affecting yield.

How do I identify it?

Look for folded leaves, unfold them and look for caterpillars, webbing and their droppings. Look at the leaf surface for small windows between the veins. The adult moth is brown with zigzag markings on the wings (see photo).

How do I manage the leaf folder?

Tiny wasps provide natural control of the leaf folder. Earwigs and other predators are also important for natural control. Pesticides are rarely needed.

Cultural control:

DO NOT take vines for replanting from plants with folded leaves.

Chemical control:

- Use plant-derived pesticides, for example, pyrethrum or derris, as they are natural insecticides and do not last long in the environment; or
- Use insecticides made from bacteria, for example: Spinosad, also known as *Success*; or Bt - *Bacillus thuringiensis kurstaki*.