

# Agri SA

## Media Release

Private Bag X180 Centurion 0046, Tel +27 (0)12 643 3400, Fax +27 (0)12 663 3178

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### DETECTION OF PEST CATERPILLAR FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SOUTH AFRICA

According to a media release of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) on 6 February 2017 results of a diagnostic report from the Agricultural Research Council, Plant Protection Research Institute (ARC – PPRI) confirmed that the Fall Army Worm (FAW) was positively identified from samples collected in the Limpopo and Gauteng Provinces. Little is known on how this pest entered Southern Africa. It is native to South and Central America and occurs in the Southern states of the USA.

Johannes Möller, president of Agri SA welcomed the timeous effort of DAFF who already met with role players from various industries and research organisations on 25 January 2017 to determine a plan of action. The interim control program was already communicated to industry members on Friday 27 January 2017.

Agri SA wishes to alert farmers that the application of chemicals must be carried out in consultation with chemical representatives. DAFF also started with a process of emergency registration of an agricultural chemical to be applied against this pest.

Although this pest attacks mostly maize plants, it may occasionally attack cotton, wheat, sorghum, soybeans, potatoes and groundnuts. It is therefore also important to scout these crops for damage and the presence of the invasive species. Since this pest is basically foreign to Africa, very little is known on its long-term effects. It may become a migratory pest similarly to the African Army Worm and may migrate in large numbers from one area to another causing great damage.

Möller thanked Grain SA (GSA) and other role-players who monitor the situation on behalf of the grain industry. He said that after the drought experienced in 2016 a further financial blow that could result from FAW should be avoided at all cost.

Issued by Agri SA, Directorate: Corporate Liaison

#### **Enquiries**

Mr Johannes Möller, President Agri SA, 082 647 8481

Mr Omri van Zyl, Executive Director, Agri SA, 012-643 3400 or 082 417 5724