Research Note

SPODOPTERA SUNIA *(GUENEÉ) (LEPIDOPTERA:NOCTUIDAE): A NEW RECORD OF ATTACK ON CABBAGE IN PUERTO RICO*[1]

During 1988-89 *Spodoptera sunia* larvae were found attacking cabbage (*Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata* L.) in experimental plots at the Puerto Rico Agricultural Experiment Station in Fortuna at Juana Díaz, P.R. Plots consisted of 28 cabbage genotypes, 14 of which were attacked. Genotypes affected were Express, Head Start, Conquest, Copenhagen Market, Blue Pak, Gourmet, Superette, Brave, Cóndor, Market Prize, Río Verde, Pennant, Ocala and Brave Cross. Genotypes Green Cup, Prime Time, Market Victor, Showboat, PSX 17483, Río Grande, Fortuna, Market King, Olympic, Cuisto, Genesis, Tala, Vedette and Cole Cash were not affected. The larvae feed on both old and new leaves but were especially found boring into the cabbage head. Cabbage with larvae inside the head were deformed and stunted.

Spodoptera sunia has been previously reported as *Callierges*,[2] *Laphygma orbicularis*, *L. caudata*[3,4] and *Xylomiges sunia*.[5] Wolcott[6] stated that in Puerto Rico this insect was first recorded from cotton in 1918 and that Smyth reported it in 1920.

In Puerto Rico it has been reported attacking celery (*Aspium graveolans* L.); asparagus (*Asparagus offinalis* L.); chard (*Beta vulgaris* L. var. *cycle* L.); cotton (*Gossypium barbadense* L. var. Sea Island); alfalfa (*Medicago sativae* L.); tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum* L.); potato (*Solanum tuberosum* L.), and green peas (*Pisum sativum* L.).[2,7] Recently it has been detected on pepper (*Capsicum annuum* L.) (fig. 1).

[1]Submitted to the Editorial Board 30 March 1993.

[2]Wolcott, G. N., 1923. Insectae Portoricensis. *J. Dept. Agric. P.R.* 7(1): 165.

[3]——, 1941. A supplement to Insectae Borinquensis. *J Agric. Univ. P.R.* 25: 127.

[4]Todd, E. L. and W. Poole, 1980. Keys and illustrations for the armyworm moths of the noctuid genus *Spodoptera* Gueneé from the Western Hemisphere. *Ann. Entomol. Soc. Am.* 73(6): 722-738.

[5]Wolcott, G. N., 1936. Insectae Borinquensis. *J. Agric. Univ. P.R.* 20: 360-525.

[6]——, 1948. The insects of Puerto Rico. *J. Agric. Univ. P.R.* 32: 593-594.

[7]Martorell, L. F., 1976. Annotated Food Plant Catalog of the Insects of Puerto Rico. Agric. Exp. Sta., Univ. P.R.

Fig. 1.—Larvae of *Spodoptera sunia* feeding on peppers on the south coast of Puerto Rico.

Larvae collected from plants in the field were identified by comparison following the keys of Levy and Habeck[8] and Oliver and Chapin.[9] In general, the larvae are extremely variable and the character which seems to be consistent and which distinguishes the species from all other *Spodoptera* species is the presence of a white spot in the subdorsal triangulate markings.

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[8]Levy, R. and D. H. Habeck, 1976. Descriptions of the larvae of *Spodoptera sunia* and *S. latisfacia* with a key to the mature *Spodoptera* larvae of the eastern United States (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae). *Ann. Entomol. Soc. Am.* 69: 585:588.

[9]Oliver, A. D. and J. B. Chapin, 1981. Biology and Illustrated Key for the Identification of Twenty Species of Economically Important Noctuid Pests. Louisiana Agric. Exp. Sta. Bull. No. 733.