

## Pest Alert: A new invasive threatening coconut in India

The very destructive rugose spiralling whitefly (RSW) *Aleurodicus rugioperculatus* Martin (Hemiptera: Aleyrodidae) – a dangerous invasive - has entered India and has been found infesting the coconut palm (*Cocos nucifera* L.) in Pollachi, Coimbatore, India. RSW was collected by Dr. K. Selvaraj, Scientist, Division of Molecular Entomology, ICAR-NBAIR and the species was morphologically identified by Dr. R. Sundararaj, Head, Forest and Wood Protection division, Institute of Wood Science and Technology, Malleswaram, Bengaluru. Further, molecular identification of RSW was done by amplifying cytochrome oxidase gene I (COX-I) by Dr. T. Venkatesan, Principal Scientist, Division of Molecular Entomology, ICAR-NBAIR and the sequence of the pest was submitted to GenBank, NCBI. Specimens received from farmer at Pollachi and Dept. of Entomology, TNAU, Coimbatore for identification were also confirmed as *A. rugioperculatus*. RSW has been declared a serious threat to coconut and many other host plants in Florida. In India, RSW is likely to infest the following host plants banana, mango, avocado, other palms and ornamentals.

RSW has the potential to spread to the coastal regions of Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Goa. Farmers and other stakeholders should be on the lookout and report its occurrence to NBAIR as soon as they notice this dangerous pest. During the field investigation, an aphelinid parasitoid *Encarsia* sp. (Hymenoptera: Aphelinidae) was found to parasitize *A. rugioperculatus* to a greater extent. Therefore, spraying of chemical pesticides may be avoided to conserve the parasitoid in whitefly infested palms which in turn suppress the whitefly infestation below economic threshold level.



### Reported by:

**R. Sundararaj<sup>1</sup>, K. Selvaraj<sup>2</sup> and Venkatesan, T<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Forest Entomology Division,

Institute of Wood Science and Technology,

Malleswaram, Bengaluru 560024, Karnataka Email: [rsundariwst@gmail.com](mailto:rsundariwst@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Molecular Entomology Division, ICAR-National Bureau of Agricultural Insect Resources  
[selvaentomo@gmail.com](mailto:selvaentomo@gmail.com); [tvenkat12@gmail.com](mailto:tvenkat12@gmail.com)