

Rice (maize) armyworm (331)

Summary

- Widespread distribution. On rice and many other cereals, vegetables, food legumes, grass weeds. Important moth, more so on dryland than irrigated rice.
- Damage: i) rice - panicles cut at base at grain filling; ii) maize - young plants destroyed; mature leaves eaten (larvae in axils).
- Eggs laid in rows along leaf blades; young larvae "loop"; mature larvae, up to 40 mm long, with narrow, yellowish-white stripe along the back and two others at the sides; nocturnal.
- Spread: late stage larvae swarm together as "armyworms"; adult (moth) migratory.
- Natural enemies: spiders eat early instars; parasitoids (*Cortesia* wasp, tachnid fly).
- Cultural control: avoid rice after maize; weed; ducks; perches for insect-feeding birds; adjust water levels to drown larvae; burn or bury stubble after harvest.
- Chemical control: dryland crops before larvae mature: i) collect diseased larvae, macerate and spray; ii) synthetic pyrethroids, but they will kill natural enemies.

Common Name

Paddy armyworm, rice armyworm, oriental armyworm, rice ear-cutting caterpillar.

Scientific Name

Mythimna separata; previously known as *Pseudoaletia separata*. It is a member of the Noctuidae.



Photo 1. Larva, rice armyworm, *Mythimna separata*.



Photo 2. Mature larva of the rice armyworm, *Mythimna separata*. Note the thin line along the back.



Photo 3. Mature larva, rice armyworm, *Mythimna separata*, from the side.



Photo 4. Underside view of adult rice armyworm, *Mythimna separata*.



Photo 5. Top view of rice armyworm, *Mythimna separata*.

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Information from CABI (2015) *Mythimna separata* (paddy armyworm) Crop Protection Compendium (<https://www.cabi.org/cpc/datasheet/45093>); and from Paddy armyworm (*Mythimna separata*) Plantwise Knowledge Bank (<http://www.plantwise.org/KnowledgeBank/Datasheet.aspx?dsid=45093>); and from Catindig J (undated) Armyworm. Rice Knowledge Bank. IRRRI (<http://www.knowledgebank.iri.org/training/fact-sheets/pest-management/insects/item/armyworms>). Photo 1 Gross L (2006) Plants tell caterpillars when it's safe to forage. PLoS Biol 4(6): e194. (<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.0040194>). Photos 2-5 MAF Plant Health & Environment Laboratory (2011) Oriental armyworm (*Mythimna separata*) PaDIL - (<http://www.padil.gov.au>).

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