

PEST ALERT

***Acria* sp. – An Emerging Defoliator Pest on Arecanut in Karnataka**

An emerging incidence of a leaf-webbing defoliator, tentatively identified as *Acria* sp. (Lepidoptera: Depressariidae), has been observed on arecanut (*Areca catechu* L.) in Karnataka.

The insect was first recorded on arecanut nursery seedlings at ICAR-CPCRI Regional Station, Vittal, Dakshina Kannada district, and the occurrence was documented (ICAR-CPCRI Annual Report 2025). Subsequently, similar infestation was noticed in arecanut gardens at Mugadur village, Siddapur Taluk, Uttara Kannada district during September 2026, and more recently at Kanakapura, Kanakapura Taluk, Bengaluru South district. The occurrence of the pest at geographically distinct locations indicates the need for increased surveillance in arecanut-growing regions of Karnataka.

The larvae feed on arecanut leaflets, generally within silken webs, resulting in scraping and removal of leaf tissue, drying of affected portions and defoliation under severe infestation (Figure 1). Based on the observations available so far, this represents a new pest association of *Acria* sp. with arecanut. The pest is presently identified at the genus level, and specimens are under taxonomic examination for confirmation of the species identity. Precise identification of the species is being undertaken at ICAR-CPCRI.

Farmers, extension personnel and researchers are advised to closely monitor arecanut palms for leaf webbing, caterpillar feeding and unusual defoliation and report similar incidences to ICAR-Central Plantation Crops Research Institute, Kasaragod, along with photographs and affected plant material. As an adhoc recommendation severely infested palms shall be sprayed with Chlorantraniliprole 18.5% SC @ 0.3 ml per litre of water.

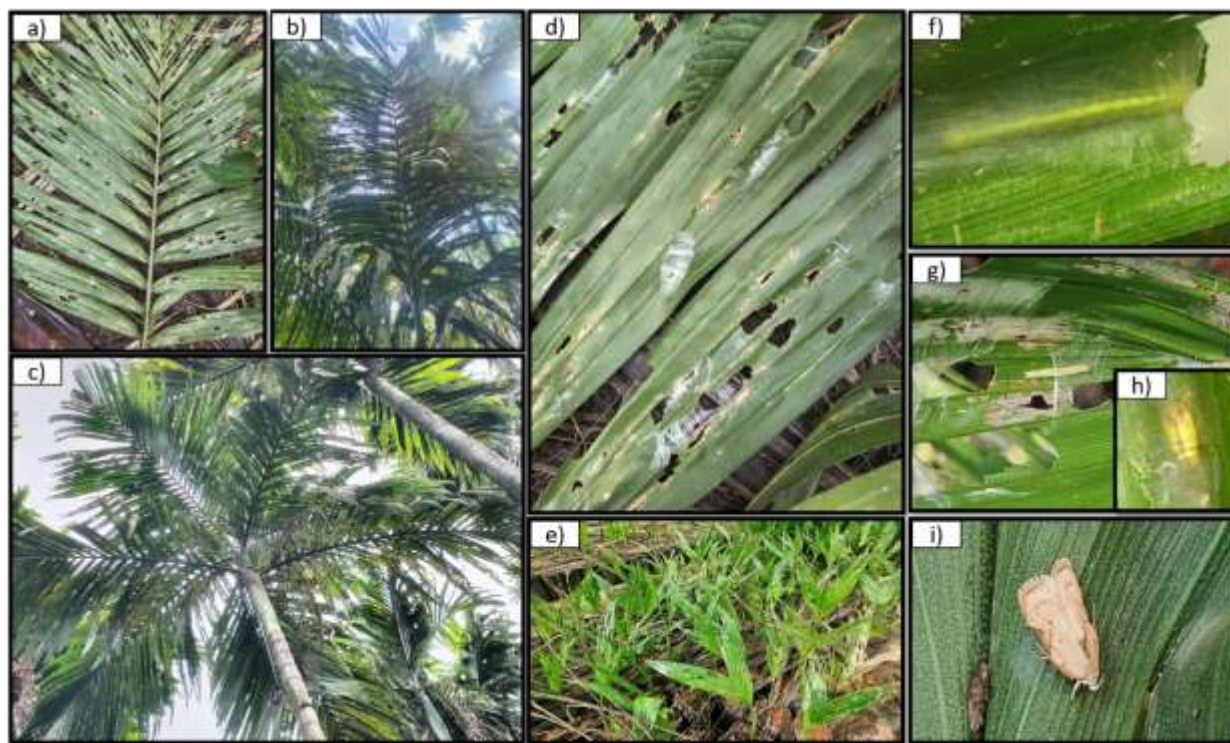


Figure 1. Field incidence of leaf-webbing defoliator, *Acria* sp. on arecanut a & b) Defoliated arecanut fronds; c) Severely defoliated arecanut palm; d) Defoliated leaflets with webbing; e) Severely defoliated nursery seedlings; f) Defoliating larva inside the web; g) Young larva with webbing; h) Pupa inside webbing; i) Adult resting on leaf lamina

Reporting of Incidence: If similar incidence is observed in any arecanut garden, please contact **Dr. Mahendran B.** (8277624573) for further information and field investigation.