

Public release date: 18-Mar-2009

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Ecological insect pest management for Guam

University of Guam scientist Dr. G. V. P. Reddy has been awarded a \$60,000 grant from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program of the US Department of Agriculture. Dr. Reddy, a chemical ecologist and entomologist, has over 25 years of experience in entomological research and a strong background in IPM (Integrated Pest Management), biocontrol, and behavioral and chemical ecology. His proposal titled, "Increasing Ecological Insect Pest Management on Guam through Building Ag Professionals' Understanding of Semiochemicals," was the highest rated proposal received by the SARE administrative council for the year and funded at the full amount requested under the Professional Development Program (PDP).

A semiochemical is a chemical substance that carries a message, such as pheromones emitted by insects to attract mates. Semiochemicals are used in agriculture to control insects that are considered pests. They are being used for monitoring, mass trapping and mating disruption, and are often more effective than using insecticides, which can have unintended environmental repercussions. "There is a lack of local knowledge about the role of semiochemicals in pest management," says Dr. Reddy, "and these grant funds will be used to educate agricultural professionals and stakeholders in the region." The training will cover the relationship between semiochemical-based trapping methods and overall crop production on Guam for four important weevil pests: banana root borer, New Guinea sugarcane weevil, and two sweet potato weevils.

Agriculture professionals will be instructed in trapping methods including the importance of lures and trap characteristics and diagnosis of pest problems. At the end of the training, trainees will host a field day initiating the process of educating the farming community and the general public. Funds will be dedicated to hire a Research Assistant and bring one agriculture professional from Saipan and Rota to attend the field day activities. Dr. Robert K. Vander Meer, research leader at USDA-ARS, Gainesville, Florida will also be invited to give a special lecture on the use of semiochemicals in the effective control of invasive species that threaten agriculture and the ecology of Guam.

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Dr. Reddy is co-author of the book *Biological Control of Tropical Weeds Using Arthropods*, which was recently published by Cambridge University Press. For more information on Dr. Reddy's research logon to www.wptrc.org or contact Dr. Reddy at 735-2142.

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