

Entomology in the Developing World

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The global population continues to increase at an alarming rate, with 90% of the added population, or 85 million per year, occurring in the developing nations of the world. From 1950 to 1980, world food production doubled, with increases in the developing countries exceeding that of the developed countries. However, food production was not able to keep pace with the population in the developing world, where population increases were twice the rate of those in the developed world. Increases in per capita food production since the 1950s have been only one-third of the developed world because increased food production has been offset by the high rate of population growth (Brown 1981). Even if birthrates decrease and the world population does not reach the level predicted, there will be significant pressure on a limited land resource.

Most of the world's land is not suitable for agriculture. Only about 10%, or 1.4 billion hectares, out of 14.7 billion hectares of land in the world is good cropland (Dudal 1976). Good cropland is being lost at an alarming rate due to waterlogging, salinization, deforestation, and subsequent erosion, flooding, and desertification. Ethiopia has been described as "literally going down the river" because more than one billion tons of topsoil are lost annually from denuded highlands where trees are cut for much-needed firewood (Brown 1981). Transformation of arable land to desert is occurring at the rate of six million hectares per year. Because of the continuing loss of arable land, the demand for food and fiber must be met by more intensive use of existing land. With modern technology, the potential for significant increases in food production on existing land is great.