

First infestation of an exotic crop pest, *Amrascabi guttula* on cotton *Gossypium hirsutum* L. in North Cameroon

Abstract

Cotton is a cash crop that actively contributes to the socio-economic development of the entire northern region of Cameroon. However, the production of this crop faces many constraints, including the pressure of bio-aggressors that causes significant damage and generate considerable losses for many producers. *Amrascabi guttula* is a feeding pest that was first reported in 2022 in a leafhopper sample collected in Djalingo, Benoue department, North region. The attacks of this atypical pest caused major damage on several cotton fields during the 2023 crop year. As a result, several other outbreaks have been reported throughout most of the cotton zone. Adults average 2.82 ± 0.16 mm in length and are green, with two black dots near the tip of the forewing. Leafhopper samples collected at several sites showed the presence of *Amrascabi guttula* and this species alone represented 22% to 84% of the diversity of leafhopper populations on cotton. The month of August seems to be the propitious time for the invasion of this new species, because it is during this period that it was mainly represented in the different leafhopper samples collected.

Keywords: Infestation, Exotic crop pest, *Amrascabi guttula*, *Gossypium hirsutum*, North Cameroon.

1. Introduction

Cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum*) is an economically profitable crop and the cotton sector alone represents 1.5% of Cameroon's gross domestic product (GDP) (CT, 2020). This crop therefore actively participates in the socio-economic development of the cotton area which extends across the entire northern area of the country. However, the cotton sector faces many challenges such as declining soil fertility, high input costs and pest pressure that directly affect production (Badiane *et al.*, 2015). The cotton plant is one of the plants that host the most pests in the world (Miranda *et al.*, 2013). Pest populations are made up of around a hundred arthropods, the most important of which in recent years can be grouped into three large groups: carpophagous caterpillars (*Helicoverpa armigera* Hübner, *Diparopsis watersi* Rothschild, *Earias biplaga* Walker and *Earias insulana* Boisduval), leaf-eating caterpillars (*Spodoptera littoralis* Boisduval, *Haritalodes derogata* Fabricius, *Anomis flava* Fabricius) and sucking biters (*Bemisia tabaci* Gennadius, *Aphis gossypii* Glover, *Jacobiella fascialis* Jacobi and *Dysdercus* sp.) (Badiane *et al.*, 2015). Crop losses caused by these phytophagous arthropods can be up to 55% in the absence of phytosanitary protection (Badiane *et al.*, 2018). This makes this crop

entirely dependent on appropriate plant protection to have a satisfactory quantity and quality production. The 2022 crop year was particularly marked by severe infestations of a new species of leafhopper *Amrascabiguttula* on cotton, with a yield drop of 10-50% compared to the previous season in several West African countries: Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali, Senegal and Togo (PR-PICA, 2022). In Cameroon, during the same season, no infestation of *Amrascabiguttula* was reported throughout the cotton zone. **Currently**, several outbreaks of infestations have been observed with significant damage on the cotton, okra and sorrel parcels that

worry all actors of the cotton sector in particular and all agricultural sectors in general, who encountered this atypical pest for the first time. It is in this context, that this preliminary study was initiated with the objective of reporting the presence of an exotic pest *Amrascabiguttula* for the first time on cotton in Cameroon and to follow its behavior to take into account in the development of a future cotton phytosanitary treatment program, the search for strategies and solutions for effective management of this dangerous crop pest.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study area

The collection of leafhopper samples was carried out on several sites in the cotton-growing zone of Far North and North Cameroon regions as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample collection sites and dates.

Region	Department	Commune	Village	Collect dates
Far North	Mayo Tsanaga	Mokolo	Zamalao	06/07/2023
		Gazawa	Katoual	23/09/2022
	Mayosava	Mora	Mora	07/07/2023
North	Mayo-Louti	Guider	Soukoundou	30/11/2022
	Benoue	Pitoea	Badjouma	19/07/2023
			Gaschiga	08/09/2022
		Gaschiga	Hamahoussou	21/08/2023
			Gaschiga	11/07/2023
		Garoua3	Kismatari	01/09/2022
			Djalingo	02/09/2022
			Bibol	05/09/2022
			Bibol	24/07/2023
			Djalingo	08/08/2023
		Mayo Dadi		09/08/2023
	Ngong	Ngong	18/11/2022	
		Ngong	15/08/2023	
	Mayo-Rey	Touboro	Touboro	14/07/2023
Djiporde			14/09/2022	

2.2. Description of damage caused to cotton plants by *Amrascabi guttula*

The damage caused by *Amrascabi guttula* on cotton plants observed following direct observations in infested farmers' fields. Observations focused on the general appearance of the plants and leaves. The attacked fields recorded the presence of this new pest crops and the plants showed visible signs of phytotoxicity.

2.3. Leafhopper collection and partial identification

Leafhopper collections were made in three to four cotton farmers' fields in the same village and constituted a composite sample of each site. In each cotton farmer's fields, the collection was done with a mouth vacuum and the leafhoppers were stuck in a small transparent bottle. On each bottle the following information was mentioned: the name of the collection site, the host plant, the date of collection and the GPS coordinates of the site.

The partial identification of leafhoppers was carried out at the Cotton Entomology and Crop Protection Laboratory against pests of the Institute of Agricultural Research for Development (IRAD) and the Cameroon Cotton Development Company (SODECOTON) of Garoua-North Cameroon. Under a binocular magnifying glass, the nymphs, impurities and other insects sucked up during the collections were separated to retain only adult leafhoppers

that constituted a sample. *Amrascabi guttula* differed from other leafhoppers mainly by the following morphological characters: the green color of adult individuals and the presence of a distal black spot at each end of the anterior or tegmina wings (Houphouët *et al.*, 2022). The length of 50 adult individuals was evaluated. The percentage of *Amrascabi guttula* was also assessed in each sample and retained for molecular identification later.

3. Results and discussions

3.1. Description of *Amrascabi guttula* attack on the cotton plant

The main damage was observed on the leaves and the general appearance of the cotton plants in several farmer's fields as illustrated in figures 1 & 2. The nymphs and adults of *Amrascabi guttula* feed directly on the leaves and tender parts of the cotton plants. Infested leaves gradually turn yellowish, then brownish, from the edges toward the midrib and show signs of gradual winding before completely drying out in the form of a burn as shown in Figure 2. Severely affected seedling cotton stop their growing and lose leaves. This pest feeds by injecting toxic saliva into the plant which disrupts chlorophyll activity, causing deformation of the

leaves and subsequently their discoloration in the form of phytotoxicity symptoms. Raza *et al.*, (2014) and Houphouet *et al.*, 2022 (2022) observed similar symptoms onokra and eggplant. Denis *et al.*, (2018) noted that the burns observed on the leaves are typical and characterized symptoms of serious attacks of *Amrascabiguttula*.

3.2. Partial morphological description of the new pest *Amrascabiguttula*

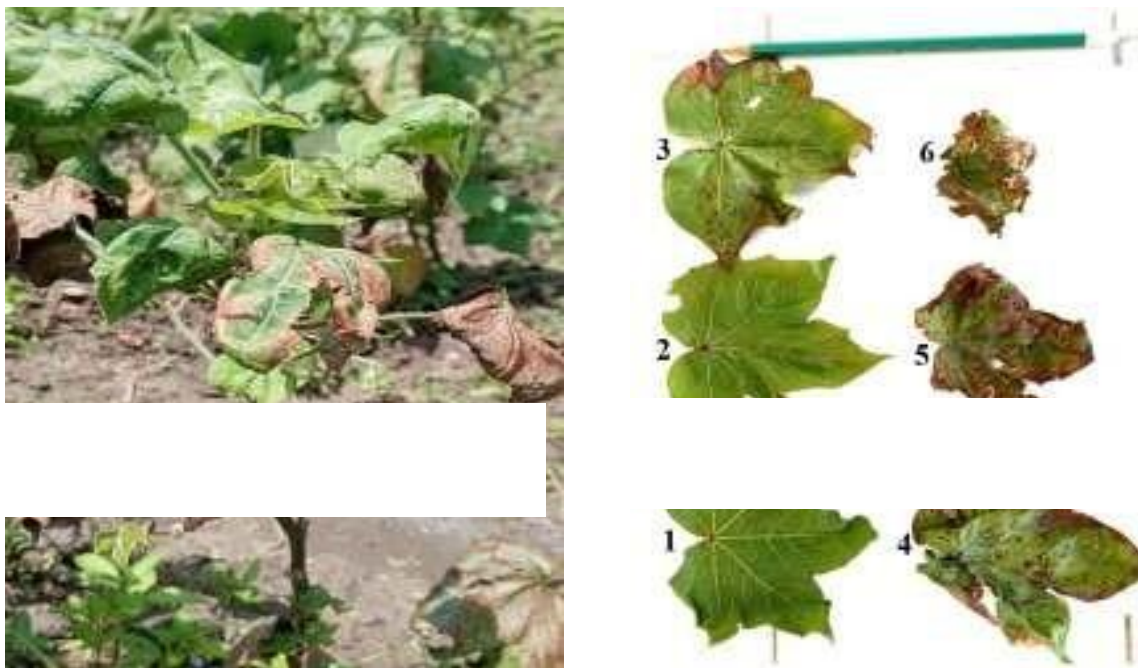


Fig. 1: Cotton plant attacked by *Amrascabiguttula*. Fig. 2: Gradual evolution of symptoms of attacks on cotton leaves by *Amrascabiguttula*.

Amrascabiguttula, commonly known as cotton jassid, is a phytophagous pest belonging to the cicadellidae family (Hasnain *et al.*, 2015). The adults observed in different samples are green in color, measure 2.82 ± 0.16 mm in length, with a clearly visible black spot on each side of the ends of the front wings or tegmina illustrated in Figure 3. Singh *et al.*, (2014), observed the same morphological characters in jassids on *Bt* cotton and specified an average length 2.42 ± 0.05 mm of males and 2.71 ± 0.05 mm for females. This pest has sucking type mouthparts, are very mobile and move at the slightest disturbance. The nymphs are wingless, also mobile and under the surface of the young leaves on which they are generally strongly attached. A similar description was made by Jayasimha *et al.*, (2012) who specifies that the insect tends to move diagonally.



Fig.3:Nymph(A)and adultof*Amrascabiguttula*oncottonleaves(B).

3.3. Percentage of *Amrascabiguttula* in the samples collected on cotton at different sites during the 2022 and 2023 seasons

Figure 4 shows the percentage of *Amrascabiguttula* in samples collected from cotton fields at different locations during the 2022 and 2023 seasons. During the 2022 collection season, *Amrascabiguttula* was detected in the Djaligno sample and represented 3 % of all leafhoppers collected at this site. However, during the 2023 collection season, with the exception of the Touboro sample, all other samples recorded the presence of this newly identified pest. These samples from Ngong, Mayo Dadi, Hamakoussou, Gaschiga and Djalingo revealed the highest proportions of *Amrascabiguttula*, ranging from 73 % to 84 %. Leafhopper samples

collected at the Bibol and Badjouma sites showed relatively low levels of *Amrascabiguttula* at 22% and 35 %. The populations of *Amrascabiguttula* experienced exponential growth in the samples collected in 2023 at the same sites, despite the almost zero presence of this pest in the 2022 season in the sample from the same sites (Ngong, Gaschiga and Djalingo). The same pest had already been identified in several West African countries: Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Togo and Benin on cotton and several other crops in the 2022 and 2023 seasons.

Amrascabiguttula was the majority species and accounted for 50-90% of the leafhopper population diversity collected in these different countries (PR-PICA 2022).

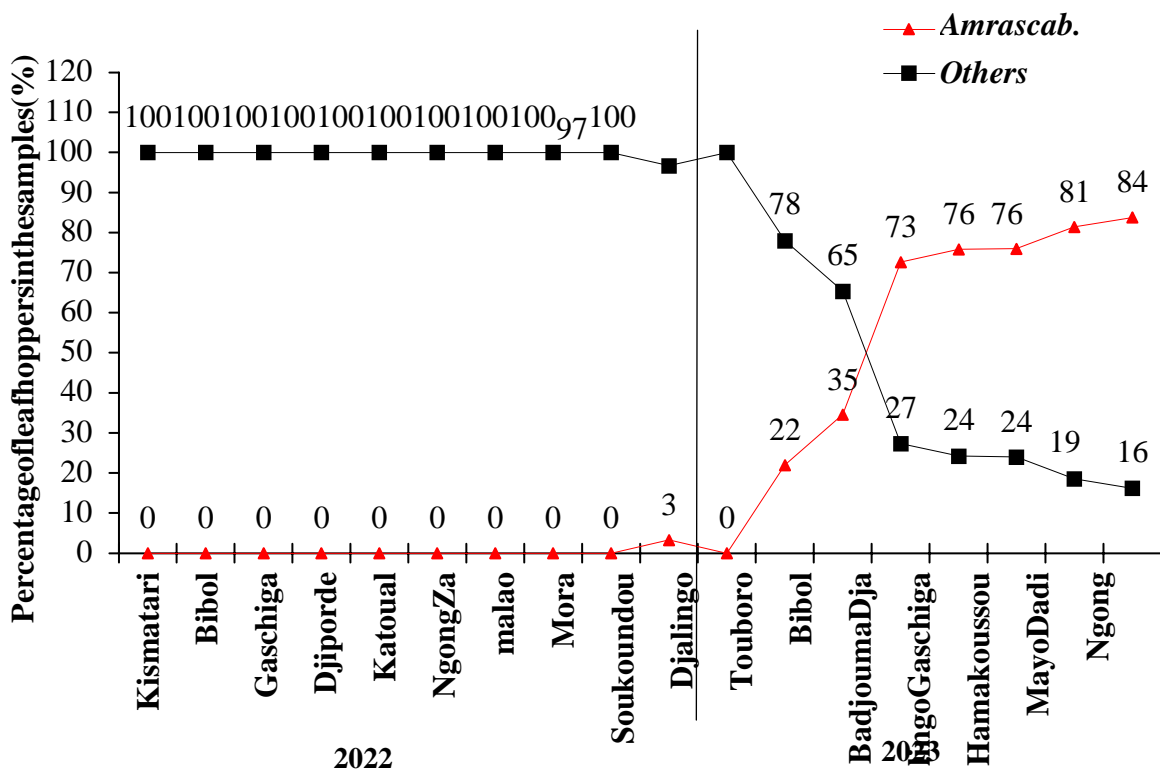


Fig.4: Percentage of *Amrascabiguttula* in the samples collected in 2022 and 2023 seasons.

3.4. Evolution of the proportions of *Amrascabiguttula* in the leafhoppers samples depend in on the collection dates

Figure 5 reveals, the evolution of the percentages of *Amrascabiguttula* in the samples collected at all sites according to the collection dates for the 2023 season. The cotton jassids were collected from 06 July 2023 to 21 August 2023. In all samples collected between 06 July 2023 and 18 July 2023, no individual of *Amrascabiguttula* were identified. During the period from 19 July 2023 to 21 August 2023, there was a gradual increase in the presence of this new pest species in the collected samples. In samples collected around 08-15 August, *Amrascabiguttula* populations alone accounted for 81-84 % of the diversity of leafhoppers collected. This new species observed on cotton in Cameroon has an invasive character over time, as evidenced by the trend curve of the regression line $R^2 = 0.86$. Similar results were observed by Dhaka and Pareek (2008) who found that the incidence of *Amrascabiguttula* on cotton started from the second and third week of June and reached its peak also in August. Ghulam et al., (2019) and

Khating *et al.*, (2016) found that the impact of leafhopper on cotton peaked rather in the second week of September.

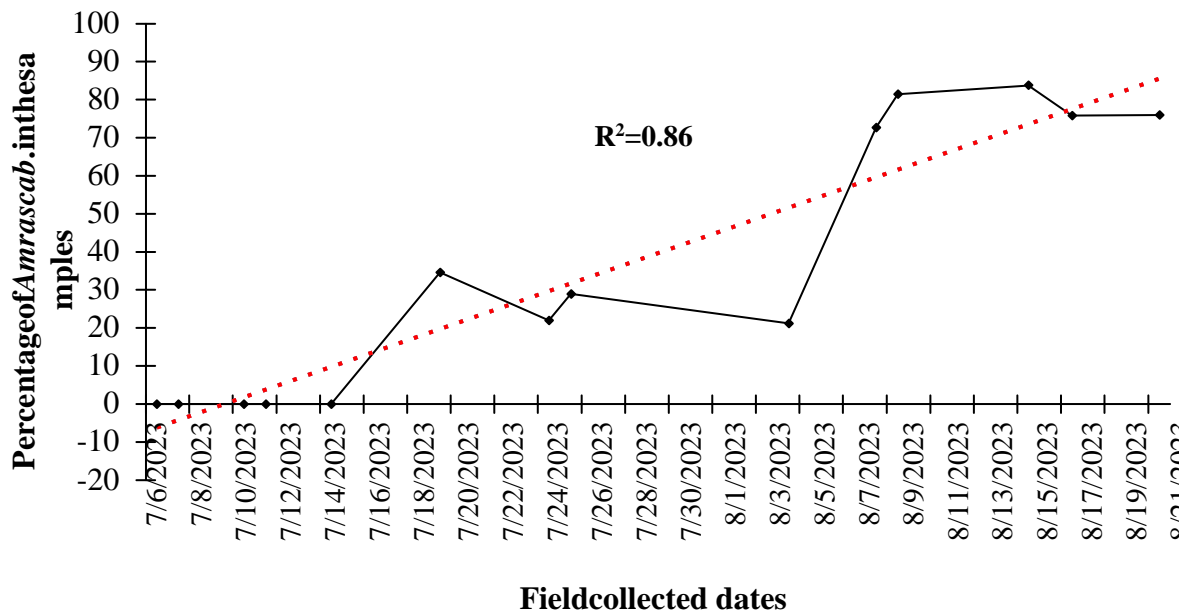


Fig.5: Evolution of *Amrascabiguttulapopulations* in samples according to collection dates.

4. Conclusion

Amrascabiguttulaw was identified for the first time in samples of leafhoppers collected in 2022 on cotton in Djalingo department of Benoue, North region Cameroon. The same year this new species of jassid was poorly represented in the diversity of the leafhoppers populations collected. In the 2023 season, at the beginning of August, several outbreaks with significant damage on the farmer fields were reported throughout the cotton zone and the *Amrascabiguttulaw* specie was the majority. This situation requires the entire sector to review the phytosanitary protection program, to take into account this new exotic and invasive pest. It is therefore necessary and urgent to search for solutions to effectively control this pest and ensure satisfactory cotton production.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authorshave declared that no competing interests exist.

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