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#### Review

# The invasive mealybug *Phenacoccus solenopsis* Tinsley, a threat to tropical and subtropical agricultural and horticultural production systems – A review

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#### ABSTRACT

Originating from USA and co-evolved with numerous food plants, the mealybug Phenacoccus solenopsis Tinsley (Hemiptera: Pseudococcidae) has become a highly invasive and polyphagous pest. It is reported damaging >200 plant species from about 24 countries of tropical and subtropical regions of the world. The average length of *P. solenopsis* life cycle range between 28 and 35 days and it can complete about 8 -12 generations in a year, inflicting significant yield losses to cotton (Gossypium hirsutum Linn.) and other economically important crops. The devastating outbreaks of P. solenopsis on cotton causing 30-60% yield losses have been reported from India and Pakistan during 2005-2009 and since then the pest has received worldwide attention as an invasive species of quarantine importance. About 28 species of natural enemies including 12 predators and 16 multiple parasitoids of P. solenopsis have been reported throughout its range, but only an Encyrtid species Aenasius bambawalei Hayat has been instrumental in controlling *P. solenopsis* natural populations in a range of 30–60%. Due to the highly polyphagous nature and the ability to oviposit on a wide range of host plants, *P. solenopsis* has huge potential to invade new areas and to adapt to a wide range of ecological situations. This clearly indicates that P. solenopsis can pose a serious threat to agricultural and horticultural production, especially in tropics and subtropics where the temperatures are expected to increase under projected climate change. There is a need for undertaking adaptive strategies against this pest to lessen the yield losses and safeguard the interest of crop growers.

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#### 1. Introduction

Certain anthropogenic changes to agro-ecosystems such as crop intensification, habitat fragmentation and climate change coupled with liberalisation of international agricultural trade policy have led to frequent emergence of new or invasive insect-pests in economically important agricultural and horticultural crops. The mealybug *Phenacoccus solenopsis* Tinsley (Hemiptera: Pseudococcidae) is one such recent example causing 30–60% yield losses in cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum* Linn.) during 2005–09 in India and Pakistan (Dhawan et al., 2007; Jhala et al., 2008; Nagrare et al., 2009). Based on initial reports of its occurrence from New Mexico (Tinsley, 1898a,b) and Texas (Fuchs et al., 1991), *P. solenopsis* is presumed to originate in North America. The pest was first found outside the continental USA in the 1980s in South America, the Caribbean Islands and Central America (Williams and Granara de Willink, 1992). From 2005 onwards, P. solenopsis was reported infesting cotton in Asia, especially in Pakistan (Abbas et al., 2005) and India (Jhala et al., 2008) which are considered as the major cotton growing hubs of South Asia. So far, P. solenopsis has been reported damaging >200 plant species of 55 different families from about 24 countries (Abbas et al., 2005, 2010; Vennila et al., 2010a; Nagrare et al., 2011; Arif et al., 2012). The pest is likely to spread to other parts of the world in near future due to the predicted temperature increase, and might pose increased threats to the agricultural and horticultural production systems in tropical and sub-tropical parts of the world (Fand et al., 2013, 2014a,b,c). This review summarizes the documented reports on global distribution, bio-ecology, host range, natural enemy fauna and management of P. solenopsis.







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Table I
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History of global distribution and	spread of P. sole	enopsis.
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Year of	Country	Host plants	Family	Reference (s)
occurrence				
1897	USA (New Mexico)	Creeping spiderling (Boerhavia spicata Choisy);	Nyctaginaceae;	Tinsley 1898a,b
	· · · · ·	California caltrop [Kallstroemia californica	Zygophyllaceae	
		(S.Wats.) Vail]		
1966	Hawaiian Islands	Jute or Mallow (Corchorus olitorius L.)	Malvaceae	Kumashiro et al., 2001
1985	Panama	-	-	Williams and Granara de Willink, 1992
1990	USA (Texas)	Cotton (Gossypium hirsutum L.)	Malvaceae	Fuchs et al., 1991
1992	Ecuador	-	-	Williams and Granara de Willink, 1992
1992	Caribbean Islands (Cuba, Dominican Republic)	-	-	Williams and Granara de Willink, 1992
2000	Caribbean Islands (Barbados and Jamaica)	-	-	Watson and Chandler 2000
2001	Galapagos Islands	-	-	Causton et al., 2006
2001	Sierra Leone		-	EPPO 2013; CABI 2014
2002	Brazii	Tomato (Lycopersicon esculentum L.)	Solanaceae	Culik and Gullan 2005
2002	Chile	Sweet pepino [Solanum muricatum (Alt.))]	Solanaceae	Larrain 2002
2003	Argentina	Faise ragweed (Ambrosia tenuijolia Spreng)	-	Granara de Willink 2005
2004	Netherianus Delvieten (Sindh Dunich Delvehieten Multen)	Green nouse plants	— Malua ana	Jaliseli 2004
2005	Pakistan (Sinun, Punjad, Banucinstan, Muitan)	collon (Gossyphum nirsulum L.) (>154 plant	Maivaceae	ADDAS et al., 2005, 2010 Arif et al. 2000, 2011, 2012
2005	India	Species of vegetables, weeds and offiditientals)	Maluacaaa	Alli et al., 2009, 2011, 2012
2005	IIIuid (Andhra Pradech Cuiarat Harvana	conton (Gossyphini misulum L.)L. (>194 plant species belonging to 52 plant families including	Walvaceae	2007 2011: Ibala et al. 2008: Bhosle
	Karnataka Madhya Pradesh Maharashtra	field crops vegetables weeds and ornamentals)		et al. 2009: Nagrare et al. 2009, Dilosic
	Punish Raissthan and Tamil Nadu)	neid crops, vegetables, weeds and ornamentals)		Suresh et al. 2010: Vennila et al.
	runjab, Rajastnan and ranni Radu)			2010a· 2011
2007	United Kingdom	Menthe ( <i>Mentha</i> sp. L.)	Lamiaceae	U.K. Plant Health Interception and
	0.00			Outbreak chart 2007
2007	Vietnam	Ornamentals	_	Nguyen and Huynh 2008
2007	Ghana	Weed (Amaranthus sp. L.)	Amaranthaceae	EPPO 2013
2008	Guatemala	-	-	Hodgson et al., 2008
2008	Cayman Islands	-	-	Hodgson et al., 2008
2008	Colombia	-	-	Kondo et al., 2008
2008	Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon (Africa)	China rose, Hibiscus rosa-sinensis L.	Malvaceae	Akintola and Ande 2008; Hodgson
				et al., 2008
2008	Guangdong	Cotton (Gossypium hirsutum L.)	Malvaceae	Wang et al., 2009; Wu and Zhang
	-			2009; EPPO 2013
2008	Taiwan	-	-	Hodgson et al., 2008; Abbas et al.,
2000				2008; EPPO 2013
2008	China	Cotton (Gossypium hirsutum L.)	Malvaceae	Wang et al., 2009, 2010; Wu and
2000	The discust			Zhang 2009
2009	l lidiidiid Cri Lanka	- Ornamentals vegetables	-	ADDas et al., 2008; EPPO 2013
2009	SII LdIIKd	Omamentals, vegetables	_	FIDDO 2013
2010	Australia Cambodia Indonesia	Cotton (Cossynium hirsutum I)	Malvaceae	Charleston and Murray 2010
2010	nastrana, camboula, maonesia	cotton (cossyptant nitsutant E.)	marvaccac	charleston and Multay 2010

#### 2. Origin and distribution

*P. solenopsis* was first described by Tinsley (1898a,b) from specimens collected from infested roots and stems of weeds *Boerhavia spicata* Choisy and *Kallstroemia californica* (S. Watson) Vail, within the nests of ants *Solenopsis geminata* (Fabricius) and from the roots of *Atriplex canescens* (Pursh) in New Mexico, USA. However, first report of *P. solenopsis* damaging cotton crop came from Texas, USA (Fuchs et al., 1991). Thus, *P. solenopsis* is considered as native of North America (Williams and Granara de Willink, 1992; Ben-Dov, 1994; Watson and Chandler, 2000; Miller, 2005). Presently, the pest is distributed over a wide range of agro-ecological zones in more than 24 countries worldwide (Table 1), where it causes significant crop losses and is considered the most damaging mealybug species in the developing world.

*P. solenopsis*, which had not previously been documented from India (Varshney, 1985), was first reported infesting cotton in *kharif* (rainy) season of 2005–06 from North-Western parts of Gujarat State (Jhala et al., 2008). It has since spread rapidly to the neighboring cotton growing states of the country. The pest is now found in all nine major cotton producing states *viz.*, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu (Table 2) (Nagrare et al., 2009). Besides

cotton, *P. solenopsis* infests other crops of economic importance such as okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus* Linn.), chilli (*Capsicum annum* Linn.), brinjal (*Solanum melongena* Linn.), tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum* Linn.), pomegranate (*Punica granatum* Linn.), guava (*Psedium guajava* Linn.), grapes (*Vites vinifera* Linn.), ornamentals like china rose (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* Linn.), as well as various weeds (Tanwar et al., 2007, 2011; Nagrare et al., 2009, 2011; Vennila et al., 2010a). This pest has been a major focus of researchers because of its invasiveness and rapid spread across the regions within a short period of time.

#### 3. Biosystematics

#### 3.1. Taxonomy and nomenclature

This mealybug species was first described by Tinsley (1898a,b) and it was named as *Phenacoccus solenopsis* by Ferris (1950). Further, the taxonomic description of this mealybug based on the morphology of adult female has been provided by many workers from different parts of the world (Ferris, 1950; McKenzie, 1967; Williams and Granara de Willink, 1992; Kosztarab, 1996; Granara de Willink et al., 2007; Hodgson et al., 2008). The present taxonomic position of *P. solenopsis* is as shown in taxonomic tree below:

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