

WHY ARE INSECTS IMPORTANT?

(AND NOT ALWAYS A PEST?)



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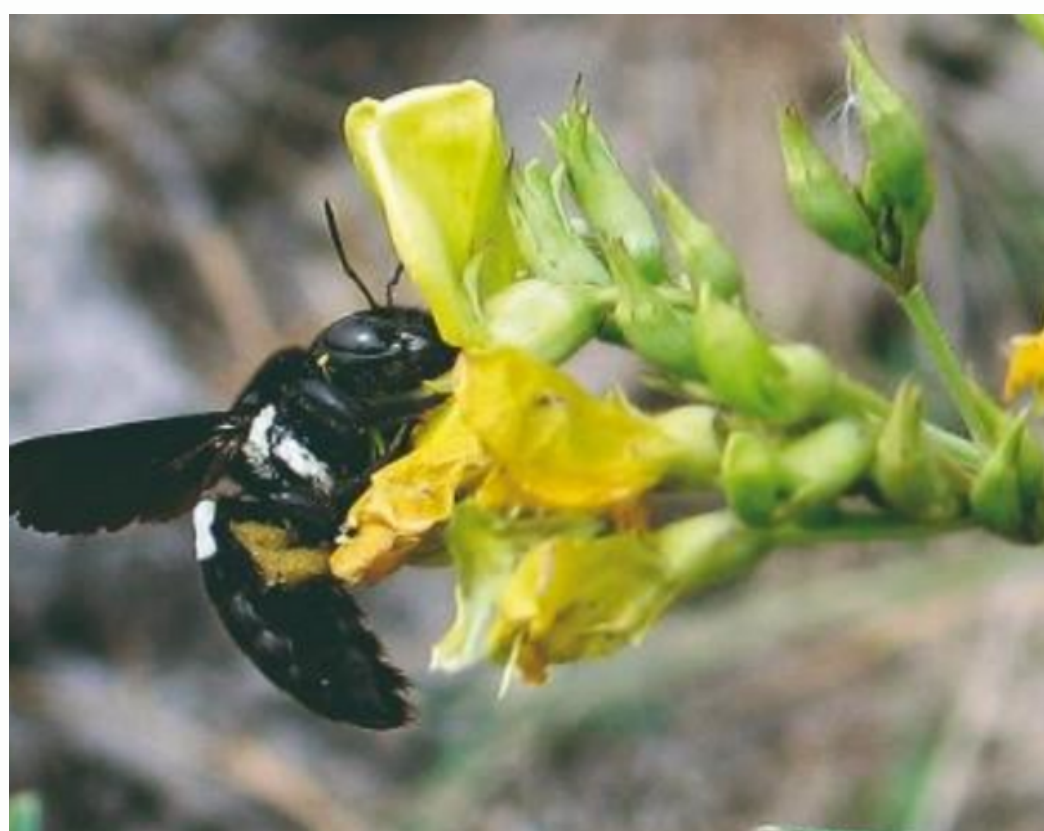


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POLLINATORS

Pollinators are insects such as bees, butterflies and hoverflies. They visit flowers to drink nectar or collect pollen. When they travel from flower to flower, they transport pollen. For flowering plants, this is a necessary process that allows the plants to produce seeds and fruit: this process is called pollination. Without pollinators, crops like pumpkins would not produce fruit.



A carpenter bee (*Xylocopa inconstans*) drinking nectar from a pigeon pea flower. ©FAO/Nature Kenya/Dino Martins.

NATURAL ENEMIES

Natural enemies are insects like predatory beetles, spiders, ants, and wasps. They eat or lay their eggs in pests like caterpillars, termites, aphids, and leaf beetles. Using synthetic pesticides can kill natural enemies as well as pests, which can make a pest problem worse in some cases.



A group of ants hunting Fall Armyworm on a maize plant. © Georg Küstner.

HOW CAN YOU FARM TO PROMOTE USEFUL INSECTS ON YOUR FIELD?

- Grow more legumes (beans, pigeon peas, cowpeas) on your farm to attract pollinators and natural enemies and reduce pest damage.
- Use pest management practices only when necessary and avoid using it on flowering crops that pollinators visit.
- Use many agroecological soil practices (for example: mulching, intercropping, legume residue and manure) to improve your soils and increase bees and butterflies on your farm.
- Grow many flowering crops (legumes and vegetables) and don't remove flowering weeds when it is unnecessary.
- Prevent cutting down remaining Miombo shrubland in your area.

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