

Banana Bacterial Wilt Film, How it spreads and How to control it

Banana is a staple food to many and is a food security crop but is affected by Banana bacterial wilt.

The disease is very destructive with potential to wipe out the entire banana plantation within a short time if not controlled. The disease is spread mechanically through 2 major ways; ie through contaminated cutting tools like pangas and hoes, and is the main course of transmission in areas where farmers intensively manage their banana fields. The second mode of transmission is by animals and insects eg cattle, sheep, bees and aphids. This is common where farmers do not intensively use tools.

Signs and symptoms

Infected plants may take a period of between 14 to 90 days before exhibiting any disease signs. This period is called latent infection and is the most dangerous period and source of inoculum. Farmers unknowingly spread the disease during this period.

The disease mostly manifests with pre mature drying of banana leaves, scotching of leaves, premature ripening of fruits and rotten pseudo stems.

Disease control

The most effective control is field sanitation for all banana plantations, removal of all male buds on the plants using a forked stick, disinfection of all farm tools used on sick plants and use of clean suckers from known sources.

If farmers are suspicious about bacterial wilt infection, they must suspend all field activities including pruning, ploughing and harvesting leaves for 3 months. After 3 months, the farmer can tell which plants have been affected and to what extent.