

## NURSERY BLIGHT OF CASHEW - A NEW RECORD

Cashew (*Anacardium occidentale* L.) is grown in a wide variety of soils under marginal conditions of management. The crop is subjected to the attack by many serious pests and diseases. During May 1987, the incidence of a new seedling blight was noticed in a severe form on two months old cashew seedlings grown in polyethylene bags filled with potting mixture, in a nursery at Chandra, Kasargod district.

The disease manifests as water soaked lesions at the tip of the young leaves which rapidly enlarge into black necrotic patches. It spreads to the complete leaf lamina and then to the subsequent leaves. Finally the whole leaves fall off leaving the stem alone. When the terminal bud or tender shoot is infected, it results in progressive die back and death of the seedlings. Sprouts of axillary buds below will also get infected. Occasionally the seedlings are attacked at the collar region also. The affected seedlings show water soaked girdles of darkened tissues around the stem. This is followed by drooping, wilting and death of the seedlings. The affected regions are covered with profuse growth of conidiophores and conidia. After the appearance of the initial symptoms, if the environmental conditions are congenial the disease spreads fast over the entire seedling and causes severe damage to the nursery.

Tissue isolations from the infected portions of leaves, tender shoot and collar region consistently yielded a species of *Aspergillus*. The fungus grew and sporulated well on potato-dextrose agar medium. Pathogenicity was tested by spraying the spore suspension of the fungal isolate in sterile distilled water to one month old healthy seedlings and high humidity was maintained. Typical symptoms appeared after 48 hours of incubation. The pathogen was re-isolated from the infected tissues and the pathogenicity confirmed. The identity of the fungus was confirmed as *Aspergillus niger* Van. Tieghem (IMI No. 321028). *A. niger* has been found associated with kernel rot of cashew (Esuruoso, 1974). Jain and Nikam (1952) has reported that the fungus caused blight of groundnut seedlings. This is for the first time that *A. niger* is reported to infect the cashew seedlings and cause severe havoc.

Removing the died and severely infected plants and spraying and drenching with Bordeaux mixture (1%) or Bavistin (0.1%) was found to control the disease effectively.

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