

# Soybean looper



GRAINS FARM  
BIOSECURITY  
PROGRAM

EXOTIC PEST – CALL THE EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE IF SUSPECTED

## What is a soybean looper?

Soybean looper (*Chrysodeixis includens*) is a pest of grain and horticultural crops, with over 174 host plants. Some of the main hosts include soybeans, peas, beans, cucurbits, carrots, sorghum, maize, cotton and sugarcane.

In the US, in 2022, it was the third costliest insect pest in soybeans and can complete four generations per year in ideal conditions.

## What does it look like?

### Caterpillars

Caterpillars range from light to dark green and can grow up to about 35 mm long. They have distinctive white stripes running along the sides and may have short black lines on each side of the head. Some caterpillars may be entirely green with no obvious markings.

They move with a distinctive looping motion, gripping the surface with their forelegs and arching their body as they bring their hind legs forward, creating a loop.

### Adult moths

Adult moths have a wingspan of 28–39 mm. Their grey-brown forewings are darker than their hind wings, with two silvery-white spots situated close together on each forewing.

## What should I look for?

Larval feeding damage can appear as clear, irregular openings in leaves, known as 'windowing'.

Soybean loopers often feed on the underside of leaves first, starting with the lowest leaves and the inside of the canopy, and then work their way up and outwards. The damage becomes more noticeable as the larvae grow larger and move to the outside of the host plant. They can defoliate entire plants and can feed on pods or fruit, causing increased yield loss.

## What can it be confused with?

There are other species of loopers that look similar and cause similar damage, so expert identification is required. It could be confused with the Australian cabbage looper (*Chrysodeixis subsidens*) or the green garden looper (*Chrysodeixis eriosoma*), both present in Australia. If you see unusual symptoms or signs of new pests, contact the **Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881**.

## How does it spread?

The most likely pathway for soybean looper to enter Australia is via human assisted movement through the introduction of eggs, larvae or pupae in infested plants and plant products from overseas.

Once in Australia they can then continue to move in infested planting material, machinery and vehicles. They are also able to disperse naturally, with adult moths able to fly between host plants.

## Where is it now?

Soybean loopers are found across North, Central and South America. Australia is currently free from soybean loopers.



Soybean looper – larval stage showcasing the 3 pairs of black thoracic legs and 2 pair of abdominal prolegs.

Russ Ottens, University of Georgia, Bugwood.org



# GRAINS FARM BIOSECURITY PROGRAM

## How can I protect my farm?

Vigilance, early detection and prompt reporting can help protect your farm.

Establish good farm biosecurity practices including:

- regularly check crops for any signs of unusual damage (especially 'windowing' of leaves) or the presence of suspicious looper caterpillars
- ensure that you are sourcing seeds, seedlings, cuttings and ornamentals from reputable sources
- clean and inspect machinery, equipment, and vehicles between properties
- ensure visitors and farm workers who have recently travelled internationally are aware of biosecurity protocols.



Soybean crop damage from Soybean looper larval feeding, showing "windowing" of leaves.

John C. French, bugwood.org



Soybean looper, larva

Illinois University - USDA Cooperative



Soybean looper, adult pinned specimen

Lindsey Seastone, Museum Collections: Lepidoptera, USDA APHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org



Soybean looper moth

Observation © Greg Lasley, iNaturalist.org

If you see anything unusual, call the  
**Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.**

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Visit [grainsbiosecurity.com.au](http://grainsbiosecurity.com.au) for more resources to implement practical biosecurity measures or contact your state Grains Biosecurity Officer, by visiting [grainsbiosecurity.com.au/contact](http://grainsbiosecurity.com.au/contact)

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