Ecological approach to organic pest and disease management

Pests and diseases can negatively impact crops health, quality and yields. Organic pest and disease managements' first line of defense is: prevention. Many of the preventative measures used act to promote on-farm diversity and keep pests and diseases at a level which does not cause economic damage. If pests reach critical levels, the second line of defense is employed: direct control measures.

How can we prevent pest and disease outbreaks in organic farming?

- Grow healthy, resistant crops
- Use crop varieties with high pest tolerance and locally-adapted
- Improve field hygiene, e.g., timely weeding, removal of host plants, proper disposition of infected plants, e.g., burning
- Scout plants early for pest and disease
- Increase crop diversity, e.g., companion cropping, crop rotations, agroforestry systems
- Maintain a healthy soil
- Use physical barriers, e.g., fruit wraps
- Supporting on-farm beneficial organisms, e.g., maintain wild areas, a variety of flowering plants, apply organic composts, etc.
- Use bait, light, colour or pheromone traps for monitoring insect pests

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