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## **Within-Canopy Distribution of Incidence and Damage of Pests and Diseases of Robusta Coffee, *Coffea Canephora* and Implications for their Management**

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### **Abstract**

Due to its perennial and robust vegetative growth nature, the Robusta coffee harbors a diversity of pests and diseases that are not necessarily evenly distributed within the coffee canopy and this has management implications. We thus, conducted a study in a Kaweri Coffee Plantation Limited in central Uganda to determine the distribution of incidence and damage caused by the pests and diseases within the Robusta coffee canopy. In each of the four section of plantation (Kitagweta, Kyamutuma Luwunga and Nonve), a plot measuring 100 x 100 m was demarcated and 20 Robusta coffee trees were systematically selected along two diagonals in each of the plots. All the stems on each of the selected coffee tree were assessed for pest and disease incidence and damage on the leaves, berry clusters and berries. The coffee canopy was divided into three sections (lower, middle and upper) and incidence and damage of the pests and diseases were determined on coffee leaves, berry clusters and berries. Results showed that the pests and diseases were not evenly distributed within the canopy.

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On the leaves, the incidence and damage caused by *Leucoptera coffeella*, *Leucoplema dohertyi* and *Hemilleia vastatrix* varied significantly ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) across the canopy sections, with the highest levels (23.1, 36.1 and 30.5%) being recorded in the lower section. On the other hand, though the damage caused by *Epicampoptera andersoni* and the leaf eating beetles was not significantly ( $p \geq 0.05$ ) different within the canopy, the highest infestation was recorded in the upper (26.9%) and middle (19.3%) sections, respectively. For the berry cluster, only damage caused by *Planococcus* spp. varied significantly ( $p = 0.0188$ ) across the canopy, with the highest infestation (18.6%) being recorded in lower section. However, incidence and damage caused by *Prophantis smaragdina* and *Cercospora coffeicola* were not significantly ( $p \geq 0.05$ ) different within the canopy but, the highest levels were recorded in the upper section of the canopy (15.8 and 24.4%, respectively). On the coffee berries, the incidence and damage of both *Hypothenemus hampei* and *Cercospora coffeicola* did not significantly ( $p \geq 0.05$ ) across the canopy sections but the highest levels were recorded in the lower (28.5%) and upper (20.7%), respectively. Our findings enlightened the understanding of the vertical distribution of the incidence and damage of pest and disease within the Robusta coffee canopy. This information will contribute to developing and implementing monitoring techniques and regimes as well as ecologically-informed management strategies for these pests and diseases.

**Keywords:** Dynamics; ecologically-informed; *Hemilleia-vastatrix*; *Leucoplema-dohertyi*; *Leucoptera-coffeella*; *Planococcus*-spp; variation.

## 1. Introduction

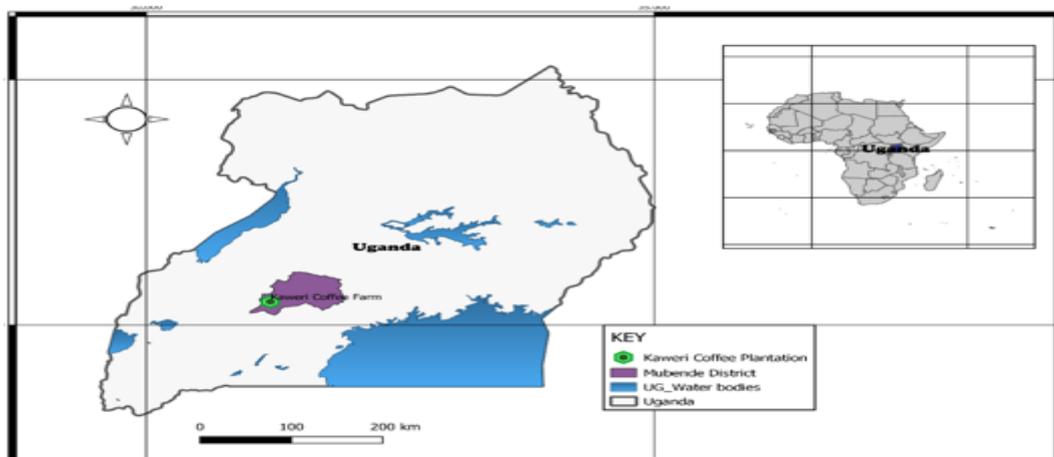
Robusta coffee (*Coffea canephora*) contributes over 80% of Uganda's total production as well as export volume [1]. The country accounts for 7% of global *C. canephora* exports and the whole coffee sector provides a livelihood for about 8 million people [2]. The sustainability of Ugandan *C. canephora* production is thus of major national and global importance, particularly for smallholder farmers [3]. However, despite its socioeconomic importance, the current farm productivity of 0.6 kg of clean coffee per tree (kgcc/tree) of Robusta coffee [1, 4] is far below that of the newly released improved Coffee Wilt Disease resistant (CWD-r) Robusta coffee varieties. For example, the NARO KR10 variety yields 4.8kgcc/tree [5]. The sustainability of the Robusta coffee industry in Uganda is therefore threatened by various challenges with pests and diseases, particularly, the Black Coffee Twig Borer (BCTB), *Xylosandrus compactus* (Eichhoff) being partly prominently responsible for this observed yield gap [4]. Due to its perennial and robust vegetative growth nature – tall with irregular structure and multi-cauliate stems [6, 7], the Robusta coffee canopy can harbor diversity of pests and diseases. These include, *X. compactus*, coffee berry borer (CBB), *Hypothenemus hampei* (Ferrari), coffee leaf skeletonizer, *Leucoplema dohertyi* (Warren), tailed caterpillar, *Epicampoptera andersoni* (Tams), leaf eating beetles, coffee berry moth, *Prophantis smaragdina* (Butler), mealybugs, *Planococcus* spp., coffee leaf miner, *Leucoptera coffeella* (Guérin-Mèneville & Perrottet), coffee wilt disease (CWD), *Fusarium xylarioides*, coffee leaf rust (CLR), *Hemileia vastatrix* and red blister disease (RBD), *Cercospora coffeicola* (B. & CKE.) [8, 9]. However, these pests and diseases may not be evenly distributed within plant canopies and their movements depend on the level of connectedness between plant organs [10]. The population, incidence and damage caused by some pests and diseases, for example, *X. compactus* on coffee [11] and on southern magnolia, *Magnolia grandiflora* [12] as well as *H. hampei* and *H. vastatrix* on coffee [13, 14] have been reported to be higher in the lower section of the canopy. On the other hand, pests such as the white mango scale, *Aulacaspis tubercularis* and the neotropical brown stink bug, *Euschistus heros* adults

have been reported to be more abundant in the middle canopy of mango [15] and cotton canopies [16], respectively. But, incidence and damage of some pests and diseases have been reported to higher in the middle canopy, for example, the larvae of the avocado seed moth, *Stenoma catenifer* on avocado trees [17], the Swiss needle cast disease, *Nothophaeocryptopus gaeumannii* on Douglas-fir [18] and leaf spotting disease, *Pyrenophora tritici* on wheat plant [19]. Other authors have reported no difference in the distribution of the incidence and damage caused by pests and diseases within the canopy. For example, *L. coffeella* on coffee [20] and the almond bark beetle, *Scolytus amygdali*, on almond orchards [21]. Understanding the distribution of these pests and diseases within the coffee tree canopy is therefore vital for developing and implementing monitoring techniques and regimes as well as ecologically-informed management strategies [22]. Management options such as phytosanitary, spraying with pesticides or bio-pesticides and trapping with lures should target the canopy sections with the high incidence and damage of these pests and diseases. This could reduce labor as well as amounts of pesticides used and thus, costs and risks to human beings and environment in general [10, 11]. However, such studies on Robusta coffee are limited in Uganda, apart from *X. compactus* [11]. We therefore conducted a study to determine the distribution of incidence and damage caused by the pests and diseases within the Robusta coffee canopy.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1 Study site

The study was conducted on Robusta coffee in the four sections (Kitagweta, Kyamutuma Luwunga and Nonve) of Kaweri Coffee Plantation Limited. The plantation is located in Naluwondwa parish, Madudu sub-county, Buwekula county, Mubende District, central Uganda at 0°36'59"N 31°28'28" E (Fig. 1). It lies at an average of 1,300 meters above sea level (a.s.l) and receives an average of 1,125 mm (range: 875 and 1,250 mm) per annum of rain, with minimum and maximum temperatures of 15 °C and 25 °C respectively. The soils are red ferralitic and sandy loams, characterized by large amounts of iron oxides [23]. The plantation is located on an area of 2,512 hectares of which 1,570 hectares are covered by Robusta coffee grown as a single crop under natural or planted shade trees [24].



**Figure 1:** Location of Kaweri Coffee Plantation Limited in Naluwondwa parish, Madudu sub-county, Buwekula County, Mubende District, central Uganda

**Source:** Nanjogo et al. (in press)

## **2.2 Data collection**

In each of the four sections of the plantation, a plot measuring 100 x 100 m (1 hectare) was demarcated. Twenty (20) Robusta coffee trees were systematically sampled along two cross diagonal transects running the full length of the demarcated plot (one running from left to right and the other one from right to left). In each diagonal, 10 trees were selected every after 14 m, derived from dividing the length of the diagonal (141 m) and the number of required trees (10). All the stems on each of the selected coffee tree were assessed for pest and disease incidence and damage on the leaves, berry clusters and berries. The canopy of each sampled coffee stem was divided into three imaginary sections– upper, middle and lower [6, 25] and each canopy section was assessed separately. One primary branch (twig) was then randomly selected in each of the three canopy sections for assessment. The total number of leaves as well as those damaged by *L. coffeella*, *L. dohertyi*, *E. andersoni*, leaf eating beetles, *C. coffeicola* and *H. vastatrix* was established and used to estimate the percentage incidence and damage. Then, the number of berry clusters on each of the selected primary branch as well as those damaged by *Planococcus* spp., *P. smaragdina* and *C. coffeicola* was established and used to calculate their percentage incidence and damage. One berry cluster was then randomly selected from the sampled berry cluster and the total number of berries as well as those damage by *H. hampei* and *C. coffeicola* was established and used to estimate their incidence and damage.

## **2.3 Statistical analysis**

Percentage incidence and damage were compared across the Robusta coffee sections using analysis of variance (ANOVA) with general linear model (GLM) procedure of Statistical Analysis System (SAS) software [26]. Means were separated by Tukey's test at 5%.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Distribution of damage caused by pests and diseases on leaves of Robusta coffee**

Table 1 below shows that the damage caused by the coffee leaf miner (CLM), *L. coffeella*, on Robusta coffee leaves varied significantly ( $p=0.0002$ ) within the canopy sections. The highest infestation (23.1%) was recorded in the lower section of the canopy while the lowest (13.5%) was in the upper section of the canopy. Our finding agrees with [27], who recorded higher damage of *L. coffeella* in the lower portions of the coffee canopy while, [28] and [29] reported higher abundance of the leaf miner in lower-canopy leaves of two oak species, *Quercus geminate* and *Q. laevis*. This could in part due to the fact that selection of the oviposition site by the female *L. coffeella* may be highly influenced by variation in the structure [30], age and size [31] as well as chemistry [32] of the leaves. In fact, the leaves located in the lower canopy portion contain less tannins [28, 33] and therefore more attacked by the miners since increased tannin concentration has been reported to negatively affect the growth of lepidopteron caterpillars [34]. The ability of tannins to form complexes with proteins enhances defense mechanism of plants and thereby affecting the growth of insects [35]. Since leaf quality is a major determinant of host choice by many herbivores [36, 37], its variation is expected to influence leaf-miner distribution, abundance

and survivorship [29]. Research studies further show that young coffee leaves contain more secondary metabolites such as phenolic compounds [38] and these may offer protection to these leaves against herbivory by the leaf miners [39]. Our results further showed that the damage caused by the coffee leaf skeletonizer, *L. dohertyi*, varied significantly ( $p < 0.0001$ ) within the Robusta coffee canopy. The highest infestation (36.1%) was recorded in the lower section whereas, the lowest (19.1%) was observed in the upper section of the coffee canopy (Table 1). This could in part be due to the fact that the lower portion of the coffee canopy is more shaded than the upper portion due to self-shading of the coffee [40] since the incidence of *L. dohertyi* has been reported to increase with increase in shade intensity or canopy [22]. This argument is also supported by a study conducted by [41] that observed higher damage by this insect pest on coffee grown in a dense contiguous forest than in less-shaded forest patches in southwestern Ethiopia. This self-shading provides conducive microenvironment for the reproduction, development and survival of the leaf miners through reduction of maximum daily temperatures as well as protecting them from direct impact of rainfall by providing partial shelter [42]. In addition, the incidence of coffee leaf rust (CLR), *H. vastatrix* on Robusta coffee leaves also varied significantly ( $p = 0.0049$ ) within the coffee canopy, with the highest infection (30.5%) being recorded in the lower while the lowest (21.3%) in the upper section of the coffee canopy (Table 1). Similarly, [13,43,44] observed higher *H. vastatrix* severity on leaves located at lower coffee strata. This could in part be due to the fact the self-shading coffee in the lower section of the coffee canopy [40] might alter a number of conditions such as reducing amount of light and temperature as well as increasing leaf area, leaf wetness and soil moisture [13]. All these in turn favor germination and penetration of the *H. vastatrix* urediniospore into the leaves [45]. The self-shading also increases survival of the leaves [46], and thereby the lifespan of sporulating lesions. This results in maintaining stocks of inoculum in the canopy [47], rendering leaves more susceptible to infection. Research studies further show that the less through-fall that reaches the lower sections of the coffee tree [48] prevents wash-off of sporulating lesions, thus, maintaining the viable inoculum stock at the lower tree canopy section [49]. However, the damage caused by the tailed caterpillar, *E. andersoni* on coffee leaves did not significantly ( $p = 0.4972$ ) vary within the coffee canopy but, the highest infestation (26.9%) was recorded in the upper section of the canopy whereas, the lowest (24.3%) was in the lower section of the coffee canopy (Table 1). Our finding supports laboratory studies by [50] that showed that the larvae of another lepidopteran, the forest tent caterpillar, *Malacosoma disstria* (Lepidoptera: Lasiocampidae) consumed more surface area from leaves collected in the upper crown section of the trees. Similarly, [51] reported that leaf biomass removed by herbivores was significantly higher in the upper than lower crown within an Australian rain forest tree. This could in part be due to the fact that herbivores usually prefer young expanding leaves in the upper canopy, because they have higher nutritional value and lower toughness than mature leaves [52]. Higher total nitrogen found in leaves from the upper tree crown could therefore explain the higher performance of this insect [50].

**Table 1:** Variation of incidence and damage of pests and diseases on leaves within the canopy of Robusta coffee, *Coffea canephora* at Kaweri Coffee Plantation, Mubende district, central Uganda

Canopy section	Lc (%)	Ld (%)	Ea (%)	LEB (%)	Hv (%)
Upper	13.5±30.4 b	19.1±31.6 c	26.9±27.1 a	17.4±23.7 a	21.3±33.6 b
Middle	17.7±25.6 b	27.5±27.3 b	24.9±26.0 a	19.3±23.2 a	26.5±32.8 ab
Lower	23.1±21.7 a	36.1±25.2 a	24.3±26.2 a	19.2±20.6 a	30.5±28.8 a
CV	145.2772	102.6048	104.1380	120.8416	122.2893
F value	8.79	23.38	0.70	0.56	5.36
P value	0.0002	<.0001	0.4972	0.5710	0.0049

Lc=*Leucoptera coffeella* (Coffee leaf miners), Ls=*Leucoplemma dohertyi* (Leaf skeletonizers), Ea=*Epicampoptera andersoni* (Tailed caterpillar), LEB=Leaf eating beetles and Hv=*Hemilleia vastatrix* (Coffee leaf rust). Same letters within a column indicate means are not significantly different by Tukey's test ( $P \geq 0.05$ ).

### 3.2 Distribution of damage caused by pests and diseases on Robusta coffee clusters

Table 2 below shows that the damage caused by *Planococcus* spp. varied significantly ( $p=0.0188$ ) across the canopy sections of Robusta coffee, with the highest infestation (18.6%) being recorded in lower section and lowest (9.8%) in the upper section of the coffee canopy. Our finding is in agreement with [53] who recorded more *Planococcus* spp. on the lower third of conilon coffee crops in Brazil. Similarly, [54] observed higher frequency of the striped mealybug, *Ferrisia virgata* (Cockerell) in the lower stratum of cotton canopy, 50 days after infestation. This could in part be due to the fact that mealybugs usually migrate to more conducive habitats created by the self-shading of coffee in the lower canopy [38] so as to find protection against extreme weather conditions and natural enemies [55]. Secondly, since the tending ants that protect *Planococcus* spp. from their predators [56] nest in the soil and under stones [57], they can easily access the leaves located in the lower parts of the coffee canopy. Thirdly, *Planococcus* spp. may prefer to feed on older leaves located in the lower canopy because the young leaves usually accumulate alkaloids such as caffeine [58] that may deter insects from feeding [59]. On the other hand, damage caused by *P. smaragdina* did not significantly ( $p=0.6167$ ) differ within the coffee canopy but, the highest infestation (15.8%) was recorded in the upper section while the lowest (13.5%) was in the lower section of the coffee canopy (Table 2). Similarly, [60] and [17] reported that another related Lepidopteran pest, avocado seed moth, *Stenoma catenifer* preferred to oviposit and consequently attack fruits located in the upper stratum of the avocado trees. The codling moth, *Cydia pomonella* (L.) (Lepidoptera: Tortricidae) has also been reported to be more active or causing more damage in the upper parts compared with the lower parts of its host trees [61]. Other studies also showed that pheromone traps placed near the top of a tree generally captured more *C. pomonella* than traps those placed in the lower parts of the canopy [62]. This could in part be due to the female *P. smaragdina* probably preferring to oviposit her eggs in areas that are more exposed to sunshine and thus, avoiding the shaded areas in the lower coffee canopy created by the self-shading effect [40]. This is true for a number of other moths [e.g. 17, 63]. This argument is further supported by research studies that showed high correlation between oviposition site selection and larval infestation by *S. catenifer* in avocado [60]. Similarly, the incidence of red blister disease (RBD), caused by the fungus, *C. coffeicola* on the Robusta coffee berry clusters

did not significantly ( $p=0.4536$ ) vary within the coffee canopy sections. However, the highest incidence (24.4%) was recorded in the upper section and the lowest (20.6%) was in the lower section of the Robusta coffee canopy (Table 2). This finding is in line with [64] who recorded the highest values of *C. coffeicola* severity and incidence on coffee leaves located in the upper branches. This could in part be due to the less self-shedding in the upper canopy section compared to the lower sections [40]. Shady conditions have been reported to reduce the incidence and severity of *C. coffeicola* [46, 64]. This is most probably because the high solar radiation and temperature in the unshaded systems favor the occurrence and development of *C. coffeicola* [64, 65]. High solar radiation and temperature have been observed to increase both water deficit and nutrition stress conditions [66], thus, increasing susceptibility of the coffee plant to *C. coffeicola* infection [67]. Secondly, high radiation increases production of the photoactive toxic pigment, cercosporin by some isolates of *C. coffeicola* that kills plant cells [68].

**Table 2:** Variation of incidence and damage of pests and diseases on berry clusters within the canopy of Robusta coffee, *Coffea canephora* at Kaweri Coffee Plantation, Mubende district, central Uganda

Canopy portion	PI (%)	Ps (%)	Cc (%)
Upper	9.8±35.9 b	15.8±24.9 a	24.4±31.7 a
Middle	16.8±33.4 ab	13.9±21.6 a	21.2±30.8 a
Lower	18.6±27.2 a	13.5±27.0 a	20.6±34.7 a
CV	211.4101	170.8772	147.4737
F value	4.00	0.48	0.79
P value	0.0188	0.6167	0.4536

PI=*Prophantis smaragdina* (Coffee mealybugs), Ps=*Prophantis smaragdina* (Coffee berry moth), Cc=*Cercospora coffeicola* (Red blister disease). Same letters within a column indicate means are not significantly different by Tukey's test ( $P \geq 0.05$ ).

### 3.3 Distribution of damage caused by pests and diseases on Robusta coffee berries

We further observed that damage caused by the *H. hampei* did not significantly ( $p=0.0689$ ) vary across the Robusta coffee canopy sections (Table 3). Similarly, [69], [70] and [71] reported no significant differences in the level of infestation by of *H. hampei* in the various coffee canopy positions and branch types. However, the highest infestation (28.5%) was recorded in the lower section whereas, the lowest (21.2%) was in the upper section of the coffee canopy (Table 3), as also reported by [72]. Similarly, [14] and [71] observed that traps placed at the lowest level of the coffee tree from the ground (0.5 m) captured the highest number of *H. hampei* compared to traps placed at higher levels above the ground. This could in part be due to the fact that the coffee berries remaining on the ground after harvest have a big potential refuse for *H. hampei* [14] and on hatching, the adult beetles will first colonize the berries in the branches near the ground, resulting into higher population and thus, damage in this section [72]. Secondly, the shady conditions created by self-shading of the coffee in the lower section of the canopy [40] could also in part have contributed to increase in damage by *H. hampei* since shade is known to promote populations and damage of this pest [73]. Furthermore, there was no significant ( $p=0.8922$ ) difference in the incidence of *C. coffeicola* on the Robusta coffee berries. However, the highest incidence (20.7%) was recorded

in the upper section while the lowest (19.1%) was in the middle section of the coffee canopy (Table 3), agreeing with our observations on the berry clusters. Therefore, these observed results could in part be attributed to the same reasons as in case of the berry clusters.

**Table 3:** Variation of incidence and damage of pests and diseases on berries within the canopy of Robusta coffee, *Coffea canephora* at Kaweri Coffee Plantation, Mubende district, central Uganda

Canopy section	Hh (%)	Cc (%)
Upper	21.2± a	20.7± a
Middle	23.9± a	19.1± a
Lower	28.5± a	20.1± a
CV	132.1574	174.8970
F value	2.69	0.11
P value	0.0689	0.8922

Hh=*Hypothenemus hampei* (Ferrari) and Cc=*Cercospora coffeicola* (Red blister disease). Same letters within a column indicate means are not significantly different by Tukey's test ( $P \geq 0.05$ ).

#### 4. Conclusion

Variations in the distributions of pests and diseases within the Robusta coffee canopy sections were observed in this study but, only significant ( $p \leq 0.05$ ) for *L. coffeella*, *L. dohertyi*, *Planococcus* spp and *H. vastatrix*. *L. coffeella*, *L. dohertyi*, *Planococcus* spp., *H. hampei* and *H. vastatrix* attained the highest incidence and damage in the lower section while, *E. andersoni* and tailed caterpillars in the middle section, and, *E. andersoni*, *P. smaragdina* and *C. coffeicola* in the upper section of the Robusta coffee canopy. This information is vital for developing and implementing monitoring techniques and regimes as well as ecologically-informed management strategies for these pests and diseases. Basing on our results therefore, to effectively manage the specific pests and diseases, options such as phyto-sanitary, spraying with pesticides or bio-pesticides and trapping with lures should be targeted in the canopy section where they attain the highest levels. This could reduce labor and the amounts of pesticides used and thus, the costs and risks to human beings and environment in general.

#### 5. Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of this study was that it was not repeated, a one-off.

#### 6. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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