

INVASIVE INSECT: Papaya Mealybug (*Paracoccus marginatus*)

DESCRIPTION: A small white, slow-moving insect. Forms large clumps covered with a white, waxy substance under the leaves and on growing tips of plants, and on papaya fruits. Young leaves of infested plants are distorted, while older leaves and fruits turn black.

THREAT: Infests many important crop and ornamental plants, including papaya, plumeria, and hibiscus, and may affect native plants. Heavily infested plants may lose their leaves, while young plants may even be killed. Flower production of plumeria and hibiscus is greatly reduced. Papaya fruit production decreases, and fruits do not ripen properly.

CURRENT STATUS: Papaya mealybug has been found throughout Palau, except in Hatohobei and Sonsorol States. It is the target of a successful biological control project which began in August 2003. The papaya mealybug is now under control, but if it spreads to uninfested islands it could cause serious problems there.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Do not take any fruits or plants from Koror to the Southwest Islands. If you believe your plants are infested with papaya mealybug, call the Bureau of Agriculture (544-5804).

