

COUNTRIES TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR REGIONAL DESERT LOCUST CONTROL



WORKING WITH countries at risk of desert locust infestations

WORKING TO improve monitoring, response to outbreaks for safeguarding food security

WORKING WITH multiple regional partners, collaboratively

WORKING THANKS TO CLCPRO member countries, AfDB, France, USA, the World Bank, Belgium



The world's last major locust plague lasted two years between 2003 and 2005, escalating from a few thousand hectares to millions, infesting 20 countries across northern Africa and requiring 13 million litres of pesticide. It cost more than half a billion dollars to control and caused more than US\$2.5 billion in harvest losses. The plague eventually declined due to control efforts and unfavourable weather, but left in its wake the loss of food and livelihoods for millions, as well as the environmental impact of the pesticides used across the region.

Today, the chance of such a monumental plague happening again in west and northwest Africa has been astronomically reduced, thanks to the work of the FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Western Region (CLCPRO). One of FAO's three regional locust commissions, CLCPRO works in collaboration with the ten countries in the region.

When FAO established CLCPRO in 2002, it was the first time that West African countries had been linked together in an FAO regional locust

When highly trained control officers in well-equipped vehicles responded to radio reports of a desert locust outbreak in Mali, there were all the elements of an emerging crisis. In reality, it was an extremely well-planned drill, put on after months of preparation by the ten member countries of the FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Western Region (CLCPRO). Simulation is just one tool the CLCPRO countries have developed – along with on-the-ground surveillance operations linked to national, regional and global systems – to ensure a constant watch on locust activities in west and northwest Africa. The countries' autonomous national locust control units have developed contingency plans, and maintain equipment and pesticide stocks for fast response. When CLCPRO was established in 2002, few countries had national locust units or self-financed programmes. But as countries have understood the benefits that such units can have on their food security and economies, they have made national and regional control of desert locust a priority in their budgets.

commission. Working through FAO's Emergency Prevention System (EMPRES), CLCPRO introduced a preventive control strategy that has proved sustainable. The fact

that the 2003/05 plague hit before EMPRES became operational actually confirmed to both the countries and the donors the importance of having a region-wide locust surveillance



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and control strategy, and the capacity to implement and sustain it. In fact, when looking at the cost of CLCPRO's control activities, the expense of controlling the 2003 plague would have paid for 170 years of prevention.

EARLY WARNING, EARLY REACTION ADD UP TO SUCCESS

Once the 2003/05 plague was controlled, CLCPRO combined forces with EMPRES to establish autonomous locust control units for early warning and early reaction to locust outbreaks. The units are now firmly established in the national ministries of agriculture of Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Morocco, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Tunisia, and sustained by their national budgets. This takes them out of the realm of politics, guaranteeing that they remain even if the minister changes.

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CLCPRO provides training and equipment to support national locust officers who survey desert areas and collect information on ecological conditions and locust populations. The national data are linked with FAO's global early warning system, the Desert Locust Information Service (DLIS), in Rome. DLIS analyses data from all countries as well as satellite imagery to forecast the timing, location and scale of locust breeding and migration, in order to provide early warning to member countries. As a result of CLCPRO activities, countries have successfully detected and controlled four outbreaks in West Africa since 2006, with no external assistance and less than 50 000 hectares requiring treatment.

COUNTRIES ESTABLISH WIN-WIN PESTICIDE EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

Many countries in the region maintain pesticide stockpiles to ensure rapid response to any unexpected event. However they run the risk of the stocks going past their expiry date, after which disposal of the toxic material becomes a problem. Thus the CLCPRO countries have established a win-win exchange arrangement, in which those who can afford to maintain the stockpiles share with those who need them. In this way,

the recipient countries receive the pesticides without having to pay to store them, and there is less chance that countries will be left with outdated stock.

In early 2012, CLCPRO countries received a shocking reminder of the importance of having region-wide surveillance and early warning, when a locust outbreak developed on the border of Algeria and Libya at a time when security issues hampered on-the-ground surveillance and pre-emptive control operations. Because of the reduced control, small groups and swarms of locusts formed and made their way south to Mali, Niger and Chad where, again, security issues hampered monitoring and control efforts in many areas, putting the entire region on alert.

But even this escalated threat has shown that the region is much better prepared to deal with an emergency than it was when the 2003 crisis hit. Thanks to the CLCPRO, national control units have well-trained personnel, proper equipment and contingency plans that can be quickly mobilized and put into action.