

September 2006

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DESERT LOCUST CONTROL COMMITTEE

Thirty-eighth Session

Rome, 11-15 September 2006

FOLLOW-UP TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE THIRTY-SEVENTH SESSION (2003) AND THE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION (2004) OF THE DESERT LOCUST CONTROL COMMITTEE (Agenda Item 9)

The **Thirty-seventh Session** of the Desert Locust Control Committee (DLCC) held in September 2003 issued thirteen recommendations (Annex I); its Extraordinary Session in November 2004 made twenty-five (Annex II). Most of these recommendations were to be implemented by FAO but several called for measures by countries with permanent Desert Locust distribution areas. The follow-up given to the recommendations is described below.

1. Surveys were intensified during the last quarter of 2003 to assess the repercussions of the exceptional climatic conditions on the environment and the population dynamics of the Desert Locust. These were carried out within the limit of funds immediately available to FAO and of the material and human resources that could be mobilised in the countries of the Western Region that had received abundant rainfall from July 2003, with additional support from neighbouring countries in the framework of strengthened intra-regional solidarity. Limited control operations were conducted in October and November in Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Sudan. These were mainly in the form of ground operations as the outbreaks at the time were localized and small in scale. At the same time, FAO issued a first alert. The vigilance required of the countries concerned and the regularity of surveys during these months were directly affected by the scarcity of available national resources.
2. The outbreak that occurred after the 37th Session of the DLCC and that then developed into a major upsurge momentarily shelved long-term research activities, such as the impact of climate change on the population dynamics of the Desert Locust. This topic will be submitted to the expertise of the Technical Group.
3. The Secretariat and ECLO worked closely with the FAO Press Office throughout the upsurge, providing the international media and the public at large with regular press releases that had been technically validated by the Locust Group. At country level,

contacts were established and ad hoc staff sometimes recruited, through the FAO Representations, to make sure that clear and precise information was released on the locust situation. For their part, most of the national control units briefed the media on developments of the locust and locust control situation, often through the press office of the ministry of agriculture.

4. FAO staff stationed in Dakar, Senegal, for emergency and post-emergency operations contacted OCLALAV to determine the best way of safeguarding the extensive locust archives stored at its central office.
5. As far as possible, advantage was taken of the upsurge to conduct full-scale field trials of more environmentally friendly pesticides. The results of these trials will be sent to the Pesticide Referee Group for consideration.
6. The recommendation to extend the EMPRES Programme to the Eastern Region was duly noted. However, the emergency situation that occurred in the Western Region in 2003-2005 seriously delayed implementation of the EMPRES Programme, while highlighting the vital need for well managed preventive control in this Region; and as some of the requisite conditions for effective start-up of the Programme were only met in the last quarter of 2005, all efforts are still focused on this region. However, as soon as the Programme has gained momentum, its extension to the Eastern Region will be seriously addressed.
7. A fellowship awarded a student from Niger is enabling him to prepare a doctoral thesis provisionally entitled “Study of the ecological and health risk of two organophosphate pesticides used in the control of the Desert Locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*, Forskål 1775) (*Orthoptera*, *Acrididae*) in Niger”.
8. From late December 2003 to March 2006, successive temporary solutions were able to be found using emergency funding so that RAMSES and remote sensing data, which are crucial for early warning, could continue to be as comprehensive as possible to avoid disrupting the quality of flow of information to all countries affected by the Desert Locust and the international community and to continue disseminating new related technologies to countries still without them. Certain activities have had to cease since March 2006. In the long-term, one partial solution would be to establish a P-2 post within the DLIS, but funds would also need to be allocated to the automated distribution of MODIS images in a format that is easily accessible to countries.
9. In follow-up to the suggestion of the delegate from the United States, the advantages and drawbacks of a possible merger between the South-West Asia Commission and the Central Region Commission will be on the agenda of the 25th Session of the South-West Asia Commission to be held in Tehran, Iran, this November. It should however be noted that, in addition to the fact that each Commission was established to deal with the specifics of its region, the Central Region Commission now has 16 countries, with the recent adherence of Djibouti, Eritrea and Ethiopia. The addition of a further four countries might make the Commission very unwieldy. Although this issue was not discussed at the 25th Session of the Central Region Commission in May 2006, the countries were canvassed for their views which tended to concur that such a merger would create more problems than benefits.
10. The Secretariat consulted with the members of the Technical Group of the Desert Locust Control Committee who recognized that contingency plans were an essential element of preventive control. A workshop on this subject was held in Nouakchott, Mauritania, from 2 to 7 May 2004, attended by 18 participants from the countries concerned and FAO (see document DLCC 06/8). Detailed action plans for the 2005 Sahel summer season were also drawn up at a workshop jointly organized by the World Bank and FAO, in Bamako, in April 2005. These were then budgeted with the donors at a meeting immediately after.

11. The level of annual contributions has remained the same. The Islamic Republic of Iran paid its contribution for 2004 and 2005 but did not follow the Committee's recommendation concerning its arrears – nor indeed did several other countries. Firm decisions need to be taken as total arrears in December 2005 amounted to more than US\$1.5 million, which jeopardizes the activities of the DLCC. It should be noted, however, that many countries made an effort to pay their contributions in 2005 (see Agenda item 13 and document DLCC 06/10 for more details).
12. For the 2004/2005 biennium, there was no need to use the cash balance to bolster budgets for survey operations, the EMPRES Programme or training, as emergency funds also covered these needs during this period (see Agenda item 13 and document DLCC 06/10 for more details).

Many of the recommendations from the **Extraordinary Session** reiterated recommendations that had already been initiated, with modifications to reflect the prevailing emergency context. References are therefore given to avoid repetition.

Locust situation

1. The ongoing dialogue established between the Desert Locust Information Service of the Locust Group at FAO headquarters and all affected countries has been strengthened; in particular, dialogue with the EMPRES Programme Liaison Officers who are generally the National Locust Control Coordinators or the Heads of National Control Units or the Information Officers. The equipment sent through emergency projects has helped strengthen this dialogue. The Commissions have played a key role at the regional level in helping identify inadequacies in human and material resources for survey and control operations and rapidly bridging shortfalls through support from neighbouring countries (covered under Agenda item 6a in more detail; document 06/3a).
2. Training workshops on RAMSES, eLocust2 and the use of satellite imagery were held in the three regions during the first half of 2006, thanks to international funding which also covered the purchase of related equipment. More specific missions and on-the-job training during in-country consultancy work helped spread the use of new technologies, notably the GPS (covered under Agenda item 12 in more detail; document 06/7).

Control measures undertaken by affected countries

3. The EMPRES Programme for the Western Region is now fully operational. The African Development Fund (ADF) of the African Development Bank (ADB), a major contributor to the Programme, made a first disbursement in the last quarter of 2005 once conditionalities had been met. The first Steering Committee meeting was held in Algiers, Algeria, from 4 to 6 March 2006, immediately following the EMPRES-WR Liaison Officers meeting, where the objectives and expected outcomes of the first four-year phase of the Programme, its financial schedule and the plan of operation and budget for 2006 were presented and, as necessary, validated. The recommendations of the 4th Liaison Officers Meeting were endorsed by the Committee, with minor amendments (for more details, see the reports of the 4th EMPRES-WR Liaison Officers Meeting and of the 1st Steering Committee Meeting). Missions to launch the EMPRES-WR Programme were fielded in April and May in Mali, Mauritania and Niger to impress upon national decision-makers the need to establish autonomous Desert Locust control units and to make provisions for financial mechanisms that will ensure their long-term operation (see Agenda item 7a and document DLCC 06/4a for more details).
4. The Extraordinary Session led to the addition of two new regional projects for the North-West African countries to the 14 regional and national projects targeting this area.
5. A roster of experts in various fields of Desert Locust activity has been drawn up. There is clearly an insufficient number of experts to deal effectively with a crisis similar to that of

2003-2005 and their average age is more than fifty. There is a pressing need to beef up training in all the regions concerned.

Crop damage assessment

6. During the crisis, Quality and Environment Surveys of Treatments (QUEST) teams were set up in the affected countries. Their aim is not only to monitor the quality of locust control treatments but also to gauge any undesirable side effects on human health and the environment. Special attention was also paid to the fate of empty pesticide containers and to unused pesticide stocks: a workshop on these topics was jointly organized by the World Bank and FAO in Bamako, Mali, from 15 to 18 May 2006. As regards the assessment of damage to crops and pasture, protocols need to be established, which could be included in the agenda of the next DLCC Technical Group meeting.
7. The methodology employed by the Independent Evaluation Mission during its visits to countries affected by the Desert Locust crisis of 2003-2005 to estimate crop and forage loss could serve as a point of departure for such protocols and the results compiled as reference for future studies.

Assistance from FAO, Desert Locust Control Commissions and donors

8. Clarifications were introduced to avoid any ambiguity in released information between pledges and contributions actually received. Little international use was made of the televised media and one of the lessons from the 2004 campaign was the need to rapidly deploy FAO camera crews to the field; the related cost could be covered by a percentage allocation from each donor-funded project. On the other hand, there were more press releases to the international printed media and more radio interviews.
9. There were prolific discussions on this subject (see document DLCC 06/3f).
10. The Emergency Operations and Rehabilitation Division (TCE) is overseeing internal studies into establishing a command structure with more rapid procedures in emergency operations.
11. More human resources are being added to the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Western Region (CLCPRO). At the end of the third four-year phase of the EMPRES Programme in the Central Region, in December 2005, its coordinator, a senior FAO officer, was assigned to the Western Region. Two FAO officers were recruited in June 2006 (with ADF funding), one responsible for monitoring and evaluation, the other an acridologist, for two- and four-year terms respectively. A technical assistant made available by France is in the process of being appointed.
12. This recommendation addressed to donors was only partially followed in 2005. This has continued to create problems, in particular concerning pesticide stocks and their immediate and future management.
13. There needs to be streamlining of locust crisis management, which could be helped by devising and applying contingency plans.
14. Information in the form of ECLO operations reports, country briefs and press releases, together with information on funds received from donors and summaries of individual contributions, have been posted at: <http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/en/info/tce/index.html>. The updating, detail and quality of presentation of this information improved throughout 2005.

Survey

15. While there is every justification for using aerial resources at the outset of an upsurge to carry out extensive surveys and early treatments in sometimes isolated areas, this option requires the immediate availability of funds, which can be a major constraint for many

countries. Their implementation therefore depends on the creation of national, regional and international emergency funds (see document DLCC 06/3f).

16. This point concerning difficulty of access to certain areas was raised with Mauritania. FAO has not looked specifically into the matter and awaits comments from individual countries.
- 17/18. Intra-regional solidarity has helped reinforce and increase border surveys, mobilizing the teams of the different countries concerned. Moreover, such surveys and interchanges between experts are included among the stipulated activities of the EMPRES-WR Programme.

Contingency planning

19. Reference is made to paragraph 10 of the follow-up to the recommendations of the 37th Session and to paragraphs 13 and 15 of the follow-up to the Extraordinary Session.
20. Workshops involving all partners, usually co-financed by the World Bank and FAO, were held in the countries to draw lessons from the completed locust control campaign and prepare for the next. Given the evolution of the locust situation, these have helped improve plans of action for the following campaign but have not yet had any impact on contingency planning.
21. ECLO is still operational and will probably continue to be so until completion of the last emergency project managed by FAO.
22. Only the Commissions for the Central and the Western Regions are involved in coordination with FAO headquarters, which takes place at different levels through regular, often daily, contact (email or telephone) with their Secretaries and joint participation in meetings and workshops. The only functioning regional organization is the DLCO-EA with which ECLO works closely, especially during locust infestations in Eritrea and Ethiopia.
23. Donor confidence in the goal shared with FAO of rapidly halting the Desert Locust upsurge was evidenced by the scale of multilateral contributions (over US\$74 million).

Research

24. The opportunity of conducting applied research activities requires better training of all staff. Such is the direction of FAO's vast, ambitious programme of training of master trainers, step-down training, *in situ* training by consultants and formation of QUEST teams. Whenever possible, full-scale trials of more environmentally friendly pesticides have been carried out (see paragraph 5 of the follow-up to the recommendations of the 37th Session).

Evaluation and monitoring

25. The eagerly awaited findings of the Independent Evaluation Mission should help to improve the management and monitoring of future campaigns.

ANNEX I**LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 37TH SESSION****(SEPTEMBER 2003)**

1. It being noted that the rainfall in 2003 had been altogether exceptional in the Western Region, with some countries having received more rain than the average for ten years, the Committee **RECOMMENDED** that, in the short term, a special and urgent effort be made to study the immediate repercussions that exceptional rainfall conditions might have on the population dynamics of the Desert Locust and on the vegetation with which the species was associated. In the longer term, it was **RECOMMENDED** that the DLCC Technical Group should study the possible links between climate change and Desert Locust population dynamics and distribution.
2. The Committee recognized that conditions were very favourable for locust breeding over extensive areas of prime locust habitat in the other two Regions, albeit that locust populations were very low, and **RECOMMENDED** that National Locust Units in key locust countries should maintain vigilance and carry out regular surveys in the coming months.
3. In respect of false reports of Desert Locust being issued by the Press, it was **RECOMMENDED** that National Locust Units should address the problem where it occurred in their National Press, and that the Secretariat should seek the assistance of the FAO Press Office in approaching the International Press, to encourage that it check with FAO before issuing reports on Desert Locust.
4. The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Secretariat, on behalf of the DLCC, approach OCLALAV with a view to creating an electronic database of OCLALAV's archives in the same way that had been done for the archives held by FAO, and that the DLCC contribute to the costs, subject to the availability of funds.
5. The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that member countries and the EMPRES Programme should continue to encourage research and operational trials using alternatives to chemical pesticides such as *Metarhizium* and PAN, and that the Pesticide Referee Group be asked to advise on their suitability.
6. The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the EMPRES Programme should be extended to the Eastern Region as soon as possible.
7. The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the awarding of Fellowships should continue.
8. The Committee, being informed that the current inputs being provided by the RAMSES/Remote-sensing consultant were coming to an end in December 2003, and expressing great concern that, without this support, these crucial elements of Early Warning may no longer function properly or be sustainable, **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** that FAO should find the means by which such support could be maintained at least for the foreseeable future.
9. The delegate from the United States suggested that perhaps an option could be to merge the South-West Asia Commission into the Central Region Commission. After considerable discussion, it was **RECOMMENDED** that first the matter (of re-establishing a full-time Commission Secretary for South-West Asia) should be raised by the concerned countries at the FAO Conference. If that did not resolve the issue, the member countries of these two Commissions could consider the advantages and disadvantages of such a merger, at their upcoming Sessions in 2004. It was noted that there was no suggestion that the Central and Western Commissions should merge, and

that in general the existing Commissions had been created because each could address the specificities of the Desert Locust problem in its own region.

10. The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Secretariat should consult with the DLCCTG members both on the topics selected for discussion and on the proposed arrangements. The Secretariat should implement the consensus agreed to by TG members.
11. The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the annual contributions of all member countries, including that of I.R.Iran should remain the same. In recognition of the difficulties that I.R.Iran had suffered, the Committee **RECOMMENDED** that, given the exceptional circumstances, Iran should be requested to pay off 75% of its arrears as quickly as possible, on completion of which the remaining 25% would be waived. The Committee warmly acknowledged and thanked those countries that regularly paid their contributions fully and had no arrears. It further **RECOMMENDED** that other member countries make an extra effort to pay their annual contributions in good time and to settle as much of their arrears as possible before the next DLCC, so that sufficient funds would be available to maintain the momentum that had developed between 2001 and 2003.
12. The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that any additional cash balances that might develop during 2004/2005, should be used to boost the budgets for survey operations, EMPRES and training.
13. The Committee supported the vote with acclaim, and **RECOMMENDED** that the DLCC invite Mr. Hafraoui to the next Session, and award him a medal.

ANNEX II

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXTRAORDINARY SESSION (NOVEMBER 2004)

The Desert Locust Situation

1. All locust-affected countries should establish a dialogue with the Desert Locust Information Service (DLIS) at the Locust Group, FAO HQ, and with the Commission Secretariats, to verify whether sufficient detail was provided in the information being sent to FAO and, if not, where the gaps were. A great effort should be made to ensure that the gaps be filled quickly, so that the best quality of forecast would be issued by DLIS.
2. During locust emergencies, maximum use should be made of available technology including GPS, RAMSES, and eLocust, to make easier the task of dealing with large quantities of data. Where countries require it, training should be organized by DLIS.

Control measures undertaken by affected countries

3. Participants felt that the preventive strategy for locust control had been successful in the Central Region, but, in the absence of an EMPRES Programme in the Western Region, had not been implemented there. To cope better with the situation the EMPRES/WR should be launched as a full field programme with donor support as soon as possible.
4. Noting the considerable efforts to control locust infestations made by the North African countries using their own resources, participants urged the international donor community to add their support.
5. A roster of experts in the various locust-related activities should be established by FAO and should include experts from all the three Regions, for use in identifying expertise to be fielded during the emergency.

Crop damage assessment

6. Damage to pastureland, together with damage to crops and the environment, should be included in future assessments.
7. At least one dedicated team should be fielded in each affected country during future campaigns to collect data on damage to crops and pastures, and on the socio-economic impact on farmers.

FAO, the Locust Commissions, and donor assistance

8. Better publicity in the Press, with greater use of television, should accompany appeals made to the international donor community, in order to encourage a faster response. Care should be taken not to announce pledges until cash had been received.
9. FAO, in consultation with donors, should consider establishing a substantial emergency fund that could be drawn on at the beginning of an upsurge so that rapid reaction can follow early warning.
10. FAO should streamline its operations so that equipment, supplies, aircraft, consultants and operational funds can be provided more quickly to affected countries.

11. Given the numerous tasks allocated to the Secretariat of the FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Western Region (CLCPRO), including the coordination of the EMPRES Western Region Programme, participants recommended that the Commission be reinforced in respect of its human, material and financial resources.

12. Donors are encouraged to channel funding for locust control through FAO whenever appropriate. When donors choose to provide assistance bilaterally, they are advised to provide the FAO and other donors with full information well in advance of delivery, including an estimate of the monetary value of in-kind contributions. This will facilitate FAO's coordination role in tracking, timing and avoiding duplication in the provision of resources, and allow an estimate to be made of the total value of resources donated from all sources.

13. Affected countries should announce contributions, as pledged and received, on their website. The National Emergency Locust Steering Committees need to be timely and fully aware of both donor contributions and resources mobilized from national resources. FAO can provide models of how this can be done and provide some technical assistance if needed.

14. FAO should provide donors with up-to-date information about the spending of their funds. To facilitate the communication, the information could be put on a restricted website.

Survey

15. Early on in a locust upsurge, helicopters should be used to survey the infestations rapidly and to determine their extent/scale. Large infestations should be treated mainly by air in order to achieve the necessary coverage.

16. Investigations should be organized by FAO to determine how areas favourable for locusts in affected countries that were difficult to access could be surveyed.

17. The importance of border surveys was stressed by many participants of locust affected countries and should therefore be encouraged.

18. To strengthen national survey and control capabilities the use of such teams from other countries should be encouraged and facilitated.

Contingency planning

19. The elaboration of contingency plans at the national, regional and international level should be considered a priority in order to be able to respond accurately to different levels of locust threat. The countries should be assisted by FAO in preparing and improving contingency plans.

20. Workshops should be held in each country at the end of each campaign involving all partners to review all aspects of the actions undertaken and identify the lessons learned. The results will be needed to improve the contingency plans.

21. ECLO should remain operational and supported until the next remission of upsurges.

22. ECLO should strive towards greater coordination among the Commissions, the regional organizations and the affected countries of the invasion area.

23. The donors and ECLO should develop the means of necessary cooperation to achieve their common goal.

Research

24. The opportunity of having gregarious locust populations and large scale control campaigns at the moment should be used to carry out appropriate applied research, such as on: improved survey methods, evaluation of the effectiveness of control operations, appropriate application techniques, environmental monitoring and testing of environmental friendly products, such as IGRs, mycopesticides and other products.

Evaluation and monitoring

25. The lessons learned and to be learned of the campaign should be captured fully by evaluation, assessment and monitoring procedures. This also concerns the effect of the present and future campaign on food security.