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منظمة الأغذية
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et
l'agriculture

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

DESERT LOCUST CONTROL COMMITTEE

Thirty-eighth Session

Rome, 11-15 September 2006

SOUTH-WEST ASIA COMMISSION (Agenda Item 7d)

1. INTRODUCTION

The major event of the FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in South-West Asia (SWAC) was the holding of the Twenty-fourth Session in New Delhi, India in January 2005. Two major Commission activities took place in the Region during the past two years: the annual joint border survey between I.R. Iran and Pakistan in April of 2005 and 2006, and a regional workshop on the use of RAMSES, eLocust2 and remote sensing imagery held in Jodhpur, India in June 2006.

2. SUMMARY OF THE 24TH SESSION

The Member Countries made several important decisions and recommendations at the last Session of the Commission:

1. to improve the monitoring of the traditional summer breeding areas along both sides of the Indo-Pakistan border by increasing the coverage of surveys and by exchanging information between the two countries and FAO, in particular reports of monthly border meetings between India and Pakistan;
2. to improve the I.R. Iran / Pakistan Joint Border Survey by incorporating new technologies, and by training participants and equipping teams so that future surveys will be more effective;
3. to address the stocks of obsolete pesticides in India and Pakistan. So far, little progress has been made on this issue due to a lack of donor interest and financial resources;
4. to raise the issue of re-establishing the Secretary post of the Commission at the FAO Conference. For the past two decades, the Secretariat for this Commission has been provided by the AGPP Locust Group. Re-establishment of the Secretary post is mainly a financial problem that is compounded by the fact that there may not be sufficient work to warrant a full-time post for a Commission with a relatively small number of member countries. Given that FAO's resources continue to decrease, there is not much chance of establishing a new post. In the meantime, it was agreed that the country holding the Chairmanship should assist in distributing information to Member Countries and help promote the Commission's activities;

5. to translate the FAO Desert Locust Master Trainer Manual and the Standard Operating Procedures into local languages in India and I.R. Iran;
6. to incorporate new technologies and enhanced communication systems in the early warning and locust management programmes in the member countries;
7. to extend the EMPRES programme to the Eastern (South-West Asia) Region.

3. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

3.1. Joint Survey

The annual 30-day joint survey was carried out by I.R. Iran and Pakistan in the spring breeding areas in southeastern Iran and western Pakistan in April of 2005 and 2006. Prevailing drought conditions in both years limited locust activity and no significant infestations were seen during the surveys. For the first time, eLocust2 and MODIS remote sensing imagery were used in the 2006 joint survey to record and transmit data and to detect areas of green vegetation, respectively. The joint survey results are used for planning the timing and scale of locust survey and control operations in the summer breeding areas along the Indo-Pakistan border.

3.2. Workshops

The FAO Desert Locust Information Service (DLIS) has initiated several new technologies to improve early warning in affected countries. DLIS organized and conducted a five-day regional workshop in Jodhpur, India in June 2006 for national locust information officers who are using these technologies. Participants were trained in using the latest version of RAMSES, the custom geographic information system (GIS) for managing and analyzing locust and environmental data, on eLocust2, the handheld device for field officers to record and transmit survey and control data, and on the use of remote sensing imagery to identify areas where rain may have fallen and where green vegetation may be present. After the workshop, participants will train survey and control officers in their country on using eLocust2.

Eight participants were invited to the workshop: one from I.R. Iran, two from Pakistan and five from India. Unfortunately, the Pakistani participants could not attend and were replaced by an additional two participants from India. The FAO Locust Forecasting Officer, K. Cressman, was the workshop trainer.

Another regional workshop was organized jointly between FAO and WMO to discuss the meteorological data needs of the national locust units for locust survey and control operations. The workshop was held in Muscat, Oman in April 2006 and a representative from the national locust unit and one from the national meteorological service attended from 11 countries. From the South-West Asia Region, representatives from India and Pakistan attended, funded from the Commission.

4. CONCLUSION

Despite the lack of a Secretary post, the Commission is very active and several important activities took place that have contributed to improvements in early warning and control in the member countries. The DLCC should consider the following questions during the discussion:

- (a) Is there a need to continue the annual I.R. Iran / Pakistan joint survey on a regular basis given the prevailing drought in the Region and the very few locusts seen during past surveys?
- (b) Is there a justified need to re-establish the Secretary post for the Commission if these services can continue to be adequately covered by the AGP Locust Group?
- (c) Should EMPRES be extended to the Eastern Region and, if so, how?