

Septembre 2006



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DESERT LOCUST CONTROL COMMITTEE

Thirty-eighth Session

Rome, 11-15 September 2006

TECHNICAL GROUP COMPOSITION AND FUTURE ACTIVITIES (Agenda item 12)

A short historical perspective of the Desert Locust Control Committee Technical Group is presented prior to suggesting some possible mechanisms that might improve its usefulness to the DLCC and FAO.

1. BACKGROUND

In **June 1989**, the 30th Session of the Desert Locust Control Committee (DLCC) urged that consideration be given to reactivating the Technical Advisory Committee on Desert Locust Control that provided briefs to the DLCC on technical issues up until 1966.

In **June 1990**, the TAC reconvened to review the Desert Locust situation and several technical issues such as information, remote sensing, surveys, control, research and training.

In **September 1990**, shortly after the end of the last Desert Locust plague, the 31st Session of the DLCC recommended the establishment of a Desert Locust Technical Group to:

- study and report to the DLCC on all technical and scientific matters pertaining to the control of the Desert Locust;
- report and advise on specific issues referred to the Technical Group by the DLCC;
- oversee and follow-up recommendations of the DLCC;
- advise the Secretariat on the agenda for future meetings of the DLCC.

The composition of the Technical Group should be a small number of locust experts of the highest technical standing nominated for a period of two years. The Committee recommended T. Benhalima, S. Hadramy, A. Karrar, M. Shafi and L. Soumare. The Technical Group was given the authority to co-opt additional members according to specific matters to be discussed. FAO would provide the Secretariat and its activities would be funded from the International Trust Fund 9161. The Technical Group should meet twice a year.

In **February 1992**, the First Session of the Technical Group met and proposed that future meetings should be held on an annual basis rather than twice a year as recommended by the 31st Session of the DLCC.

In **January 1995**, the Third Session of the Technical Group proposed amending the composition of its membership. The 33rd Session of the DLCC, also in January 1995, requested that eight participants (B. Chara, S. Ghaout, C. Gueye, N. Mahjoub, A. Rassipour, M. Shafi, A. Showler and A. van Huis) review the Technical Group's terms of reference, duration and composition. Based on their review, the Committee adopted the following:

- Revised terms of reference
 - analyse and advise on specific issues as identified by the DLCC;
 - review and report on progress in carrying out the recommendations of the DLCC;
 - advise the Secretariat on the agenda for future meetings of the DLCC.
- Criteria for Technical Group membership
 - the Technical Group members be chosen on the basis of their individual ability, expertise and experience;
 - the membership among locust-affected countries should include as wide a range of geographic experience and interest in locust issues as possible;
 - the membership of the Technical Group will be expanded by three members from the donor countries;
 - the regional commissions and organizations be associated with the Technical Group as observers.
- Duration of the Technical Group
 - The Technical Group is permanent and half of its members will be changed every two years;
 - The Technical Group should convene normally once each year.
- Composition of the Technical Group
 - The Technical Group will be composed of five members from the affected countries and three donor countries.

The following experts were recommended for the Technical Group: B. Chara (Algeria), A. El-Gammal (Egypt), C. Gueye (Senegal), A.M. Karrar (DLCO-EA) and M. Shafi (Pakistan). It was noted that the Technical Group would be able to call upon specialized expertise when required.

In **October 1998**, the Sixth Session of the Technical Group recommended that a paper on the role of the Technical Group should be prepared for the 35th Session of the DLCC. It was further recommended that members of the Group should meet at the end of the DLCC, draw up an agenda for the next Group meeting, based on the DLCC recommendations and designed to promote technical discussion, allocate the preparation of papers to members, the Secretariat or consultants, and agree on which experts it would be useful to invite to provide specialist inputs.

In **May 1999**, the 35th Session of the DLCC addressed the future role of the Technical Group and its relation to the EMPRES/CR Consultative Committee. It was concluded that the Technical Group covered the whole range of the Desert Locust and served a distinct function from the EMPRES Consultative Committee that existed for the Central Region only. In an effort to ensure that Technical Group discussions focused on technical issues, it was proposed that towards the end of each DLCC, Group members should meet, identify technical issues worthy of discussion or which had been referred to it by the DLCC, and decide on who would be asked to prepare working papers on the topics funded, if necessary, by the DLCC Trust Fund.

Some DLCC participants were of the view that the Technical Group had not addressed enough technical issues at its last meeting, and papers were being presented for information rather than for technical discussion. Others felt that the functions of both the DLCC and the Technical Group had become somewhat blurred with some technical papers presented at the DLCC and some policy matters at the Technical Group. The Committee nevertheless unanimously agreed that the

Technical Group should continue to function and should hold one meeting per year. In order to ensure that discussions concentrated on technical matters, it was decided to ask a representative sub-committee to re-examine the terms of reference of the Technical Group and to report back to the DLCC before the end of the Session.

Based on the sub-committee's review, the Committee agreed to revise:

- the mandate of the Technical Group so as "to study and report to the DLCC on all technical and scientific matters pertaining to the control and management of the Desert Locust, as referred to it by the DLCC";
- the membership of the Technical Group so it "will be composed of five members to be chosen by the FAO Secretariat on the basis of their individual ability, expertise and experience relevant to locust management, augmented as necessary by outside expertise;
- the duration of the members of the Technical Group so they "will be nominated by the DLCC for a period of four years";
- the frequency of the Technical Group meetings to "once per year".

In **September 2001**, the 36th Session of the DLCC noted that the Technical Group was not meeting on an annual basis. The Secretariat proposed that Technical Group meetings be held in the year between the DLCC sessions.

2. DISCUSSION

The various sessions of the DLCC Technical Group, its membership and revisions are summarized in Annex 1. In practice, very little has changed regarding the role and membership of the Technical Group. From 1999 onwards, it ceased to review the status of recommendations made by previous DLCC sessions and to advise the Secretariat on the agenda for future sessions. This was to allow the Technical Group to concentrate solely on any technical and scientific matters pertaining to Desert Locust management and control. Yet, the last two sessions of the DLCC and the Extraordinary Session held in December 2004 have referred only three technical issues to the Technical Group: update the *FAO Spray Monitoring Form*, examine contingency planning and study the possible links between climate change and Desert Locust population dynamics and distribution.

It could be argued that some of the above items are not particularly appropriate for the Technical Group or beyond their means. Perhaps locust-affected countries and decision-makers should determine what information is required on the *FAO Spray Monitoring Form*. Research institutes may be more suitable for carrying out climate change studies.

Furthermore, the Technical Group was not consulted during the 2003-05 Desert Locust emergency by DLCC or FAO.

The Multilateral Evaluation of the 2003-05 Desert Locust Campaign recommended that full advantage be taken of the Technical Group to review the needs for the development of improved Desert Locust survey and control means, and prepare appropriate proposals. It is less clear whom these proposals should be addressed to.

Despite the recommendation of the 35th Session of the DLCC (1999) that the Technical Group should consist of five experts, the current membership contains six persons: a Member of Parliament from the Algerian Government, an ex-Director of the Australian Plague Locust Commission, a locust expert, a bio-geographer and two entomology professors.

The Technical Group has met twice in the past six years because there have not been enough suitable topics for discussion.

3. IMPROVEMENTS TO THE TECHNICAL GROUP

In order to improve the usefulness of the Technical Group, several options could be considered.

2.1. No change – the Technical Group's mandate, membership and frequency of meetings remains unchanged to that what was agreed by the 35th Session of the DLCC although the number of members should be clarified, either five or six. This option may not be very satisfactory if the Committee questions the usefulness of the Technical Group and believes that improvements are required.

2.2. Review and revise – a sub-committee could be established to propose changes to the mandate, membership and frequency of meetings of the Technical Group. This option is the approach that has been taken in the past with, perhaps, only limited results.

2.3. Expert advice – the Technical Group could be decommissioned and replaced by non-paid technical experts in, for example, communication and information systems, remote sensing, meteorology, control, environment, damage assessment, pesticide management, training, economics, planning, and new technologies, who could be appointed by the Director-General of FAO and be called upon to provide advice as needed. Internet-based tools (email, forums, network, etc.) could be used to facilitate such advice in a more timely and meaningful manner as well as to replace the formal conveying of meetings. It may be useful to maintain an updated roster of appropriate experts in key fields. The advice does not necessarily need to be limited to technical and scientific issues that arise in the DLCC but also in the Locust Group, the Regional Commissions and in EMPRES. In this case, it may be more practical that the Locust Group takes the lead in contacting these experts and seeking their advice. Such contacts could be reported to future DLCC sessions.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The question of the role of the Technical Group, its mandate, membership and usefulness is not a new one. These issues have been discussed repeatedly during the past 15 years at various sessions of the Desert Locust Control Committee. The standard recommendation has been to establish a sub-committee to review these issues and make suitable proposals that are then adopted by the Committee.

Taking the above into consideration, the DLCC should address the following questions during the discussion:

- (a) Does the DLCC and FAO currently profit from the advice provided by the Technical Group?
- (b) Is DLCC the right body to guide the Technical Group or should the Locust Group be allowed to address issues to the Technical Group as they arise?
- (c) Which of the options outlined above is preferred and for what reason?

Annex 1. Previous sessions of the DLCC Technical Group, its membership and revisions*Table 1. The dates and topics of previous Technical Group meetings.*

Session	Date	Topics discussed
1	18-20 February 1992	DL management strategies, research, training; 31 st DLCC recommendations; 32 nd DLCC agenda
2	13-17 September 1993	DL control strategies, research, pesticide disposal, environmental issues; 33 rd DLCC agenda
3	11-13 January 1995	Information system, control potential, preventive control, research, environmental issues, obsolete pesticides, training; Technical Group membership; 32 nd DLCC recommendations; 33 rd DLCC agenda
4	21-24 March 1995	DL economics, control strategies, EMPRES implementation and extension
5	25-28 June 1996	Communication systems, remote sensing, surveys, campaign efficiency; status of economic studies, research, EMPRES; environmental issues; 33 rd DLCC recommendations; 34 th DLCC agenda
6	5-8 October 1998	EMPRES progress, control potential, research priorities, DLCCCTG future, Locustox workshop; 34 th DLCC recommendations; 35 th DLCC agenda
7	12-15 June 2000	Updating DL guidelines, environmental monitoring, training and research network, GPS, APLC methods, DLCC mandate
8	2-7 May 2004	Contingency planning (Nouakchott)

Table 2. The members of the TAC and the Technical Group, 1990-2006.

Session	Members
TAC	S. Bamofleh, M. Bensalah, A.M. Karrar, A. Khasawneh, M. Launois, J. Magor, N. Mahjoub, L. McCulloch, I. Murshed, J. Roffey, M. Shafi, L. Soumare, W. Thomas
1	S. Bamofleh, T. Benhalima, A.M. Karrar, M. Shafi, L. Soumare
2	Y. Ashour, T. Benhalima, A.M. Karrar, M. Shafi, L. Soumare
3	Y. Ashour, T. Benhalima, A.M. Karrar, M. Shafi, L. Soumare
4	L. Bonneau, B. Chara, A. El-Gammal, C. Gueye, A.M. Karrar, J. Rosenberg, M. Shafi, A. Showler
5	L. Bonneau, B. Chara, A. El-Gammal, C. Gueye, A.M. Karrar, J. Rosenberg, M. Shafi, A. Showler
6	S. El Basher, S. Ghaout, S. Krall, M. Mohsin, P. Ottesen, A. van Huis
7	B. Chara, S. El Basher, G. Hamilton, M. Lecoq, J. Magor, A. van Huis
8	B. Chara, S. El Basher, L. McCulloch, M. Lecoq, J. Magor, A. van Huis

Table 3. Changes in the mandate, membership and frequency of meetings of the Technical Group, 1990 -2006.

Date	Mandate	Membership	Meetings
Sept 1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study and report to the DLCC on all technical and scientific matters pertaining to the control of the Desert Locust; • report and advise on specific issues referred to the Technical Group by the DLCC; • oversee and follow-up recommendations of the DLCC; • advise the Secretariat on the agenda for future meetings of the DLCC. 	5 locust experts nominated for 2 years	twice/year
Feb 1992			once/year
Jan 1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analyse and advise on specific issues as identified by the DLCC; • review and report on progress in carrying out the recommendations of the DLCC; • advise the Secretariat on the agenda for future meetings of the DLCC. 	5 affected countries + 3 donors; half of the members changed every 2 years	once/year
May 1999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to study and report to the DLCC on all technical and scientific matters pertaining to the control and management of the Desert Locust, as referred to it by the DLCC 	5 experts chosen by FAO for 4 years	once/year