



DESERT LOCUST CONTROL COMMITTEE

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Presentation of preliminary results of the EMPRES-WR evaluation mission and recommendations (Agenda Item 21)

Introduction

The Desert Locust constitutes a formidable threat to agriculture over a very large area. In periods of invasion, it can endanger the livelihoods of one tenth of the world's population in some sixty countries.

The Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Western Region (CLCPRO), which covers ten countries (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal and Tunisia), is charged with promoting at national, regional and international level all actions needed to ensure preventive control and to deal with Desert Locust invasions.

The EMPRES Programme is designed to help affected countries with their prevention and control efforts and has been implemented in the Western Region since 2006. A large proportion of Programme activities focus on four countries accounting for a large part of the locust breeding area (Chad, Mauritania, Mali and Niger), commonly referred to as the “*frontline countries*”. Five support projects have been approved for the EMPRES Western Region Programme, including a project costing 6 million dollars over four years financed by the African Development Bank (AfDB) and implemented by FAO through the CLCPRO.

Evaluation

The evaluation centred on activities funded by all FAO donors in the Western Region, with a particular focus on the AfDB project. Its purpose was to provide donors, CLCPRO member countries and FAO with an appraisal of progress of the Programme and its impact. One explicit function of the evaluation was to determine whether a second phase was needed and, if it was, to plan its main features.

The evaluation mission visited Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Algeria and Tunisia to meet national authorities, surveillance and control operators and donor representatives. Contacts were also made with herder representatives. The mission visited Niamey on 22 and 23 December 2008

to present its main conclusions and recommendations to the Fourth Meeting of the Programme Steering Committee.

Programme design and implementation

Financing for the Programme is provided by the African Development Bank, USAID, IFAD, the CLCPRO, FAO and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Other projects not managed by FAO also contribute: a project from the Fonds de solidarité prioritaire (FSP France), designed to build national capacity to formulate Desert Locust risk management plans and to establish financial mechanisms ensuring continuity of preventive control; as well as the Africa Emergency Locust Projects (AELP) financed by the World Bank in seven Sahel countries. All these projects complement each other relatively well.

For the period 2006-2009, the FAO EMPRES Programme accounted for 10 million US dollars, equivalent to 19% of the total amount budgeted for preventive control in the Western Region (55 million US dollars). The World Bank's AELP provides some 30 percent of the total, while funds and resources from the CLCPRO countries themselves account for some 44 percent.

These different projects all started at the same time, after the 2003-05 crisis, and are due for completion in 2009 or 2010. The current period is therefore relatively fortunate for the financing of locust control, which allows for significant progress but also raises problems of coordination and absorption capacity for all the activities funded under one project or the other. Moreover, a sharp fall in financing is to be expected in 2010 which could undermine the sustainability of Programme outcomes. A second phase will no doubt be necessary to ensure a "soft landing" of programme support and the sustainability of built capacity.

The Programme is generally well designed and the objectives realistic. The EMPRES Western Region Programme has placed an emphasis on establishing strong national locust control units that enjoy administrative and budgetary autonomy. The evaluation was able to confirm the wisdom of this approach, to the extent that Programme outputs were better used and maintained where such autonomous units already existed (Mauritania, Mali) than where they were still absent when the support was provided (Niger, Chad). Nevertheless, control unit autonomy should not come at the expense of working relations and trust with other administrations.

The CLCPRO head office in Algiers does not meet United Nations security standards so FAO staff are prevented from working there. This hampers its proper functioning, although short-term solutions have been found and very many activities have been carried out during the evaluation period.

After nearly three years, the AfDB project has disbursed 2.6 million US dollars, equivalent to 43 percent of its budget. At the present rate of disbursement, the project will have spent its budget by the end of 2011. It will therefore be necessary either to raise the pace of implementation or to extend project duration.

Effects and Impact

The frontline countries have made huge progress in organizing and conducting preventive control. Surveys are regularly conducted and a solid regional cooperation is now in place. However, the existence of "grey areas" in prospecting campaigns, caused by inaccessibility or lack of security, puts the effectiveness of preventive control at risk. The use of satellite imagery, local informant networks and joint surveys by teams from several countries around such "grey areas" is developing and to be encouraged. Preventive control teams should also be prepared to tackle intermediary situations (outbreaks) that are made more probable by the existence of such "grey areas".

Information management, a function shared with the DLIS, has greatly improved thanks to RAMSES and *eLocust* which have facilitated surveys and reporting. The system is nevertheless extractive, with analysis taking place primarily in Rome. National services only use a fraction of the data processing potential of the RAMSES software.

There are numerous environmental protection initiatives but these are not always well coordinated, despite the CLCPRO's efforts to produce standardized environmental specifications. The QUEST (*Quality, Environmental Protection, and Safety Treatments*) teams are much appreciated as they help safeguard the health of control workers. However, checks on the environmental quality of treatment deserve to be reinforced. Despite logistical difficulties, large-scale use of alternative control methods (mycopesticides like *Metarhizium*) is making progress (Australia, China, Yemen, East Timor, Senegal). The EMPRES WR Programme is supporting the development of new formulations to make this biopesticide fully operational. It must be stressed that taking environmental aspects into visible consideration is a prerequisite to restore the trust of livestock owners, some of whom have a poor opinion of locust control operations.

Continuity

The Programme was meant to provide temporary support to national and regional locust control capacities, until the national locust control services and the CLCPRO could take over responsibility for ensuring continuity at national and regional levels. Although the existence of these structures is meant to ensure continuity, some interlocutors expressed doubts that preventive control would continue after the EMPRES Programme, arguing that frontline countries were reluctant to cover recurring costs. As with other crisis prevention activities, the frustrating feature of locust preventive control is that its success reduces its visibility, since there are no crises. It is important therefore to continue raising decision-maker awareness and information level through advocacy and targeted communication.

Another point is that the locust control mechanisms in frontline countries cannot expand *ad infinitum*. The financial resources that are currently available fuel their growth but, paradoxically, care is needed to contain that growth if there is to be continuity. Similarly, the CLCPRO will not be able to afford all the international experts that it now has available, so thought must be given to the possibility of handing over to national experts in the second phase.

The evaluation of the 2003-05 locust control campaign noted weak member country ownership of the CLCPRO and recommended that ways and means be found to make it statutorily more independent of FAO. However, the CLCPRO statutes cannot be changed in isolation, without reviewing the statutes of all FAO commissions. The evaluation mission believes that the political will of the Member States is a pivotal factor. As the Independent External Evaluation of FAO clearly stated, the members of a multilateral organization need to assume responsibility for determining the policies and priorities of their organization. The CLCPRO will be owned by its members when those members allow this to happen, for example when they send not only technicians but also decision-makers to the Commission's biennial meetings. The proposal for a conference of CLCPRO agricultural ministers, already envisaged in 2006 to promote ownership of the Commission by its member governments, merits all the support currently given by its Secretariat.

Recommendations

1. FAO and the AfDB should establish a framework agreement on procedures to be followed in emergency projects financed by the Bank and implemented by FAO.
2. A second phase will be needed for the EMPRES Western Region Programme to ensure the continuity of built capacity.
3. While continuing to raise donor awareness of the need for a special emergency fund, FAO and its partners should not neglect existing emergency funds, such as the Donors Common Fund (FCD) in Niger and the United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).
4. A further extension of project duration should be envisaged, until at least the end of 2010.
5. The programme of work would benefit from being simplified and made more strategic by adopting clearer priorities and integrating certain elements that are currently independent.
6. To minimize the impact of “grey areas”, the Programme and affected countries should continue to develop local informant networks and use of satellite imagery, and should intensify joint surveys along the borders of those “grey areas”.
7. Niger should appoint the staff of the Centre national de lutte antiacridienne (CNLA) as soon as possible so that this structure can make the best possible use of Programme support.
8. Programme training in locust information management should place more emphasis on data analysis to guide decision-making at national level. The DLIS should also seek to involve the most experienced survey officers in the monthly analysis of locust data.
9. FAO should insist more forcefully to obtain travel authorizations from UNDSS so as to install RAMSES 3 and *eLocust 2* in Chad.
10. The reagents for “test mate” kits should be regularly purchased and supplied by FAO to the CLCPRO countries.
11. The monitoring of treatment quality and impact on non-target fauna should be reinforced, and storekeepers and guards should also be given health checks.
12. QUEST teams should continue to intervene in a wide range of phytosanitary campaigns (grasshoppers, birds) to maximize their contribution to environmental protection and the health of control teams.
13. *Metarhizium* should be tested on a large scale. A proposal from Algeria to test the product on the Moroccan Locust warrants support from the EMPRES Programme.
14. Crisis management plans call for a more integrated approach, with a single plan per country rather than the two currently envisaged for the remission and crisis phases.
15. The M&E system developed by EMPRES should aim to facilitate simple and succinct reporting to donors.
16. CLCPRO member countries in arrears with their contributions should clear those arrears.
17. The Programme should continue to help Mali prepare a meeting of ministers, by developing an agenda focused on policy issues.
18. The CLCPRO should ensure a more regular presence in Algiers and help identify premises that meet United Nations security standards.
19. Collaboration with Plant Protection Directorates in ad-hoc campaigns against other locusts should be restricted to serious outbreaks and call for specific protocols that include adequate financing, following the example of Mauritania.
20. AGPP should seek to narrow differences of opinion on preventive and curative control strategies.
21. National locust control services in the CLCPRO countries should hold awareness-raising days for decision-makers.
22. The second phase of the EMPRES Western Region Programme should provide less material support and more long-term technical support. Regional capacities should be developed under the aegis of the CLCPRO.