2010

SWAC/CRC
INTER-REGIONAL WORKSHOP FOR DESERT LOCUST INFORMATION OFFICERS

18-19 April 2010

Cairo, Egypt

Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in South-West Asia (SWAC)
Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC)
Desert Locust Information Service (DLIS)

SWAC/CRC Inter-regional Workshop for Desert Locust Information Officers

18-19 April 2010 (FAO/RNE, Cairo)

The FAO Senior Locust Forecasting Officer, Keith Cressman, supported by three regional resource persons, conducted an inter-regional workshop that brought together English-speaking national locust information officers from 11 countries and one regional locust organization in the Central, Eastern and Western Regions[1]. The workshop has been held on an annual basis since 2008. As in previous years, the objective of the workshop was to discuss informally the improved use of various technologies (eLocust2 for data recording and transmission from the field, eLocust2Mapper for data processing, RAMSES geographic information system for data management and analysis, remote sensing imagery (MODIS for green vegetation and IRI for rainfall estimates) and new technologies (Skype remote sharing, battery powered eLocust2)) used by participants in locust surveillance, early warning and reporting. This year, advanced use of RAMSES for data analysis was also presented.

The workshop was an informal event without an agenda or timetable, which allowed all issues to be discussed in a very open manner. The participants were asked to indicate what they wanted to achieve during this year's workshop and to indicate problems they face in the use of these technologies in their daily work. All problems were resolved on the spot.

Programme

1. Administrative announcements
2. Welcome
3. Introduction of participants
4. Workshop objectives
5. Current problems and difficulties

Current problems and difficulties

Informal discussions were held on the use and improvement of eLocust2, eLocust2Mapper, RAMSES, remote sensing imagery and new technologies.

<u>eLocust2</u>
Most of the problems faced were associated with interruption of the power supply during data transmission. This can be overcome by proper training of field staff. Egypt and Oman have developed battery powered eLocust2 units that allow survey officers to use eLocust2 away from the vehicle in areas that are only accessible by foot. Other countries were encourage to adopt similar systems whenever necessary. Egypt suggested using a special code (area surveyed= 9999.9) that could be used in case of an emergency in the field.

[1] DLCO-EA (Elias Felege), Egypt (Samira Nabel, Rania Huessein Mostafa, Osama Taha, Essam), Eritrea (Eyob Mengist, Zimam Sibhatu), Ethiopia (Hiwot Lemma), India (Pramod Gour), Iran (Mehdi Ghaemian), Libya (Zamzam El Busefi), Oman (Khalid Al-Harrasi), Pakistan (Ghulam Baloch), Saudi Arabia (Abdullatif AbdulSalam), Sudan (Kamal Suliman, Talal Mohamed Ali), Yemen (Said Al-Mama'ary); resource persons: Nassor Al-Harthy (Oman), Mehdi Ghaemian (Iran), Hichem Dridi (CLCPRO)

Specific details:
- use new version (PAK)
- missing data and power off too soon (PAK)
- hardware issues
- use activated units (PAK)
- backpack mode (OMN)
- external battery (EGY)
- keep one laptop with serial port
- reinstall software
- troubleshooting hardware
- save History file (update DELSOFT)

eLocust2Mapper

In general, this custom software remains one of the easiest to use and less problematic.
Specific details:
- replaces MailReader (PAK)
- map and time zone (YEM)
- time format (SAU)
- import complete data only
- expiration

RAMSES

Participants have obtained good knowledge and experience in the basic use of RAMSES. They were shown several methods of using RAMSES in an advanced manner to (1) analyze locust and environmental data in order to delimit infested areas and determine the resources required for control operations, (2) to extract specific data using Sequential Query Language (SQL) and (3) to forecast the scale, timing and location of locust breeding and migration. The latest format for data export to DLIS should be used in all countries. Specific details:
- specific data extraction (nobody uses SQL)
- use MODIS (PAK)
- export to 2009 new format (PAK, EGY, OMN, IND)
- measuring infested areas

MODIS

Participants were shown how to interpret MODIS imagery within RAMSES. Several participants indicated that there were too many steps in downloading and managing MODIS imagery. A streamlined mechanism within RAMSES is required. A method to transmit new MODIS-derived greenness maps developed by the Université catholique de Louvain to locust-affected countries is underway with testing in Mali, Eritrea and Sudan. Specific details:
- download button
- analysis
- regular use
- zoom
- greenness map

New technologies

The latest version of Skype can allow national locust information officers to remotely share the desktop of their PC with DLIS and resource persons so that the latter can provide technical support in the use of software and PC functions. This should reduce the number of emails, telephone calls and time required to resolve technical issues. A new handheld data logger, eDubas, developed in Oman for the Dubas Bug on date palm and modeled after eLocust2 was presented. Specific details:
- install Skype
- eLocust2 emergency code
- antivirus

- backup
- improve DL forecasts

Specific examples and demonstrations

1. Using remote sensing imagery to plan surveys (Nassor Al-Harthy)
2. Delimiting infested areas in RAMSES (Keith Cressman)
3. Using eLocust2Mapper map and Excel Auto Filter to check data before RAMSES import and FAO transmission (Keith Cressman)
4. eDubus demo (Nassor Al-Harthy)

Conclusion

The annual workshop is very useful because it brings national locust information officers together to exchange experiences, problems and solutions face-to-face rather than through the Internet or by other means. This helps to maintain a strong information network that is the foundation of preventive control and FAO's locust early warning programme.