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Agenda item 6. CRC: What did the Regional Commission achieve?

Mamoon Al-Alawi, Executive Secretary, CRC

Overview and background

The Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC) was established in 1967 as an Article XIV body within FAO. The Commission's role is to strengthen the cooperation and coordination between member countries in implementing the preventive control strategy by detecting early signs of gregarizing locust populations and rapidly intervening to eliminate infestations before they cause crop damage. The Commission consists of 16 member countries (Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen).

The effectiveness of regional solidarity amongst the Commission's member countries was demonstrated during Desert Locust outbreaks in 2012–2014. Threatening situations were most serious in Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and, to a lesser extent, in Ethiopia, Oman and Somalia. The Commission played a key role in providing financial assistance and technical support to Sudan and Egypt in 2013, and Eritrea and Yemen in 2014. Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Development Bank, USAID and FAO were the sources of this support. The Commission recently received a grant of USD 1 500 000 from Saudi Arabia to support currently affected member countries.

Since 2012, CRC has actively supported the adoption and use of advanced tools such as eLocust3 and RAMSESV4 for monitoring, early warning, and timely control. The Commission developed the Environmental Health and Safety Standards (EHS) for Desert Locust survey and control operations and the Desert Locust Contingency Planning Assistant (DeLCoPA) for national contingency plans. Drones are currently being tested for survey and control in collaboration with CLCPRO, SWAC and DLIS.

In 2014, the 29th CRC session agreed to double the annual contribution rate and establish a Regional Emergency Fund for Desert Locust emergencies (REF). A regional contingency plan was developed to strengthen technical and financial support for Desert Locust management in member countries. CRC agreed to establish a postgraduate MSc Desert Locust degree in collaboration with the Sudan University of Science and Technology.

Points for discussion and decisions

- Arrears continue to accumulate because of irregular annual contributions by some member countries due to a variety of circumstances
- CRC is unable to support member countries in case of Desert Locust emergencies or outbreaks so it relies on emergency projects provided by FAO and donors
- Insecurity problems hinder the deployment of survey and control teams in some countries such as Yemen, which affect the entire region
- Biopesticides are not fully used on an operational basis in control campaigns
- Mitigation steps need to be taken to address extreme weather events that will impact Desert Locust such as cyclones, floods and droughts associated with climate change