



**EMERGENCY PREVENTION SYSTEM FOR TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL AND
PLANT PESTS AND DISEASES (EMPRES) – DESERT LOCUST COMPONENT**

FOURTH MEETING

of the

EMPRES CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

for the

CENTRAL REGION PROGRAMME

Cairo, 15 – 17 January 2002

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Opening

1. Mr Hafraoui welcomed the delegates from the locust-affected countries and the donor agencies to the 4th Meeting of the EMPRES/CR (Desert Locust Component) Consultative Committee for the Central Region Programme.
2. The meeting was officially opened on behalf of the FAO Director-General and in the name of the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for the Near East, Mr. A. Bukhari, by Mr. Abdalla Zohair, Senior Officer, ADG/RNE a.i.. He underlined the importance of the EMPRES Central Region Programme (EMPRES/CR) and its work on the prevention of Desert Locust outbreaks emanating from the Central Region. This was to be achieved by strengthening the capacities of national Locust Control Units of the member countries and by stimulating collaboration with the regional Desert Locust Organizations. He appealed to participants to maintain and further enhance the state of vigilance despite the prevailing absence of locusts. He requested member countries and the donor community to continue with their efforts to support the EMPRES/CR Programme in its objective to introduce improved preventive control strategies, which are both more economic and less hazardous to the environment.
3. Mr. Abdalla pointed out that with the beginning of the Phase II of the Programme, the EMPRES/CR Coordination Office had been transferred to Cairo in order to enhance collaboration with the FAO Central Region Commission for Controlling the Desert Locus (CRC). FAO-RNE was happy to provide EMPRES/CR with all necessary support to conduct its various activities to the benefit of the member countries and their farming communities. He concluded by saying that he expected the meeting further to contribute to the accomplishment of the EMPRES Programme, and wished participants successful discussions and a pleasant stay in Cairo.
4. Mr. Hafraoui welcomed the representative from Switzerland, Mr. Kohler, who was participating for the first time in the Consultative Committee Meeting. Thereafter, each participant briefly introduced himself.

Adoption of the Agenda

5. The proposed agenda was adopted with no changes and the daily schedules were agreed.

Review of EMPRES progress and constraints in 2001

6. The Coordinator of EMPRES/CR, Mr. C. Pantenius, presented his report on the progress made since the last Consultative Committee held in Rome in December 2000. He said that this progress was measured against the results expected at the end of Phase II as outlined in the Phase II Implementation Document. The report summarized the status of achievement of the various activities planned during the 8th ELO Meeting in Muscat in October 2000, the results obtained, and the obstacles/difficulties observed during the implementation process.

7. The achievements in the harmonization of important components of improved preventive control with the CRC and DLCO-EA were highlighted. Areas of close interaction were pointed out. The decision of Djibouti to join the CRC as its 14th member country was much acknowledged and will contribute to enhancing the sustainability of EMPRES approaches after the end of the Programme.
8. The EMPRES/CR Coordinator summarized the improvements observed in introducing pro-active Desert Locust management components. Emphasis had been given to national and international networking and information exchange between the member countries, early warning, survey procedures and data management systems. However, in the process of integrating EMPRES/CR approaches into the national programmes of member countries, a variation in the level of achievements has been observed. In some countries there was hesitance in using modern communication facilities such as email to keep up regular contacts. This had led to slower progress than expected. Other constraints had included external factors such as the Rift Valley Fever outbreak and armed conflicts in the Region. In addition, the suspension of DFID's (Department for International Development of the UK) support for locust work had affected the introduction of the RAMSES data management system at the Locust Control Units of the member countries, in particular in Sudan. The delegate of the UK pointed out that DFID's policy may not have been well enough explained and may have led to some misunderstanding. He made the point that DFID's interest in preventive locust management had not diminished. It is continuing to support other locust research. But the funds for work related to EMPRES are on hold pending the results of the current socio-economic survey. If those results indicated that locusts have a negative impact on resource-poor livelihoods, and that locust management can mitigate this, funding would be likely to resume.
9. Special attention has been given to developing a more self-reliant survey system in northern Somalia in collaboration with the DLCO-EA. This action followed improved security and the end of the contract of the EMPRES-UNV in June 2001. Support has been given to facilitating the transmission of locust survey data to FAO and DLCO and to training on locust survey and reporting matters for some ministry and NGO staff.
10. With regard to training it was reported that the special Diploma Course on Desert Locust management has started at the University of Khartoum and that six students from three of the EMPRES/CR member countries have been sponsored by the CRC and EMPRES/CR. The qualification of national trainers on locust subjects has resulted in increasing involvement of national trainers from the member countries in various national and regional training courses conducted during the reporting period. Special attention will be given in the future to developing and introducing training impact assessment schemes. Standard training curricula will also be introduced into the existing training structures of the member countries in order to enhance the national staff development capacities of the member countries.
11. On research, the new system to encourage the national research institutions in the Central Region to submit operational research proposals for support by EMPRES/CR has resulted in an increased number of applications, but only a limited number has been considered for support. So far two research projects are in the process of being implemented and a third one has resulted in the award of an MSc degree. The delegate from the Netherlands asked for an explanation on why so few of the research project proposals received, had been approved. He pointed out that the strengthening of the regional research capacity had always been considered by his Government as an important priority for EMPRES/CR. The Coordinator explained that the quality of the proposals received had sometimes been sub-standard and/or the

topics selected had not been at all related to EMPRES/CR objectives. It was expected that as far as possible research projects should have the potential for producing results which would feed into improved locust management. The matter would be receiving emphasis in 2002 and at least five new projects were expected to be launched.

12. Good progress has been made in introducing new technologies such as field data transmission systems and DGPS for improving aerial pesticide application, and the excellent collaboration with the colleagues from EMPRES Western Region (EMPRES/WR) in this matter has been emphasised.
13. In comments from the floor on the Coordinator's report, clarification was requested on the difficulty some countries experienced in obtaining meteorological data as required for locust forecasting. The delegate from Sudan said that the problem had been solved by including the necessary funds in the national budget. Alternatively a Government decision could be taken to provide the met. data free. A further possibility, which might be more practical for remote areas and less costly, was to use remote sensing information on cold cloud cover and vegetation upgreening. Each country should seek its own best solution through the Country Focus Programme and contingency planning processes, but EMPRES/CR resources should not be expected to be available to pay for routine rainfall data provision.
14. The delegate from Djibouti said that the assistance so far provided by EMPRES/CR was much appreciated, but requested locust training in French as this was the preferred language of most of the locust technicians. He was informed that the first training course in French was planned for February 2002 in Djibouti and Djibouti staff would also be invited to appropriate training events in EMPRES/WR.
15. The Coordinator clarified that part of the installation process of the RAMSES locust data management system involved the storing of historical data on locust events. These could then be retrieved when required in order to assist assessments of current locust situations. In the case of Ethiopia 1,500 maps of past locust situations had been input into the system.
16. The delegate from the Netherlands indicated that the discussion paper on improved preventive control strategies was not prepared with inputs from the Wageningen University (WU) as stated in the progress report.
17. In a discussion of the difficulty that the Coordinator had experienced in collaborating with the assistance provided bilaterally by some donors, the Coordinating Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Coordinator should be informed in advance of any bilaterally funded Desert Locust activities in the Region and that EMPRES should be invited to participate in such activities wherever appropriate.
18. The delegate from the USA suggested that a certification standard should be developed by EMPRES/CR in collaboration with relevant institutions for locust trainers having some written, oral and practical examination. The Coordinator said that while the principle was accepted, the matter would need to be investigated carefully with locust-affected countries, as EMPRES/CR had no status as a certification body.
19. The Chairman congratulated the EMPRES/CR Coordinator on an excellently organized, transparent and well-presented report. These congratulations were endorsed by several other participants both from donor and from locust-affected

countries. It was suggested that the report would benefit from having an Executive Summary and it was agreed to include one.

REPORT ON THE 2001 EMPRES EVALUATION MISSION

20. Mr. Bernd Bueltemeier presented a short summary of the Evaluation Report on the EMPRES programme, Phase II. He explained that the need for an evaluation in 2001 had been a decision of the FAO Director-General, as part of the preparation for the World Food Summit: Five Years Later (WFS/FYL). In the event, the WFS/FYL had been postponed to 2002, but only after the Mission had completed its work. The Mission had taken place from 25 July to 6 September 2001 and had visited six countries, five of them in the Central Region. Subsequently it had been decided that the Mission report should be subject to a Peer Review Panel and this had taken place in December. The Report and the Panel's views would be submitted to FAO's Programme Committee and could not be released in full until they had been cleared by this Committee.
21. The Mission had concluded that Phase II of EMPRES/CR involved consolidation of Phase I activities and had significantly advanced the expertise of DL staff in the Region through training. It had also noted an important improvement in the management of the Programme as compared to the previous evaluation in 1999. The locust-affected countries visited continued to regard preventive control of the Desert Locust as a high national priority and the benefits of it as in the national interest. The Mission considered that the low level of locust populations may have reduced the perceived threat of Desert Locust and that the international community may no longer view preventive control as a high priority, although it was admitted that the donor community was not consulted directly. The Team Leader also reviewed the achievements of EMPRES/CR and the constraints that had been recognized.
22. The Mission's main recommendations included stepping up research reinforcing contacts with donors, giving maximum emphasis to Country Focus Programmes, using consultants to reinforce technical inputs in the Programme, and considering widening the mandate of EMPRES/CR to include other relevant plant pests.
23. Specific research priorities identified were: Assessment of the socio-economic impact of Desert Locust control; initiating joint research and training activities between EMPRES/CR and EMPRES/WR to ensure efficient use of resources and standardization of approaches; development of contingency plans and establishment of priorities to facilitate field research in the event of Desert Locust outbreaks. It was also recommended that EMPRES/CR, CRC and FAO should give consideration to the long-term sustainability of the research grant scheme.
24. In the discussions that followed, the delegate from the UK said that it was inaccurate to consider that his Government considered that Desert Locust management should be given a lower priority. On the other hand the UK had decided that it needed some assurance that Desert Locust upsurges caused significant problems to resource-poor farmers and had taken steps to carry out a study to collect data on the matter. The study was expected to be completed and made available to FAO by the end of March 2002 and if it provided the necessary evidence, it was expected that the UK would resume its support within a short time. Current assistance was still being provided to EMPRES/CR and would be completed at the end of January.
25. The delegate from Switzerland said that it was generally accepted that there was some reluctance among donors at present to support agriculture *per se*. This might

have indirectly affected EMPRES. He noted that good programme management was more likely to attract funds, but he had been impressed by the efficient way in which the EMPRES/CR Programme was managed.

26. The Secretariat pointed out that in the Central Region the evidence was that the donor community was supporting EMPRES/CR, and new funds had recently been approved by both the USA and Switzerland. It was also suggested by the delegates from the donor agencies that the evaluation report should be amended to express the continued interest of the donor community in preventive control strategies for Desert Locust irrespective of the locust population.
27. The Consultative Committee discussed at some length the Mission's proposal that EMPRES/CR's mandate be widened to other migratory pests. The delegates from from Eritrea, Ethiopia and Sudan strongly supported this suggestion, because they suffered from pests such as armyworm and quelea birds. The delegate of Ethiopia noted that his department was using some of the EMPRES/CR approaches, such as contingency planning, to combat other migratory pests. Other participants said that the Mission's conjecture that expansion was justified by the present recession in locust populations was misplaced and highly dangerous. Part of the *raison d'être* of EMPRES/CR Programme (Desert Locust Component) was to implement preventive control and defeat the vicious circle of complacency leading to surprise outbreaks of Desert Locust that caught countries off guard and risked the development of plagues. It was concluded that expansion of the EMPRES/CR Programme to other migratory pests demanded large additional resources and there was no indication that such resources existed either at FAO or with the donor community. Those countries that supported expansion should consider pursuing the matter at a political level.

REVIEW OF THE WORKPLAN FOR 2002

28. The EMPRES/CR Coordinator presented the paper, explaining that the components of the workplan were developed by the participants at the EMPRES Liaison Officers' Meeting (ELOM) which had been held in Khartoum, Sudan in October 2001. The ELOM now follows a routine in which it first reviews progress on the current workplan, assessing activities that were not fully completed and providing inputs for the following year. Discussions are conducted in a participatory way using the card system. The Coordinator polishes up these conclusions and puts them into a realistic framework, including also additional information and inputs from the CRC in order to develop a joint CRC/EMPRES workplan as recommended by the participants of the planning workshop of Phase II of the EMPRES/CR Programme.
29. The Chairman and several other participants complimented the Coordinator and the ELOM on the quality of the workplan but commented that it seemed very ambitious. The Coordinator explained that it was planned to make more use of consultants during 2002 to try to cover all the activities planned.
30. The delegate from Sweden asked for explanations of why certain EMPRES/CR countries were reluctant to join the Central Region Commission (CRC). It was explained that these countries were already members of a locust organization, the Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA), to which they made a large financial contribution. They needed to be convinced that being a member of a second body was advantageous and would cost relatively little.
31. The delegate from Sweden also said that Sweden would welcome the opportunity to present the results of its bilaterally-supported environmental economic studies at a Workshop during 2002. The proposal was welcomed and it was noted that other

inputs on socio-economics by EMPRES/CR and by DFID should also be presented at such a workshop. The Coordinator agreed to examine the timing of events to see if space could be found for such a workshop, but it might have to be held over to 2003 given that the programme was already very full.

32. The delegate from the Netherlands mentioned that Wageningen University would be pleased to comment on the draft EMPRES/CR report on improved strategies for Desert Locust control but asked that an official request for this assistance. He also expressed some scepticism of the ELS model which relied on many assumptions and was not sure that updating it would bring about substantial improvement in the levels of uncertainty it contained. The Coordinator agreed to re-examine this proposal.
33. A number of delegates mentioned points of detail in the workplan that required some modification. Several said that it was confusing to include activities that were exclusively for the CRC to carry out. The Coordinator explained that the workplan was agreed to be a comprehensive joint-workplan between CRC and EMPRES/CR in order to strengthen the collaboration between CRC and EMPRES/CR in the wish to achieve sustainability of the EMPRES/CR approaches. Inevitably this meant that some activities were included that were only for EMPRES/CR to carry out and some that were only for CRC. The workplan had to be read carefully especially the column on responsibilities. It was agreed that the final version of the workplan would include a preamble explaining the symbols and indicating the need to pay special attention to the responsibilities column.
34. The delegate from the UK supported the proposal to carry out a workshop on testing new locust ground spraying machinery. This would up-date the work that was last done in 1994. He suggested that locust-affected countries should be involved in selecting the company equipment that should be tested.
35. The delegate from Ethiopia asked about the guidelines provided for research institutions wishing to apply for research grants from EMPRES/CRC. He was informed that these were all distributed through the ELOs and it was expected that the ELOs would provide them to their national research institutions. He also remarked that in the context of possible membership of the CRC, Ethiopia had a practice of being fully committed to any organization it decided to join. He expected that his Government would communicate some indication of its intentions in respect of the CRC later this year.

REVIEW OF 2001 EXPENDITURES AND THE BUDGET FOR THE REMAINDER OF PHASE II

36. The working paper was presented by the FAO Secretariat. It was noted that there were now seven donors supporting EMPRES/CR, one more than in 2000. Expenditure figures were presented for 2001 but it was pointed out that these were not final as accounts had not yet definitively closed. Total expenditure in 2001 had increased by about 6% compared to the previous year, despite the disruptive effect of staff changes and transfers.
37. The Secretariat also reviewed the budget for 2002 and 2003. The funds unspent in 2001 plus the balances remaining on donor Trust Funds indicated that there were sufficient funds to cover the remainder of Phase II. If all the funds were to be used by December 2003, EMPRES/CR would have to increase its rate of expenditure by 40%. The position would become clearer by the end of 2002 but it was likely that there would be some unspent balances by the end of Phase II. Two options could be

considered, one to extend Phase II for about six months to allow more time to complete all the activities. The other could involve the carrying over of balances to contribute to Phase III.

38. In the discussions that followed, several donors offered information about the funds that they had provided bilaterally. For example, Sweden mentioned that about US\$ 130,000 had been spent on their studies and it was expected the same level would be available in 2002. This was in addition to the cost of the APO EMPRES/CR post in the Sudan.
39. It was **RECOMMENDED** that in future years bilateral donors should be asked to estimate their contributions to EMPRES/CR and that these figures should be tabulated in the financial report.
40. Several delegates from locust-affected countries questioned the inclusion in the Secretariat's report of increased contributions to EMPRES activities by some countries and not others. This led to a discussion of the importance of including some tabulation of the contributions being made to locust control by all locust affected countries. It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Secretariat should collect this information and present it at the next Consultative Committee meeting. Such data would demonstrate that the locust-affected countries are fully playing their part in strengthening their national and regional locust control units/organizations and the creation of capacity for preventive control.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

41. The delegate from the USA raised the question of **improved pesticide management** for Desert Locusts, and of reducing the risk in future of creating new obsolete pesticides. A number of delegates stressed the continuing problem of obsolete pesticides in their countries. In the discussions that followed, it was agreed that EMPRES/CR had no specialization in obsolete pesticides and any queries on this matter were simply referred to the special project on this subject at FAO.
42. In addition, pesticide management aspects are already included as part of the Training of Trainers courses and would be included also in the planned Training Manual. The maintenance of pesticide stocks was also included as part of the contingency planning process. While it was agreed that pesticide management was therefore to some extent covered, it was **RECOMMENDED** that consideration be given to having data on pesticide stocks, their location and expiry date, included as part of the RAMSES data base. This would further contribute to improving pesticide management by affected countries.
43. The Secretariat asked for views on arrangements for the **next Consultative Committee meeting**. It was pointed out that an Evaluation Mission would again be mounted early in 2003 to review the progress of Phase II. This could be followed, back-to-back, with a Planning Workshop to review the need for a Phase III. Since the participants in a Planning Workshop would be similar to those that would participate in a Consultative Committee, it was proposed that there should be no Committee meeting in 2003 and it in effect be merged into a Planning Workshop. This proposal was accepted and participants suggested that the event be held within the Region. Almost all the locust-affected country delegates offered to host such a Workshop, but it was agreed that the final decision be left to the Secretariat in consultation with the country selected.

CLOSURE

44. After adoption of the meeting report the Chairman thanked the participants for their support to the EMPRES/CR Programme, the open and fruitful discussions and expressed his optimism that this meeting further contributed to strengthen the good cooperation between the affected countries, the donor community and FAO. He wished the participants a safe journey back home and declared the meeting closed.

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