



**REPORT OF THE MEETING ON
A COMMON STRATEGY AND THE RESTRUCTURING OF
DESERT LOCUST CONTROL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE WESTERN
REGION**

**Rome, Italy
22 – 24 February 1999**

**Plant Production and Protection Division
The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
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1. OPENING SESSION

In implementing the recommendations (para. 85 - p.15) made by the FAO Desert Locust Control Committee (DLCC) at its 33rd Session in 1995, and in conformity with resolution 4/97 (Para. 72) adopted by the 29th. FAO Conference in 1997, which called on FAO to organize a meeting of locust-affected countries in West and North-West Africa to define a common strategy for Desert Locust Control and to restructure the organizations responsible for locust control in the Western Region, FAO invited the nine concerned countries to participate in the meeting held in Rome from 22 to 24 February 1999.

The meeting was opened by Mr. Abdoulaye Sawadogo, FAO Assistant Director General, Agriculture Department and introduced by Mr. Mahmud Duwayri, Director of the Plant Production and Protection Division.

Mr. Duwayri, on behalf of the FAO Director-General, welcomed the participants and thanked them for accepting FAO's invitation. He stated that their participation in such an important meeting would provide an opportunity to the various authorities concerned with the Desert Locust control to exchange technical, scientific and institutional views regarding the best means to manage the Desert Locust in the Western Region.

Mr. Duwayri confirmed that, with to the support of the concerned countries and the International Community, it was hoped that the Desert Locust component of the EMPRES programme would become operational in the Western Region during 1999.

Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of undertaking a preventive approach, as being the most successful means in both controlling the Desert Locust and avoiding the damage that results from its invasions, in the most economic, environmentally friendly and sustainable way. This approach has been approved as a basic strategy by the EMPRES programme.

He also stated that one of the priorities of this programme is to reinforce national capacities to intervene against the Desert Locust in the countries where gregarization occurs.

The preventive control strategy essentially requires modifications in the way the Desert Locust problem is handled both at the technical as well as at the organizational level. He said that the meeting should examine thoroughly the Desert Locust problem and propose ways and means to solve it in line with the interests of the concerned countries and the wishes of the international community.

Mr. Duwayri ended his presentation by wishing the meeting success in its deliberations.

2. ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN, VICE-CHAIRMAN AND NOMINATION OF RAPPORTEURS

The participants **ELECTED** Mr. Faustin Diatta (Senegal), as Chairman, Mr. Mustafa Aliesh (Libya) as Vice-Chairman and nominated Mr. M. Said Ghaout (Morocco) and Brahim Idrissa Djibrine (Chad), as Rapporteurs.

3. ADOPTION

After discussions, the following agenda was adopted:

1. Opening.
2. Election of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and nomination of Rapporteurs.
3. Adopting the agenda.
4. Strategy for Controlling Desert Locust in the Western Region.
5. Presentation on "EMPRES" programme in the Western Region.
6. Restructuring the organizations of the Desert Locust control in the Western Region.
7. Adoption of the report.

4. STRATEGY FOR CONTROLLING THE DESERT LOCUST IN THE WESTERN REGION

Mr. Nezil Mahjoub, FAO Consultant, made a presentation on this subject. He explained the threat that the Desert Locust poses in West and Northwest Africa, and how it has two origins.

1. Internal to the region: This is located in the gregarization areas, one in Mauritania and the other in the central sector of northern Mali and Niger and the extreme south of Algeria.

Desert Locust activities in these gregarization areas constitute a threat to agriculture and pasture in the 14 member countries of the two sub-regions covered by the organizations of CLCPANO ⁽¹⁾ / and OCLALAV ⁽²⁾

To avoid and alleviate this threat, the consultant stated that early preventive control should not require more than 100,000 ha to be controlled per year.

2. External to the region: This is located in the gregarization areas of the Central Region, in the countries bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. When winter, spring and summer breeding occurs in these areas, producing many swarms, some of the swarms can invade the West and North-West African countries at the end of the summer season. The Central Region has been the origin of most of the well-known invasions in the past.

The two origins can, according to ecological conditions, affect the Western Region either separately or in combination.

1. Commission for controlling the Desert Locust in Northwest Africa.
2. Organization for controlling locusts and birds.

The consultant concluded that the solution of the Desert Locust problem lay in strengthening the collective effort to achieve preventive control, under the auspices of FAO in the three regions of the Desert Locust distribution area. Moreover, he emphasized that the "EMPRES" programme aimed to achieve that goal. EMPRES started a full field programme in the Central Region in 1997 and is now extending to the Western Region. It is expected to expand later to the Eastern Region.

Following the presentation, the following points were discussed:

- The importance of avoiding gregarization and the formation of swarms which become difficult to control.
- Despite knowledge of locust bio-ecology, this pest is still unpredictable, requiring permanent vigilance from the concerned countries.
- The complementarity of the activity of the Desert Locust in the two regions requires the establishment of a common intervention system.

5. THE EMPRES PROGRAMME IN THE WESTERN REGION

The proposal for the extension of the EMPRES Programme to the Western Region was presented by Mr. Michel Le Coq, FAO Consultant. He explained that the new version had been drafted following a regional workshop held at Nouakchott in March 1998, and it incorporated comments made by the countries, organizations and contributors.

The general objectives of EMPRES and its extension to the Western Region were justified by the economic importance of the Desert Locust, the necessity to conduct preventive control and the weak capacity, particularly in the Sahelian countries. The preventive control strategy as developed in the Western Region was perfectly defined and justified according to economic, technical and environmental considerations. It was based on knowledge acquired long ago about habitats favoured by first instar hoppers and on the capacities of survey teams to detect and control them as early and efficiently as possible.

The concept of EMPRES was presented. The consultant said that it uniquely concerned the nine so-called "front line" countries, i.e. those directly involved in preventive control operations or which could possibly be involved during the first stages of an outbreak.

The EMPRES Western Region programme aimed to allow these countries to:

- Carry out preventive control operations during recession periods in order to reduce the likelihood of outbreaks.
- Improve the early warning system for the Desert Locust in order to improve control efficiency, not only of the prevention procedure, but also of outbreak control.

The programme fitted well with EMPRES overall while also respecting the bio-ecological, historical and socio-cultural particularities of the Desert Locust

cultivated, populated areas was an important factor that affected the organization to be established and required that a survey and control system exclusively dedicated to the Desert Locust be maintained.

The EMPRES programme should mainly concentrate its efforts on the following:

- National Control Units.
- Regional co-operation.

The national units constituted the basis of the preventive control system and their strengthening was a priority for the programme. They should have considerable autonomy secured by government commitments to adhere to the common policy and to the executive entities of preventive control. They constituted the basis of the international system of early warning against the Desert Locust. Furthermore, they had to conduct surveillance and control operations against the Desert Locust population and keep the action plans up to date.

The establishment of a unique regional structure for cooperation was justified by the complementarity of the ecology of the West and Northwest African countries. The structure would comprise all the countries concerned with preventive control. It would guarantee the development of a common policy and methodology for controlling the Desert Locust. It would serve also as a pilot technical committee for the EMPRES programme in the region. Finally, a temporary EMPRES programme support unit in the Western Region would help to strengthen national units and to establish the regional structure for cooperation.

The Consultant underlined the important role of training anticipated in the programme, as well as the role of research, both of which should support the application of the preventive control system. It would also be necessary to collaborate closely with the EMPRES Central Region programme.

The financial requirements of the EMPRES Western Region programme were presented, underlining the important contribution of the countries of the region, as much in support of their national units as in contributing to operating the regional and international organizations in charge of Desert Locust.

It was suggested that the proposed system appeared to be the most realistic solution to the Desert Locust problem since it ensured preventive control. Furthermore it appeared to be unanimously endorsed by the countries in the region. The new system should rationalize survey and control operations, and reduce costs. It was based on a clear strategy, resulting from 30 years of observations and work in the Western Region that had been unanimously approved by the countries. The system was technically and economically applicable, and seemed to be the only way to provide regular information on the Desert Locust situation and to maintain national capacities for effective preventive or curative control.

The Consultant stressed that the long-term sustainability of the system depended on the following:

- The commitment of each country.
- That costs were reasonable (the cost of the system in the long term was mentioned).
- The balanced financing by the different concerned parties: countries of the front line, countries of the invasion areas, the international community at large (proposals for the distribution of costs had been made).
- The establishment of a simplified structure allowing regional consultation and co-operation.

The new structure had occasioned much discussion among participating countries. It had been agreed that it guaranteed sustainability and long term funding. It also greatly simplified the regional base of co-operation. The EMPRES programme would help to establish the new management approach to the Desert Locust problem in the Western Region, taking into consideration new knowledge of locust bio-ecology, focussing the system on front line countries, allowing genuine regional cooperation and reducing costs.

The representatives of the four countries of CLCPANO, the four countries of OCLALAV and of Mauritania, had unanimously agreed to participate in the new structure.

In addition, the Consultant underlined that an agreement between the countries should quickly set up the new regional structure that replaced the two old ones, since this would give the EMPRES programme more credibility, showing that the countries of the region fully intended to promote the system of preventive control and ensure its long-term sustainability.

6. RESTRUCTURING THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE DESERT LOCUST CONTROL IN THE WESTERN REGION

The secretariat presented a working document entitled "Thoughts on the the proposal related to restructuring the organizations responsible for Desert Locust control in the Western Region".

Key elements included:

- The invasion area of the Desert Locust including the winter, spring and summer breeding habitats in the Western, Central and Eastern Regions.
- The historical background and analysis of the factors that led to the establishment of the present Desert Locust control structures.
- The constraints to which these structures were exposed in the Western Region and which were inherent to the geo-political and technical context in which they have been created (lack of coherence in the geographic distribution, multiple tasks, inappropriate utilization of the control means, disproportionate budgets in comparison to the different activities to be undertaken, and the declared orientation towards curative control).

The proposed new structure would be based on the preventive control concept and thus had to:

- be based on the most recently available knowledge of the Desert Locust bio-ecology;
- focus on the countries that had complementary gregarization areas, and associating all the other countries that can be concerned in case of invasion;
- reduce the costs of the operation of the structures;
- allow a good quality information system on Desert Locust to be at the disposal of the structures concerned with the survey and control;
- promote preventive control against Desert Locust by training personnel involved in the survey and control, and in the meantime to organize and coordinate these activities;
- promote operational research to consolidate preventive control;
- Hence, the structure that corresponds best to this work will take the form of an FAO commission, whose statute will be reviewed in light of the experience acquired out of the management of the Desert Locust problem.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the meeting at which country representatives and the regional organizations expressed their opinions on the different points that were raised and after various explanations, the participants adopted the following recommendations:

1. The participants unanimously reaffirmed their commitment to the concept of preventive control in the Western Region. The countries of the region have largely contributed to this strategy. The participants also reaffirmed that the strategy was the most suitable for Desert Locust control.
2. The participants appreciated the changes made to the new version of EMPRES Western Region programme which were based on the recommendations made at the workshop held in Nouakchott in March 1998, and approved the main lines of the revised programme. They expressed their wish to put the programme into action as quickly, fully and completely as possible. The participants requested FAO to identify and mobilize funds as soon as possible, in order to implement the programme.
3. The participants unanimously approved the proposal to develop a new simplified structure for regional cooperation to include the nine countries concerned with preventive control against Desert Locust in the Western Region. They recognized that this structure was the most appropriate to permit an efficient and suitable application of the preventive strategy, so far as it has been proposed in the framework of the EMPRES Western Region programme.
4. The participants requested FAO to prepare and transmit to the countries a clear, concise and precise technical document, giving the reasons that led to the need for a new structure to manage Desert Locust in the Western Region. The document should include a project for the organization and operation of this new structure. The document should be discussed at a meeting of the representatives of the nine concerned countries and the regional Desert Locust organizations. The meeting should take place immediately before the next session of the DLCC (24 to 28

5. FAO was requested to arrange an inter-governmental consultation at the ministerial level of the nine concerned countries during the forthcoming FAO Conference in November 1999, with a view to formal approval of the new regional structure.
6. The participants noted with great satisfaction that FAO proposed to cover the additional expenses of the meetings.

7. ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

After review and introduction of amendments, the report of the meeting was unanimously approved.

MOTION OF THANKS

The representatives of the countries and regional organizations participating in the meeting, namely: Algeria, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Tunisia, CLCPANO and OCLALAV, thanked the FAO Director-General for the warm welcome extended to them during their stay in Rome, and for convening this important meeting.

They also thanked the Plant Production and Protection Division and in particular, its Director and his collaborators.

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