



ECLO Operations Report

EMERGENCY CENTRE FOR LOCUST OPERATIONS

Senegal meeting calls for national reserve funds

Agricultural experts and government officials attending the International Scientific Locust Seminar in Dakar, Senegal (11-13 January 2005) called for the establishment of national emergency reserve funds to enable affected countries to respond immediately in the case of another locust outbreak.

A statement issued at the end of the conference also suggested a new sub-regional mechanism for cooperation among frontline countries (Mauritania, Mali, Niger and Chad) and countries where swarms do not normally form (Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea and Guinea Bissau).

FAO's Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES) is seen as a possible way of strengthening national capacities. EMPRES is an early warning, research and rapid reaction system that already operates effectively in the Central Region (East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula), but until now FAO has lacked the funding to extend EMPRES to West Africa.

The conference said that despite FAO's appeal in February 2004 for funds to combat a predicted crisis, donors did not appreciate the urgency of the problem and governments in the region did not have adequate funds to enable comprehensive control operations to start immediately.

FAO sent three members of staff (Annie Monard, James Everts and Thami Benhalima) to present papers at the meeting, which was hosted by the Senegalese Government.

SITUATION UPDATE

as of 25
January

"For the first time in 14 months things are improving," says Keith Cressman, ECLO's Locust Forecasting Officer. "But we are not being complacent. Survey and control operations must continue to avoid a resurgence in the spring."

*In **Morocco**, control operations have declined by about 50 percent from the previous week and in **Algeria** by 20 percent. Nevertheless, immature swarms persist in both countries. In **Mauritania**, control operations have ceased completely.*

*In **The Gambia** and southern **Senegal**, limited control operations continue against a few immature swarms, while measures are being planned to tackle similar swarms in **Guinea Bissau** and northwest **Guinea**. There has been no significant breeding along the Red Sea coast except in northeast **Sudan** where a few swarms are copulating.*

FAO people on the ground

Dakar-based FAO consultant Mohamed Salah El Hani visited **Guinea Bissau** and **Guinea** in mid-January to make a preliminary assessment. FAO staff member Mohamed Lemine Ould Ahmedou (based in **Mauritania**) followed up this mission by visiting **Guinea** to assess the locust situation, identify sites for possible ground and aerial operations, evaluate levels of trained staff and equipment and provide forecasts. FAO consultants Bob Aston (**The Gambia**, 26 January-7 February) and Jean-François Duranton (**Guinea Bissau**, 27-January-6 February) are carrying out similar visits.

Funding update

- As of 19 January, FAO had received US\$64 million in cash, to which the Organization has added US\$6.2 million of its own funds.
- US\$9.3 million has been pledged but not yet received.
- US\$1.2 million is currently being negotiated with donors.
- **Portugal** is contributing US\$331,900 to FAO, earmarked for operations in **Guinea Bissau**.
- In **Egypt**, a 12-month project – Emergency Assistance for Desert Locust Control – gets underway in January. FAO has contributed US\$193,000 from its own funds.

FAO training trainers for summer 2005

FAO is currently organizing a major training package to prepare national staff involved in this summer's desert locust campaign. The training – hosted by ICRISAT (International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics) in Niamey, **Niger** - will start in mid-March and last for three weeks.

Twenty participants from ten west African countries will learn from a team of regional and international experts. Training modules include survey and data management, management of control campaigns and the bio-ecology of desert locust populations.

Once back in their countries, the trainees will become trainers, in charge of organizing training at a local level.

Desert Locust Control Committee recommendations

Damage assessment

- Future assessments should note damage to pastureland, crops and the environment.
- In future emergencies, each affected country should have a field team dedicated to collecting such data.

FAO's Desert Locust Control Committee met in Extraordinary Session in Rome (29 November-2 December 2004), bringing together experts and officials from around the world. The committee made recommendations in the light of the emergency situation in west and northwest Africa.

Monitoring

- All affected countries should liaise with FAO to identify gaps in information, enabling FAO to improve forecasting.
- During emergencies, affected countries should use available technology eg. GPS to manage data better. FAO should organize training where necessary.
- Helicopters should be used in the early stages of an infestation to determine the extent and scale of the problem. Large infestations should be treated mainly by air.
- FAO should investigate ways of surveying areas that are hard to access; border surveys should be encouraged.
- The use of teams from other countries to strengthen national survey and control capabilities should be encouraged and facilitated.
- Evaluation, monitoring and assessment should capture fully the lessons to be learned from a campaign and ensure they are applied to future operations.

Planning

- FAO should assist countries in improving and coordinating contingency planning.
- Review workshops involving all partners should be held in every country at the end of each campaign to assess actions taken and identify lessons learned.
- ECLC should remain operational and supported until an emergency subsides.
- ECLC should strive for greater coordination with partners, and strengthened cooperation with donors.

Research

- Locust emergencies provide a valuable opportunity for applied research, the results of which can assist future control operations.

FAO, the Locust Commissions and donor assistance

- Donor appeals should be accompanied by better publicity. Donor pledges should not be announced until cash is received.
- FAO, in consultation with donors, should consider establishing an emergency fund for rapid reaction to emergencies.
- FAO should streamline operations so assistance can be provided faster to affected countries.
- FAO's Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Western Region should be allocated more staff, equipment and funding.
- Donors should channel funds through FAO where appropriate. When providing funds bilaterally, donors should keep FAO informed to improve coordination and reduce duplication.
- Affected countries should announce donor contributions on their websites. FAO can provide assistance as required.
- FAO should provide donors with timely information about how their money is being spent.

Control

- EMPRES should be launched in the Western Region as a full field programme with donor support as soon as possible.
- Donors should continue to support national efforts at control.
- FAO should establish a roster of experts from the affected countries to be deployed in future emergencies.

ECLC contacts

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For more information on the desert locust situation, including operational activities, donor funding, country briefs and previous situation reports, go to <http://www.fao.org/news/global/locusts/locuhome.htm>

Aircraft operations

In **The Gambia**, spraying operations begun in mid-December and due to end on 19 January were extended for a further two weeks until 5 February. In **Mauritania** all aircraft contracts have been terminated. In **Senegal** a contract for one fixed-wing aircraft has been extended until 1 February; cross-border operations will be carried out in **Guinea, Guinea Bissau and The Gambia** as required.