

Technical Workshop on Locusts in Caucasus and Central Asia (CCA)
Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 12-16 November 2012
Regional cooperation: information sharing (monthly bulletins)

- Item 7 of the Provisional Agenda -

Background

During the Regional Consultation on Locust Management in Caucasus and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, October 2009), four templates were discussed and endorsed by countries: two standardized forms (for Survey and Spray Monitoring), the template for the monthly national bulletin and the one for the monthly regional bulletin. On this basis, national and regional monthly bulletins have been produced by CCA countries and FAO-HQ from 2010 onwards during the locust campaigns.

The preparation of such bulletins is part of Activity 1.1.1. of the Roadmap for implementation of the “Five-year Programme to improve national and regional locust management in Caucasus and Central Asia (CCA)”. Information sharing of standardized data at national and regional levels is indeed considered as crucial for regional cooperation and locust preventive strategy.

The success of locust preventive control strategy relies basically on well organized surveys carried out by skilled and well-equipped survey officers as well as an efficient national information network producing and distributing good quality and timeliness reports; this increases the likelihood of the early detection of locust populations.

The use of Standardized Survey and Spray Monitoring Forms should allow to gather homogeneous field data while the template for the national monthly bulletin should ensure harmonized analysis and reporting of the locust situation. The monthly national bulletins provided by the countries should allow the preparation of the monthly regional bulletins by the 15th of each following month and its distribution.

In 2012, like for the two previous years, FAO has taken into account all documents received from countries (national bulletin, e-mail, table, report and picture) in order to prepare the regional bulletin. However, only the monthly national bulletins have been evaluated in terms of quality of the information provided, timeliness and frequency of reporting; indeed, they should include all the required information for assessing the situation and establishing the most likely forecast and in addition their format had been approved by all participatory countries. The objective of this assessment was to identify, for each country, strengths and weaknesses and identify the ways for further improvement.

Overview on national monthly bulletins received in 2012

During the 2012 campaign, FAO received 55 documents on locust situation in CCA, including 41 monthly bulletins. This number increased as compared to the previous years (42 documents in 2011 including 31 bulletins, and 51 documents in 2010 including 41 bulletins). As indicated before, this Working Paper provides the results of the evaluation of the monthly national bulletins only.

Among the ten countries participating in the programme, two did not send any bulletin (Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan) in 2012. Eight countries sent the bulletins regularly every month, i.e. seven bulletins from April to October. All bulletins were in Russian except those of Georgia and Afghanistan which were in English.

The first document received on locust situation was from the Russian Federation on 16 March 2012 as piece of information and not as bulletin. The first bulletin was received on 1st April from Armenia and the last one on 9 October from Kyrgyzstan.

An important feature, which is common to all reports, is the absence of geographical coordinates of areas infested or treated. The names of locality only were provided; this is not sufficient and can even be misleading since they often referred to large areas and also because different areas can have the same name. In case of GPS unavailability to get accurate coordinates, this information can nevertheless be obtained from a geographical map (in degrees-minutes). FAO provided in 2012 a number of GPS for each country to contribute filling this gap.

The main findings of the evaluation of the monthly national bulletins are summarized hereafter.

National assessments

Armenia:

Bulletins were received on time every month from April to October (with information provided for the months of March to September), in accordance to the agreed template. They contained relevant information and the quality was in general acceptable.

However, some shortcomings were identified. They concerned especially the absence of summary which should highlight the key information of the bulletins. Only one bulletin included a map (a manual one) showing the prospected/infested areas (July) although each report received specified that a map would be provided with the next bulletin.

Afghanistan:

The efforts made to prepare the bulletin in English were welcomed. However, the style and the long sentences used made difficult the understanding of the information provided (in particular for weather information). This could be easily overcome by using short and simple sentences.

The National bulletins arrived every month, in compliance with the template; however timeliness needs to be improved. All bulletins were in fact received with delay up to 10 days from the deadline and sometimes after a reminder from FAO-HQ. This situation hampered the preparation of the regional bulletin issued the 15th of every next month. In addition, the bulletins were in pdf format, which did not facilitate feedback for their improvement.

Although the country continued to make every attempt to provide good reports, there is still significant room for improving the national bulletin in term of quality of the information provided. Some relevant pieces of information were often missing. For instance, there were no accurate data regarding rainfall, temperature, prevailing wind or they were provided in the next bulletin (with a delay of more than one month). The density of locust populations and the forecast were also often missing. Furthermore, discrepancies were sometimes noted in the same text, including on areas treated.

In the bulletin of March, it was mentioned that the Standard Survey Forms were not available but the reason was not indicated.

Azerbaijan

Bulletins were received every month on time from March to September, in accordance with the template (except for the content of the summary which referred to the situation of the previous month rather than the situation of the corresponding bulletin).

Satisfactory and timely reporting was maintained during the seven months of the campaign. The bulletins contained good information, including details on pesticides used as well as maps showing areas treated. On the other side, some relevant shortcomings were identified. They included the absence of population densities and geographical coordinates of the infested or treated areas.

Georgia

The bulletins were received regularly, on time, except for the bulletins of April and July which have been received with a delay of 2 and 3 days respectively. The template was used.

The content of the bulletin still needs improvement. Most paragraphs were partially filled or not filled at all; that was the case for the paragraphs related to forecast and announcements. Details have been included in the summary while they should have been in the corresponding paragraphs of the bulletin. Locust populations' densities were always missing. However well designed maps showing areas treated were provided for 3 months (from April to June), which represented a major improvement as compared to the previous years.

Some errors could have been avoided if the bulletins were double-checked. For instance, the number attributed to the bulletin of April (n°2) remained the same for the following bulletins and the monthly bulletin's header of August qualified the locust

situation of CIT as 'Cautious' while the color indicating locust situation level was green (i.e. calm, which was the case).

Kyrgyzstan

Six monthly bulletins (from April to September) were received in compliance with the agreed template. In addition, for March, a short document was received as piece of information summarizing the locust situation. There were minor delays in receiving the bulletins on time (1 to 3 days). Concerning the format, it has to be mentioned that it is not necessary to keep the explanation on how to fill in the template in the monthly bulletin.

The quality of the bulletins was deemed satisfactory as they included relevant information such as temperatures, prevalent wind, densities of locust populations, locust behavior, details on area treated and pesticide used. However, locust species were sometimes not mentioned particularly in the part related to locust situation (Section 3 sub-section 3.1). A very slight decline in quality was noticed during the last two months (July and August), particularly in the paragraphs dealing with locust situation and forecast.

Some information provided in the bulletins related to pesticide use (spraying of EC formulations with Micronair AU8115) indicated that there is a significant room for improving technical skills of the personnel on Ultra Low Volume spraying techniques.

Russian Federation

Monthly national bulletins were received regularly every month in compliance with the agreed template. Of the seven bulletins received, two arrived with some delay (bulletins of May and July, four and one days late respectively).

The quality of the bulletin was in general acceptable with good information such as densities of locust populations (hoppers and adults) and of their egg-pods, but some shortcomings that could be easily overcome have been identified. They concern especially the absence of summary which should contain key information further detailed in the bulletin itself. Some relevant details useful for better assessment of the situation and for good forecast were absent in the text such rainfall, prevalent wind, locust species, locust development instars, locust behavior, pesticide used and efficiency on locust operations. Infestations were reported only once on a map (June). The paragraph of announcements was never filled in.

Tajikistan

During the first three months of the campaign (March to May), monthly reports on locust situation were received as piece of information (and not as bulletins). Information for the following months (June to September) was provided using the standard template. Information was received on time throughout the year.

The quality of the reports has slightly improved as compared to the previous year but the content of the bulletin still deserves more improvement. For instance, the color

indicating locust warning level (or risk of threat) in the bulletin's header was used only once (June) while it was recommended to include it for all monthly bulletins. The part on Locust situation (Section 3 sub-section 3.1) did not contain sufficient technical information to provide an appropriate overview of the locust situation. Some relevant pieces of information were not present in the text such as locust instars, densities, behavior, pesticides used and efficiency of control operations. Locust species were sometimes not mentioned. Tables were provided but without analysis. Forecasts of the locust situation development were not always presented and no map showing infested areas was included in the bulletins.

Uzbekistan

Seven monthly national bulletins prepared according to the template -except for the summary- were received during the locust campaign. They were received on time except for the months of July and September with three days of delay for both.

The quality of the bulletin was acceptable but the content needs more development. No summary was included in the bulletins although this part is the most widely read by the busy decision makers.

Some relevant pieces of information were often missing. For instance, there were no accurate data regarding rainfall, prevailing wind, locust development instars, locust densities and behavior and efficiency of treatments. Tables were sometimes provided but they were not analyzed in the bulletin. Forecasts of the locust development were not always presented and no map showing infested areas was provided.

Discrepancies were also noted in Bulletins 2, 3 and 4. They concerned the locust situation that has been described in the bulletin' header calm while important treatments were carried out.