

*REPORT*

New Delhi,  
India,  
25-27  
November  
1998

**FAO Commission for  
Controlling the Desert  
Locust in the Eastern  
Region of its  
Distribution Areas  
in Southwest Asia  
Twenty-first session**



**Report of the**  
**Twenty-first Session of the FAO Commission for Controlling**  
**the Desert Locust in the Eastern Region**  
**of its Distribution Areas in Southwest Asia**

New Delhi, India

25-27 November 1998

**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**Rome, 1998**

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## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Commission recommended that:

1. India and I.R. Iran be provided with e-mail as a means to improving communication and timely reporting.
2. If FAO can find evidence that a microlight can be used to detect hopper bands and solitarious adults, the FAO should make an arrangement with a microlight supplier for a demonstration in Pakistan.
3. FAO enquire with Afghanistan's neighbouring countries on the possibility of providing assistance with pesticide stocks in the event that Afghanistan is invaded by locust.
4. I.R. Iran again investigate the possibility of establishing a radio link between Tehran and Karachi and if this proves feasible, the Commission approved the purchase of one radio for Tehran.
5. FAO should revive the Commission Secretary post forthwith, and the original Terms of Reference should be used with the additions specified.
6. The Commission Chairman and Vice-Chairman to follow the matter up in Rome and raise it at the next DLCC meeting; each country to seek high-level support for the re-establishment of the post.
7. The Commission Agreement should be updated; the Secretariat should follow up on the matter and submit a new version of the Agreement to Member Countries for comment.
8. There should be a monthly border meeting between locust officers of Pakistan and I.R. Iran on the 7<sup>th</sup> of each month at the Mand/Pishin border post, March-June, inclusive. The establishment of this arrangement should be initiated by the National PPD/PPO with assistance from the relevant FAO Representatives.
9. I.R. Iran and Pakistan exchange information on locust activity on a weekly basis from March to June initially by fax and then by e-mail once it becomes established in I.R. Iran.
10. The Secretariat should confirm the funds used over the last three years for border surveys in India with the FAO Representative. If these funds were not used, the necessary action should be taken to order a vehicle.
11. The Secretariat prepare a budget for 1999 totalling US \$ 190,000 and maintain the budget for 2000 at the standard figure of US \$ 71,450.

## **INAUGURATION**

1. Following an introduction by the Joint Secretary, Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Mr. P. D. Sudhakar, the Twenty-first Session of the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Eastern Region of its Distribution in Southwest Asia, and the Twelfth Session of its Executive Committee which preceded it, were inaugurated by the Hon'ble Minister of State for Agriculture of the Government of India, Shri Som Pal. In his address, the Hon'ble Minister in welcoming delegates to the Commission, recalled seeing, as a child, swarms of locust flying past for hours and days, darkening the sky and nibbling away at anything green until there was nothing left. With 60 countries in Africa and Asia potentially affected by the Desert Locust, international cooperation was essential to face the challenge and FAO, as global coordinator, provided the counter balance of the locust swarms. The Hon'ble Minister reviewed the efforts made by India since 1939 when the Locust Warning Organization was established to combat the locust threat through effective survey, control and research. He stressed the need for continued cooperation among locust-affected countries and mentioned the need to locate the Commission Secretariat within the Region. In conclusion, the Hon'ble Minister wished success to the deliberations of the Commission Sessions.

2. The Senior Officer, Migratory Pests, FAO HQ, Mr. Clive Elliot added some words on the importance FAO attached to the Commission and the need to revitalize its activities. Mr. Peter Rosenegger, FAO Representative for India and Bhutan, on behalf of the FAO Director-General, welcomed Commission delegates and said that FAO's support for locust management was underlined by the Director-General's Special Programme 'Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases', otherwise known as EMPRES. A major part of EMPRES was devoted to the Desert Locust.

3. In closing the ceremony, Mr. R.L. Rajak, Plant Protection Adviser to the Government of India, thanked the Hon'ble Minister for his encouragement and the delegates and participants for their support.

## **OPENING**

4. The Twenty-first Session of the Commission was opened by the outgoing Chairman, Mr. M.D. Mohsin (Pakistan). He welcomed the delegates from Afghanistan, India and I.R. Iran, the Secretariat from FAO HQ, an observer from France and other participants. He pointed out that the Commission had not met since 1995, so much ground needed to be covered to catch up. He wished the meeting success and useful discussions.

5. The participants are listed in Appendix I.

## **ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION**

6. Mr. Mohsin called for nominations for Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the 21<sup>st</sup> Session. Mr. R.L. Rajak (India) was elected as Chairman, proposed by I.R. Iran and seconded by Pakistan. I.R. Iran was elected as Vice-Chairman, proposed by India and seconded by Afghanistan.

## **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

7. The Agenda was adopted, as shown in Appendix II.

## **ELECTION OF THE DRAFTING COMMITTEE**

8. A Drafting Committee composed of Mr. Jagdish Prasad (India) and the FAO Secretariat including the NPO from Afghanistan was elected.

## **THE DESERT LOCUST SITUATION 1996-98 AND OUTLOOK TO SPRING 1999**

9. The working paper reviewed the situation, starting with the spring breeding season of 1996, and continuing to the end of the summer breeding season of 1998.

10. During this period, locust populations remained at a relatively low level in the spring and summer breeding areas although there were increases in locust numbers associated with good rainfall and subsequent breeding in most years. These occurred in Baluchistan during the spring of 1996 and 1998, and along the Indo-Pakistan border in 1997. A few swarms from the Central Region may have reached Tharparkar, Pakistan in 1997 and some swarms arrived from the Central Region in southern I.R. Iran in 1998, giving rise to higher than normal populations. Control operations were undertaken by India (22,930 ha), I.R. Iran (55,679 ha), and Pakistan (56,721 ha) in 1996-98.

11. The delegates from India and Pakistan indicated that some areas were difficult of access. The balance of evidence suggested that a second generation of breeding was produced locally in August and September, 1997 rather than a second incursion of swarms from the Central Region.

## **A REVIEW OF THE DESERT LOCUST SURVEY AND CONTROL ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT BY THE MEMBER COUNTRIES DURING 1996-98**

12. A number of observations based on an analysis of data received from Member Countries was presented in a working paper. It was noted that in 1996-98:

- i) The timing and duration of breeding varied during the spring and summer;
- ii) Timely control operations in the spring prevented swarms from moving to the summer breeding areas;
- iii) The length of spring breeding had a pronounced effect on locust numbers in summer areas;
- iv) Pre-monsoon rains fell in many years but they only had an impact when higher numbers of locusts were present;
- v) Surveys in India are organized by the calendar for administrative reasons, but additional surveys are done according to unusual environmental conditions;
- vi) Initial invasions and breeding are sometimes difficult to detect, especially in remote or inaccessible areas;
- vii) Reporting delays sometimes occurred during periods of increased locust activity when all available staff were deployed for survey and control operations. In India, they also were sometimes associated with delays in receiving data from the Meteorological Department and in transmission to FAO HQ;

- viii) Survey details are missing in some cases. India indicated their willingness to include more details and to send a technical report in advance of the complete fortnightly bulletin. Pakistan and India will give consideration to using the *FAO Desert Locust Survey and Control Form*.

13. The Commission **RECOMMENDED** that India and I.R. Iran be provided with e-mail as a means to improving communication and timely reporting.

14. In order to improve locust detection in areas of difficult access, members considered the use of a microlight aircraft. If FAO can find evidence that a microlight can be used to detect hopper bands and solitarious adults, the Commission **RECOMMENDED** that FAO make an arrangement with a microlight supplier for a demonstration in Pakistan.

### **ANTI-LOCUST SURVEY AND CONTROL POTENTIAL AVAILABLE IN MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE COMMISSION**

15. The Secretariat had circulated forms to each Member Country, requesting details to be filled in on pesticide stocks, vehicles, radios, GPS, sprayers, aircraft and personnel. The data provided are tabulated as Appendix III.

16. In discussion of the topic, Members considered the question of how much buffer stock of pesticide should be maintained. New stocks of pesticide normally took several months to be processed and delivered. It was agreed that a buffer stock of between 10,000 and 20,000 litres of a pesticide that could be applied at 0.5-1.0 l/ha was appropriate, i.e. coverage of 10,000-40,000 ha of infestations, in a recession situation. Larger stocks should be maintained when there was any likelihood of invasion from the Central Region.

17. The case of Afghanistan was different since Desert Locust outbreaks normally developed only by invasion from I.R. Iran or Pakistan. Buffer stocks were not appropriate and given current circumstances, Afghanistan would need help with pesticides. The Commission **RECOMMENDED** that FAO enquire with Afghanistan's neighbouring countries on the possibility of providing assistance with pesticide stocks in the event that Afghanistan was invaded by locusts. FAO would also identify funds to cover transportation costs to the appropriate site in Afghanistan for such donations.

### **REVIEW OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE TWENTIETH SESSION AND PROGRESS MADE**

18. The working paper reported systematically on the 21 recommendations that had been made by the 20<sup>th</sup> Session. In discussion of the progress made, the Commission noted that a number of recommendations had already been covered by the Executive Committee. Points of interest were as follows -

- i) I.R. Iran reported that the only feasible means of communication between Tehran and Karachi was telephone and fax, as there were restrictions on the use of radios for international calls. Pakistan reiterated the importance of radio communications during locust upsurges. The Commission **RECOMMENDED** that I.R. Iran again investigate the possibility of establishing a radio link between Tehran and Karachi,

and if this proves feasible, the Commission approves purchase on one radio for Tehran

- ii) It was noted that the question of expanding the FAO Desert Locust Control Committee to cover other locust species was to be debated at the next DLCC meeting.
- iii) Joint locust surveys in southern Afghanistan were impractical at present and should anyway only be considered if there is significant locust activity in northern Baluchistan.
- iv) On the question of re-establishing the Secretariat post within the Region, the Member Countries felt that FAO should recognize their strong commitment to the work of the Commission and the considerable resources they were investing in Desert Locust management. No locust swarms had escaped the region for many years to cause problems to countries in other regions. The revival of an international Secretary post would be an appropriate response to the Commission Members' efforts. Members felt that the Terms of Reference originally developed for the post should be used as the base, but they should be expanded to include the organization of the following regional studies and trials:-
  - a) improving pesticide application techniques with a view to reducing the amount of pesticides used;
  - b) introducing more environmentally friendly control methods including mycopesticides, botanicals, and barrier treatments with IGRs; and,
  - c) investigating economics and the cost/benefit ratio of control in order to reduce costs while maintaining the necessary efficiency.

19. These studies should be organized to complement similar studies being carried out by EMPRES field programmes in the Central Region and be considered as a means by which EMPRES activities could be implemented in the Eastern Region.

20. The Secretary post should also be given special responsibility for assisting countries to develop national training programmes and systems for checking that procedures taught were being properly used under field operation conditions.

21. Member Countries did not accept that the Secretary post could be handled by national staff rotating annually between countries. It was felt that recruitment procedures would be too cumbersome, that countries would have difficulty in releasing staff for a whole year and that arrangements for office and secretarial assistance would be difficult to implement.

22. In conclusion, Member Countries **RECOMMENDED** that FAO should revive the post forthwith, and that the original Terms of Reference be used with the above additions. It was further **RECOMMENDED** that the Commission Chairman and Vice-Chairman follow the matter up in Rome and raise it at the next DLCC meeting. It was also **RECOMMENDED** and that each country seek high-level support for the post re-establishment.

23. It was noted that Member Countries' views on developing EMPRES activities in the Region had been discussed at the Executive Committee.

24. The **RECOMMENDATION** from previous meetings that the Commission Agreement should be updated still stood. The Secretariat was requested to follow up on the matter and submit a new version of the Agreement to Member Countries for comment.

25. On Member Country cooperation, it was noted that there was daily radio contact between Karachi and Jodhpur (June-November); monthly meetings between Indian and Pakistani Locust Officers at the border (June-November); joint border survey, I.R. Iran/Pakistan (April-May).

26. It was **RECOMMENDED** that there should be a monthly border meeting between locust officers of Pakistan and the I.R. Iran on the 7<sup>th</sup> of each month at the Mand/Pishin border post, March-June, inclusive. The establishment of this arrangement should be initiated by the National PPD/PPO with assistance from the relevant FAO Representatives.

27. It was further **RECOMMENDED** that I.R. Iran and Pakistan exchange information on locust activity on a weekly basis from March to June initially by fax and then by e-mail once it becomes established in I.R. Iran.

28. It was noted that effective communication with Afghanistan could be made through the FAO/UNDP Crop Production Project for Afghanistan, based in Islamabad, by e-mail, fax and telephone. There was also a weekly UN flight to Herat which could carry mail.

29. India mentioned that some data on crop damage had been collected in Rajasthan. The Secretariat agreed to provide information on measuring grain losses in sorghum and millet. No data had been collected in I.R. Iran or Pakistan. It was agreed that the **RECOMMENDATION** that studies on economic aspects of locust control and environmental side-effects should be carried out by Member Countries should stand.

#### **REPORT OF THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

30. The report (Appendix IV) was adopted by the Commission and the recommendations it contained were endorsed.

#### **REPORT BY THE PREVIOUS CHAIRMAN ON COMMISSION ACTIVITIES SINCE THE LAST MEETING**

31. It was reported that one Executive Committee meeting had been held in 1997. The Chairman had pursued the re-establishment of the Secretary post with FAO's Assistant Director-General and with the Director of the Plant Production and Protection Division.

#### **FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE COMMISSION AND ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO MEMBER COUNTRIES, AS AT 31 OCTOBER, 1998**

32. The working paper presented information on the final accounts for 1995, 1996, 1997 and provisional accounts for 1998, so that the complete picture since the last Commission Session could be reviewed (The Tables are presented in Appendix V). Detailed expenditure information was also provided. The financial situation of Member Country contributions to the Commission was given.

33. The Commission expressed its thanks to the Secretariat for the information provided and for the work put in to administer the Commission's Trust Fund.

34. In respect of the contribution amounts outstanding, India said that it was almost up to date and would settle the 1998 contribution before the end of its financial year, ending in March 1999. I.R. Iran said that a formal commitment had been given to settling the 1998 contribution through the FAO Representative's office in Tehran. Arrangements were also being made to pay US \$ 50,000 of the arrears by the same route. The Commission expressed its great appreciation of I.R. Iran's new approach to settling its arrears, which would do much to put the Commission back onto a more equal and active footing.

35. Pakistan said that the arrears amounted only to US \$ 20,975. Steps would be taken to settle this amount as soon as conditions allowed. In the meantime, a full breakdown of Pakistan's payments and calculations would be provided to the Secretariat in the near future.

36. In connection with establishing the 1999 and 2000 budgets, it was agreed to list equipment that Member Countries wished to be purchased from their Trust Fund (Appendix VI).

37. In consideration of the 1999 and 2000 budgets for the Trust Fund of the Commission, it was noted that the recommendations made by the Executive Committee and endorsed by the Commission had budgetary implications totalling US \$ 49,500. The total cost of the equipment listed in Appendix V was US \$ 76,000. Routine activities for the Commission Members including the Joint Border Survey I.R. Iran/Pakistan, the India/Pakistan Border Survey, production of Commission reports, the holding of the 13<sup>th</sup> Executive and the 22<sup>nd</sup> Commission, and the travel of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Commission to Rome came to US \$ 64,500. The Grand total for 1999 was therefore US \$ 190,000 including servicing costs.

38. The Commission **RECOMMENDED** that the Secretariat prepares a budget for 1999 totalling US \$ 190,000 and maintains the budget for 2000 at the standard figure of US \$ 71,450.

#### **ELECTION OF THE CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

39. The Chairman called for nominations for these positions. I.R. Iran was elected as Chairman of the Executive Committee, proposed by Afghanistan, seconded by Pakistan. Pakistan was elected as Vice-Chairman, proposed by India and seconded by I.R. Iran.

#### **DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION**

40. As recommended by the Executive Committee, the Commission accepted with great appreciation the offer of the I.R. Iran to hold the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Commission and the 13<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Committee in Tehran, I.R. Iran. A date in November 1999 would be fixed in consultation with the I.R. Iran and the Director-General of FAO.

#### **ADOPTION OF THE REPORT**

42. The Commission unanimously adopted the report.

**CLOSURE OF THE COMMISSION SESSION**

43. Mr. R.L. Rajak, Chairman, thanked the delegates of Afghanistan, the I.R. Iran and Pakistan for their valuable contributions, the FAO Representative and the FAO Secretariat for their strong support of the meeting and the participants from India for their hard work.

44. Mr. M.D. Mohsin, on behalf of the visiting delegation, thanked the Government of India for the excellent arrangements that had been made which had ensured a successful meeting. Mr. Peter Rosenegger, FAO Representative for India and Bhutan and Mr. Clive Elliott, Senior Officer, FAO HQ thanked the Government of India for hosting the meeting.

45 The Chairman declared the meeting closed.

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**AGENDA**

1. Opening of the Session
2. Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Commission
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Election of the Drafting Committee
5. The Desert Locust Situation 1996-98 and Outlook to the Spring of 1999
6. A Review of the Desert Locust Survey and Control Activities Carried out by the Member Countries during 1996-98
7. Anti-Locust Survey and Control Potential Available in Member Countries of the Commission
8. Review of Recommendations of the Twentieth Session and Progress Made
9. Report of the Twelfth Session of the Executive Committee
10. Report by the Previous Chairman on Commission Activities since the Last Meeting
11. Financial Position of the Commission and Assistance Provided to Member Countries
12. Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Executive Committee
13. Date and Place of the Next Session
14. Adoption of the Report

## RESOURCES FOR DESERT LOCUST SURVEY AND CONTROL

Resources	FAO/Afghanistan	India	I.R.Iran /1	Pakistan /1
<b>PESTICIDES</b>				
ULV (ltrs) in stock ha. covered	Nil	17,491 28,649	25,915 51,830	102,000 190,200
E.C.(ltrs) in stock ha. covered	Nil	Nil	89,216 89,216	Nil
Dust (kg.) in stock ha. covered	Nil	Nil	5,000	Nil
Bait (kg.) in stock ha. covered	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
<b>VEHICLES (No.)</b>				
4 x 4 working	10	67	30	85
Trucks working	02	05	06	08
<b>RADIOS (No.)</b>				
Mobil working	10	13	Nil	51
Fixed working	02	56	Nil	33
<b>GPS (No.)</b>				
Hand held working	05	20	10	10
Aerial working	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
<b>SPRAYERS (No.)</b>				
Hand held working	500	324	250	2,215
Vehicle mounted working	03	69	20	75
Aerial working	Nil	Nil	20	Nil
<b>AIRCRAFT (No.)</b>				
Survey working	Nil	Nil	Nil	
Control working	Nil	Nil	20	
Both working	Nil	Nil	Nil	21
<b>PERSONNEL (No.)</b>				
Technical	10	168	700	200
General	20	122	300	162

/1 includes total resources available for plant protection activities.