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COMMISSION FOR CONTROLLING THE DESERT LOCUST IN SOUTHWEST ASIA

Twenty-seventh Session

Islamabad, 25-27 January 2011

REPORT ON JOINT-BORDER SURVEYS DURING THE SPRING OF 2009 AND 2010

1. Introduction

The nineteenth session of the FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in Southwest Asia (SWAC) recommended that the *Desert Locust Joint Survey in the Spring Breeding Areas of the I.R. Iran and Pakistan* be re-established and undertaken on an annual basis. Since 1995, the survey has been carried out every year during April for about 30 days by a joint I.R. Iran / Pakistan team. In the early years, the SWAC Secretary assisted in the organization of the survey and participated in it in the field. These responsibilities were transferred gradually to the national locust units in each country. The Secretary participates in only a portion of the survey when it is deemed necessary from a technical viewpoint as a means of improving survey methodology and reporting.

More recently, insecurity has disrupted the portion of the joint survey that is carried out in Pakistan. There also has been somewhat a decline in the quality of the final report. In order to guarantee the sustainability and effectiveness of future joint surveys, these issues should be addressed by this Session.

2. Survey results

In 2009 and 2010, the Iranian team could not participate in the first half of the survey in Baluchistan, Pakistan because they did not receive security clearance from the Ministry of Interior in Pakistan. Consequently, the first half of the survey was only carried out by the Pakistani team while the second half in I.R. Iran was carried out by both teams. In both years, the survey was carried out of a period of 34 days from 1 April to 4 May. The team used eLocust2 for recording their observation and transmitting them to the respective national locust centre. Data was also entered on the *FAO Desert Locust Survey & Control Form* and into the Joint Survey Database which was installed on the Iranian team's Flybook laptop. A GPS version of the dynamic greenness map was prepared by M. Ghaemain for the joint team. Both new tools were found to be useful. At the end of the survey, the team met with National Locust Unit Heads of the two countries in Zahedan to discuss the results. In 2010, the meeting was held at the end of the Inter-regional Master Trainers workshop in Ramsar, I.R. Iran and was attended by the Secretary of the Commission.

2009. The Pakistani team made 66 stops and covered a distance of 6,880 km during the first half of the survey in Pakistan. The joint team made 65 stops in I.R. Iran and covered 5,880 km during the second half of the survey. Only low numbers of solitarious adults were seen in the interior of western Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, in the interior of southeast Iran and at one place on the coast. The joint team traveled as a single team for security purposes but then split up into two at each survey site so that their sample covered a large area.

2010. The Pakistani team made 74 stops and covered a distance of 6,500 km during the first half of the survey in Pakistan. The joint team made 80 stops in I.R. Iran and covered 6,150 km during the second half of the survey. No locusts were seen in either country because of poor rainfall, low soil moisture and dry vegetation. Consequently, a few more stops could be made in the same period of time.

	2009	2010
Distance covered in Pakistan	6,880	6,500
Distance covered in I.R. Iran	5,880	6,150
Total distance (km)	12,760	12,650
Number of stops in Pakistan	66	74
Number of stops in I.R. Iran	65	80
Total stops	131	154
Number of days in Pakistan	17	17
Number of days in I.R. Iran	17	17
Total days	34	34

It should be noted that FAO DLIS did not receive the survey results as a RAMSES export file (Excel spreadsheet) from the Joint Survey carried out in 2010. It was also unclear if eLocust2 was used throughout the first half of the survey carried out in Baluchistan, Pakistan.

3. Future improvements and concerns

The status of the recommendations made at the 26th Session (see Annex 1) pertaining to the joint survey should be reviewed by the 27th Session in order to determine if the two countries and FAO were able to implement them successfully and, if not, to identify the cause and further need for the recommendation.

In both years, the joint survey team provided a short list of suggestions for improving future joint surveys (see Annex 2). These suggestions should be reviewed by the Session in order to recommend which ones to adopt and implement.

For future sustainability, the primary concern of the joint survey is the security situation in Baluchistan, Pakistan. For the past two years, the Iranian team has not been able to participate in the first half of the survey. Although it is hoped that the security situation will improve, several decisions will need to be taken by the Session:

a) Is it worthwhile technically and politically to continue the annual joint surveys, or should they be replaced by national surveys funded under national programmes?
b) If the joint survey is to continue but the security situation does not improve in Pakistan, should the Commission Trust Funds support the entire survey or only the portion that is jointly carried out?
c) What can Member Countries do so that the Pakistani side can be surveyed jointly?

Annex 1. Joint survey recommendations from the 26th Session

In order to improve the annual I.R. Iran/Pakistan Joint Survey in the spring breeding areas:

(a) the experts participating in the joint survey must be experienced and well informed of survey procedures as indicated in the *FAO Desert Locust Guidelines*;
(b) drivers from both countries must be familiar with driving in desert areas and off-road conditions;
(c) three drivers and one mechanic-driver should be nominated by Pakistan, and the latter person should carry an essential tool kit for immediate repair of vehicles to avoid interruption of the survey;
(d) two days of survey are added to allow an extra day of survey each in the Kharan Valley (Pakistan) and in the Jaz Murian Basin near Kanoj (I.R. Iran);
(e) the border meeting on the last day of the survey in Zahedan should be extended by an extra day to allow sufficient time for discussion between the two Locust Heads and the team, and for the Pakistanis to cross the border before it closes;
(f) custom maps showing place names and vegetation in Pakistan and I.R. Iran are prepared by Mehdi Ghaemian for use on a laptop computer during the survey;
(g) all of the survey equipment, including eLocust2, should be checked before the survey to ensure that they are in good working condition;
(h) FAO should prepare guidelines in the form of *Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the Desert Locust Joint Survey in the Spring Breeding Areas of the I.R. Iran and Pakistan* to be used for training prior to the survey and for reference during the survey;
(i) the team should not be required to use RAMSES during the survey; instead, they should record data in eLocust2 as well as in a database (to be developed by Mehdi Ghaemian) on the Flybook laptop;
(j) appropriate spare parts are purchased prior to the survey and carried with the team to be used for any repairs as necessary during the survey;
(k) maintain the current DSA rates but increase the GOE for each country to account for increases in fuel prices and the need for spare parts.

Furthermore, FAO should implement the following recommendations:

(a) The FAO Representation in I.R. Iran should provide the Plant Protection Organization with the full amount of the general operating expenses earmarked for the annual Joint Survey no later than 1 March of every year.
(b) The annual general operating expenses for the I.R. Iran/Pakistan Joint Survey should be increased by US$ 1,000 for each country.
(c) A laptop computer should be procured for Pakistan to be used during the annual Joint Survey and at the monthly Border Meetings with India in the summer, and an extra battery for the existing Flybook laptop in Pakistan.

Annex 2. Suggestions for joint survey improvements from the 2009 and 2010 team

2009	2010
1. The survey should be continued in the coming years to assess the locust situation and any possible migration from across the Persian Gulf.	1. The joint survey should be continued in the coming years to monitor Desert Locust activity on both sides of the border and to watch for any possible migration of locust populations from across the Persian Gulf
2. Training at regional level should be organized and assisted by FAO for staff of plant protection organization of both countries to meet any emergency and to become familiar with locust survey and control methods and on the use of GPS, eLocust2, laptop computer and other equipment provided by FAO.	2. Whenever new technologies become available, FAO should organize workshops to train the joint survey officers of both countries
3. Mr. Ghaemian should prepare custom maps for the laptop and GPS that cover the Pakistani side.	3. Mr. Ghaemian should prepare custom maps for the laptop and GPS that cover the Pakistani side.
4. Keeping in the view of the tough desert job and the high inflation rate, the DSA may be enhanced by 50%.	4. Keeping in the view of the tough desert job and the high inflation rate, the DSA may be enhanced by 50%.
5. Whenever locust control operations occur in either country, the locust officers of DPP and PPO should be invited to participate in order to gain more experience. This activity should be sponsored by FAO.	5. Whenever locust control operations occur in either country, a team of locust officers of the DPP and PPO should be invited to participate in order to gain more practical experience. The activity should be sponsored by SWAC.
A. Regular national surveys of winter/spring breeding areas of southern Baluchistan should be carried out in both countries from at least 1 February to 31 May every year to check the activity and movement of locusts from across the Persian Gulf.	A. GPS units previously provided to Pakistan are now obsolete because their memory batteries have been exhausted. FAO should provide at least two new GPS units to be used during the routine national locust survey as well as the joint survey.
B. At least one of the two locust experts from each country should be the nationally designated locust information officer. This person would be useful because he knows the latest situation, data recording, reporting, computers, GPS, eLocust2, new technologies and preparing the final report.	B. If possible, the Flybook in I.R. Iran should be repaired; otherwise, it should be replaced with a Netbook laptop PC. An external drive and extra battery should be ordered for the new Flybook provided to Pakistan by SWAC.
C. At least one of the four drivers should be a mechanic who will also be responsible for emergency repair of vehicles during the survey. He should be well equipped with the necessary tool kit and emergency spare parts.	C. If possible, a replacement pre-paid SIM card should be procured by SWAC for the Thuraya satellite phone in Pakistan and I.R. Iran so that they can be used during the joint survey.
D. FAO is requested to provide walkie-talkies of high range for making better communications during the survey.	D. Walkie-talkies provided by FAO are of limited range. FAO is requested to provide four high range sets to each country if possible.
E. The route of Bandar Abbas to Kahnuj should be slightly modified to include Ghale Ganj and Sowlan. Three overnights should be continued in Kharan (Pakistan) in order to survey the vast and deep desert of Kharan, Naru, Shamsi and Ormage.	E. The team hopes that security situation in Baluchistan, Pakistan will return to normal and both the countries will undertake regular joint survey activities in 2011 and thereafter.
F. Pakistan should arrange, manage and improve guesthouse accommodations and the Locust Officer in-Charge of the respective outposts in Pakistan should coordinate and help the survey team.	