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DESERT LOCUST CONTROL COMMITTEE

Fortieth Session
Rome, 19-22 June 2012
A brief history of the FAO Desert Locust Control Committee (DLCC)
(Agenda Item 6)

I. Introduction

FAO's current role in Desert Locust monitoring and control dates back nearly an entire century. In 1916, the Permanent Committee of the International Institute of Agriculture (IIA) in Rome, the precursor to FAO, agreed to host an international conference on locust control at the peak of the 1912-1919 plague. The meeting was delayed by World War I and could not be held until 1920. The conference adopted an international convention to control Desert Locust, share information on locust movements and submit reports to IIA. Some 40 years later, the Desert Locust Control Committee (DLCC) was established in 1955, again when locust-affected countries were in the midst of the longest plague in the 20th century. In 1978, FAO assumed full responsibility for the centralized locust information service from the Anti-Locust Research Centre in London (UK), which had been operating the program since 1931.

This paper provides a brief chronological overview of the DLCC within the context of FAO's Desert Locust programme, including relevant locust projects, committees, commissions and regional organizations. This background should be useful when discussing how the DLCC can become a more effective coordinating instrument for locust early warning and preventive control.

II. Desert Locust Control Committee (DLCC)

The DLCC has met 39 times between 1955 and 2009, and the report of each session has been issued in English, French and, more recently Arabic. It is the primary advisory body to the Director-General of FAO on all Desert Locust issues.

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1951. The 12th session of the *FAO Council* (June) recommended that the Director-General explore the possibility of FAO providing technical assistance to locust control. FAO hosted an *International Conference* (October) in which delegates recognized FAO as the agency best placed to coordinate locust control campaigns.

1953. The 3rd *FAO Regional Meeting on Food and Agriculture Problems and Outlook in the Near East* (Cairo, September) recommended that FAO should serve as a central coordinating body to stimulate and integrate international action against the Desert Locust, especially in the Arabian Peninsula, but later in other areas. The *FAO Desert Locust Control Meeting* (Damascus, November) recommended an international coordinating committee to prepare campaign plans for Desert Locust control in the Arabian Peninsula in 1954. The 7th session of the *FAO Conference* (November) established a Special Fund S.1. (Trust Fund No. 1) to accommodate governmental cash contributions in financing locust control operations mainly in Arabia.

1954. The *Coordinating Committee for the Control of the Desert Locust in the Arabian Peninsula* (Cairo, June) suggested establishing a Working Party to coordinate all work on Desert Locust. The *Working Party on Desert Locust* (September) recommended that the *Coordinating Committee for the Control of the Desert Locust in the Arabian Peninsula* expand into an *FAO Desert Locust Control Committee (DLCC)*, include other regions and to establish a central fund. The Director-General suggested that affected countries should contribute to the operational costs of FAO's programme, stressing long-term implications of locust control.

1955. The Director-General established the DLCC (January), which was approved at the 8th session of the *FAO Conference* (November) with the following terms of reference:

- (a) keeping the DL situation under review;
- (b) coordinating DL control campaigns in the Arabian Peninsula;
- (c) coordinating DL control campaigns elsewhere;
- (d) promote the coordination of national and international policies for preventive control.

The DLCC membership was defined as representatives of all countries affected by the Desert Locust and of those participating materially in international control campaigns. The first session of DLCC was held in April.

1957. A Trust Fund (No. 61) was established based on the recommendations of the *FAO Eastern African Desert Locust Control Sub-Committee*, mainly for vehicle and pesticide reserves.

1958. A Trust Fund (No. 90) was established to provide additional funds for long-term aspects of Desert Locust control.

1964. The 9th session of the *DLCC* (July) recommended the establishment of an international trust fund.

1966. The Director-General of FAO established an international trust fund (No. 161, later 9161) to carry out certain activities supporting the United Nations Special Fund (UNSF) project.

1968. The 51st session of the *FAO Council* (November) amended the terms of reference for the DLCC to include: provide the Director-General with technical, scientific and policy advice on the Desert Locust situation and the measures required to keep it under control, and review the annual, financial and workplan reports.

1969. The 13th session of the *DLCC* (October) approved a long-term strategy of Desert Locust plague preventive control. A *Panel of Experts on Emergency Action against the Desert Locust* was established, which met three times before it was abolished in 1993.

1986. The Director-General established the *Emergency Centre of Locust Operations (ECLO)* as a temporary focal point to coordinate national, regional and international actions, to maintain direct contact with donors and affected countries and to mobilize the necessary finance and supplies for the grasshopper and locust campaigns in progress.

2004. An *Extraordinary Session* of the DLCC was convened in November because of the emergency situation in West and Northwest Africa.

2006. The 38th session of the *DLCC* (September) replaced the *DLCC Technical Group* with technical experts who were to advise the DLCC on an ad-hoc basis.

III. FAO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The TAC met 12 times between 1952 and 1964, and the report of each session was issued in English and French. Although the committee discussed all technical aspects of Desert Locust control, it mainly concentrated on control in the Arabian Peninsula and suppressing the 1950-1963 plague. It guided FAO's work and indicated to governments how national locust control organizations might be strengthened.

1951. The TAC was established by the 6th session of the *FAO Conference* (November), which defined its function as:

- (a) to advise FAO on the Desert Locust situation and the measures necessary to keep it under control;
- (b) to establish uniform procedures for the preparation and presentation of reports on locust control by the countries concerned;
- (c) to assess the overall requirements of equipment and supplies needed to implement plans for campaigns, and to consider and advise FAO with regard to any requests for assistance that may be required to supplement national efforts;
- (d) to provide advice and assistance in the procurement of equipment and supplies;
- (e) to make recommendations on the distribution and movement of equipment and supplies provided from sources outside the Desert Locust area;
- (f) to advise the Director-General regarding the calling, as need arises, of general conferences on Desert Locust control.

The Committee was composed of locust experts nominated by the governments of Egypt, France, India, Iran, Pakistan, UK and USA.

1955. The 8th session of the *FAO Conference* redefined the functions of TAC so as to provide the Director-General with technical and scientific advice on the Desert Locust situation and the measures required to keep it under control.

1960. The 34th session of the *FAO Council* decided that TAC's terms of reference should include serving as the expert advisory body to FAO for the implementation of the UNSF project. Membership of the Committee was increased to include Ethiopia, Morocco and Sudan.

IV. United Nations Special Fund (UNSF)

From 1960 to 1970, the project produced an enormous volume of important base-line technical and historical data on a variety of Desert Locust aspects regarding ecological survey, coordinated research, reporting and forecasting, training, exchange visits and fellowships, and operational research including meteorology, population dynamics and aerial control.

1956. The report of the *Panel of Experts on the Long-Term Policy of Desert Locust Control* recommended an inter-regional project on Desert Locust control.

1958. The 4th *FAO Regional Conference for the Near East* (December) recommended that this project be submitted to the United Nations Special Fund (UNSF).

1959. The Director-General of FAO submitted proposals to the UNSF Managing Director on behalf of nine governments (February). The 6th session of the *DLCC* (July) approved the project draft requiring financial commitments from governments. The recommendations of the Managing Director were submitted to the 3rd session of the *UNSF Governing Council* and FAO was designated as Executing Agency (December).

1960. A six-year Plan of Operation was signed by 14 countries at a *Special Meeting on Desert Locust Control* (April) with original budget of USD 3,865,800 of which USD 1,373,100 was contributed by participating governments.

1963. Thirty-four countries had joined the Project by December.

V. Regional Anti-Locust Committees, Commissions and Organizations

A. Central Region

Desert Locust Survey (DLS)

1948. The Governments of the East Africa High Commission established DLS as a replacement to the British wartime anti-locust organizations (October). Its role was to survey and supervise locust activity in Somalia, British Somaliland, Ethiopia, Eritrea, the Aden Protectorates (now part of Yemen), Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman.

Desert Locust Control (DLC)

1950. Established when reports indicated a new plague was imminent. Its mandate covered DLS areas as well as Egypt and Sudan.

FAO Arabian Peninsular Desert Locust Control Sub-Committee

The Committee met 22 times between 1953 and 1963, and the report of each session was issued in English while a few reports were also issued in French.

1953. First met as the *Executive Committee for Desert Locust Control in the Arabian Peninsula* (November).

1955. The 1st session of the DLCC (April) approved the establishment of the *Executive Committee for Desert Locust Control in the Arabian Peninsula* and its terms of reference (prepare campaign plans for control operations in the Arabian Peninsula and ensure effective collaboration between governments).

1957. The 4th session of the DLCC (June) modified the title of the Committee to *FAO Arabian Peninsular Desert Locust Control Sub-Committee*.

FAO Eastern African Desert Locust Control Sub-Committee

The Committee met three times between 1957 and 1961, and the report of each session was issued in English and French.

1956. A *Meeting on Desert Locust Control in the Ethiopian-Somali Area* (Addis Ababa, February) recommended that FAO establish an international consultative committee on Desert Locust control in the Ethiopian-Somalia area with a permanent secretary in Addis Ababa. The 3rd session of the DLCC (July) supported this recommendation.

1957. The 1st session of the *FAO Eastern African Desert Locust Control Sub-Committee* (February) recommended that the sub-committee's role was to facilitate the free consultation amongst affected countries to further Desert Locust control.

1961. The 3rd session recommended the establishment of a regional Desert Locust control organization to supplement national efforts.

FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East (CRC)

1961. The 11th session of the *FAO Conference* recommended the establishment of the Commission.

1965. A *Special Conference* in Beirut endorsed the Commission and the 44th session of the *FAO Council* (July) approved its establishment.

1967. The Commission agreement came into force on 21 February and superseded the *FAO Arabian Peninsular Desert Locust Control Sub-Committee*.

1994. The 20th session (December) recommended changing the Commission name to the *FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC)*.

Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA)

1962. A *Special FAO Meeting on Desert Locust Control in Eastern Africa* (Rome, January) drafted a convention creating an independent intergovernmental regional organization outside the framework but in close contact with FAO called the *Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA)*.

1963. The agreement between DLCO-EA and FAO was approved by the 40th session of the FAO Council (June) and the 12th session of the FAO Conference (December). DLCO-EA superseded DLS and DLC.

B. Western Region

French Office National Anti-acridien (ONAA)

1943. ONAA, based in Algiers, replaced the *French Committee for the Study of Locust Biology* to coordinate research and monitoring in Senegal, Mauritania, Mali (then French Soudan) and Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta).

1952-58. Control operations were coordinated in West Africa.

Organisation Commune de Lutte antiacridienne (OCLA/OCLALAV)

1958. Established as an independent intergovernmental regional organization outside the framework but in close contact with FAO for ONAA countries in West Africa as well as for Chad, Niger, Benin (then Dahomey) and Ivory Coast.

1965. OCLA became known as the *Organisation commune de Lutte antiacridienne et de Lutte antiaviaire* (OCLALAV).

North West African Desert Locust Research and Control Coordination Sub-Committee

1966. Established by FAO.

Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in North-West Africa (CLCPANO)

1970. An agreement to establish the Commission was reviewed by *North West African Desert Locust Research and Control Coordination Sub-Committee* (March). The 55th session of the FAO Conference (November) approved the Commission's establishment.

1971. The Commission agreement came into force on 17 August and it was registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations on 24 September. It replaced the *North West African Desert Locust Research and Control Coordination Sub-Committee*.

Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Western Region (CLCPRO)

2000. The 119th session of the FAO Council (November) approved the establishment of the Commission.

2002. The Commission agreement came into force on 25 February and it was registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations on 26 April. It superseded CLCPANO.

C. Eastern Region

FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in [the Eastern Region of its Distribution Area] in South-West Asia (SWAC)

1962. A special *FAO Meeting of Member Nations directly affected by the Desert Locust in the Eastern Region of its distribution area in South-West Asia* (Tehran, October) recommended that a regional commission for the control of the Desert Locust should be established for the region.

1963. This recommendation was confirmed by a second meeting of the Member Nations directly concerned (May) and by the 8th session of the DLCC in May. A draft Agreement was considered by the 40th and 41st sessions of the FAO Council and approved by the 12th session of the FAO Conference (December) for submission to Member Nations for its acceptance.

1964. The Commission agreement entered into force on 15 December.

1965. The Agreement was registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations on 2 April under No. 7663 as the *FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Eastern Region of its Distribution Area in South-West Asia*.

2000. At the 23rd session (September), the Commission changed its name to the *FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in South-West Asia* (SWAC).

VI. Discussion

Although the DLCC differs from FAO's regional locust commissions in that it is not an article XIV body, it remains an important coordinating body for locust early warning and preventive control. The Committee should consider how DLCC can become more effective in terms of:

- a) its current role as an advisory body to the Director-General;
- b) its future role to possibly include oversight of the regional locust commissions to ensure interregional collaboration and harmonization of technical methodologies and administrative procedures.