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para la  
Alimentación y la  
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# DESERT LOCUST CONTROL COMMITTEE

<b>Fortieth Session</b>
<b>Rome, 19-22 June 2012</b>
<b>FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC)</b>
<b>(Agenda Item 7)</b>

## I. Introduction

This paper has been prepared to clarify a number of subject matters that play an important role in the Commission's activities and performance. Establishment of the Commission, member countries, Secretariat, responsibilities, constraints and the future orientation of the Commission will be addressed and discussed.

## II. History and evolution

### A. Establishment

The Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC) was established under Article XIV within the framework of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. The establishment agreement was approved by the 44<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Council in July 1965 (Resolution 6/44) as recommended by the 11<sup>th</sup> Session of the FAO Conference in 1961 (Resolution 9/61) and by a Special Conference held in Beirut (1965).

The Commission was established under the name *Desert Locust Commission in the Near East*. The Agreement came into force on 21 February 1967 and was amended by the Commission at its 7<sup>th</sup> Session (1976). The 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission (Cairo, 18-20 December 1994) considered renaming the Region "Central Region" and consequently modifying the name of the Commission and the Agreement. It also considered modifying the definition of the Region covered by the Agreement to make it possible for Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia to become members of the Commission. This was approved by the Council at its 108<sup>th</sup> Session (Rome, 5-14 June 1995). In 1999, an emblem

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was chosen and approved by FAO for the Commission, which was changed by the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission (Doha, 25 May – 1 June 2006).

## **B. Member countries and contributions**

Until 2002, the Commission in the Central Region consisted of 13 member countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, United Arab Emirates and Yemen. The last three countries that joined the Commission were Djibouti in 2002, Ethiopia in 2004 and Eritrea in 2006, and the number of member countries in the Commission became sixteen. Due to the prevailing situation and unfortunate circumstances, it has not been possible for Somalia to join the Commission; nevertheless, locust operations and activities are supported through FAO's Special Programme, the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES), initiated by the Director-General of FAO in 1995 to combat the Desert Locust.

Each member of the Commission undertakes to contribute annually its share of the budget in accordance with a scale of contributions that is determined by the following criteria:

- Size of the country
- Per Capita income
- Agricultural land
- Desert Locust infestation frequency
- Damage to crops and pastures

Contributions by members amount to USD 266,850 per year made payable to the Trust Fund account in Rome. The Commission may also accept contributions and donations from other sources. All activities and Commission's workplan are covered from the Trust Fund.

## **C. Secretariat and seat**

The Secretariat of the Commission consists of the following staff:

- Secretary of the Commission (P4) appointed by the FAO Director General;
- Administrative Assistant (G6);
- Technical Assistant (National Consultant);
- Driver (G2).

The Commission's Trust Fund covers the expenses, salary, official missions and local visits of the staff (Administrative Assistant and Driver). FAO's Regular Programme covers the salary and operational expenses of the Commission's Secretary.

The seat of the Commission was transferred from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia to FAO Headquarters in Rome after the retirement of the Secretary of the Commission in 1992; thereafter, the post was abolished. In 1993, a Plant Protection Officer was appointed at the FAO Regional Office for the Near East (RNE) in Cairo and he was given the responsibility of handling Desert Locust activities in the Central Region in addition to his plant protection duties. In 1998, the 22<sup>nd</sup> session of the Commission affirmed that the implementation of its recommendations and follow-up of its activities warranted the appointment of a full time secretary. The Commission called upon the FAO Director-General to reinstate the post of the Secretary. Consequently, the Secretary of the Commission was appointed in 2001. The current seat of the Commission is in Cairo, Egypt. The sessions of the Commission are normally held at its seat;

however, they could be convened elsewhere in consultation with the FAO Director-General, following the decision of the Commission at a previous session.

### **Role of the Commission**

As per the establishment agreement, the Commission's role is to strengthen the cooperation and coordination between member countries, promote joint activities at national, regional and international levels in order to carry out Desert Locust survey and control operations whenever and wherever it is necessary. The Commission encourages member countries to implement a preventive control strategy against Desert Locust infestations in order to reduce potential damage to agricultural crops and grazing lands. Hence, the Commission contributes to food security and the fight against hunger and poverty in Africa and the Near East with particular emphasis on the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea coast.

In this regard, during the 27<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission held in Beirut, Lebanon, in 2010, it was recommended to increase the budget for the Emergency Fund from USD 100,000 to USD 300,000.

### **D. Sessions and meetings**

The Commission convenes regular sessions, at least once every two years, in which delegates elect the Chairman and vice-Chairman of the Session and the Executive Committee Chairman and members. The Executive Committee of the Commission was composed of five members of the Commission, but after the adherence of the three additional countries, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Eritrea, the membership of the Executive Committee was increased to seven. The Committee should meet at least once between any two successive regular sessions of the Commission.

## **III. The impact of EMPRES**

In 1997, the Commission was brought back to life and its role became more dominant when the EMPRES Programme became operational. This resulted in numerous publications and references, in English and Arabic, produced by the Commission and building capacities and creating self reliant national master trainers in the region who are recruited by other regions to benefit from their training skills. Research is another activity that the Commission initiated, supported and encouraged by EMPRES. The Commission played a key role within EMPRES in the Central Region by establishing Desert Locust Information Offices in the front-line-countries, i.e. Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen. These offices were created and strengthened with various equipment and advanced technologies such as eLocust2 data recording and RAMSES data management systems. This allows Desert Locust data and ecology information to be received quickly and analyzed properly so that national staff can undertake survey and control operations in a timely manner. Recently, the Commission arranged for the provision of pesticides to Ethiopia and Somalia for early intervention against locust infestations, and the triangulation of pesticides from existing stocks in Mauritania for control operations in Yemen. As Eritrea and Sudan are members in the Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA), the Commission played an important role in 2007 in the coordination of aerial control operations in Eritrea through the provision of pesticides and aviation fuel from Sudan.

Preparedness in human, financial and equipment resources are vital in Desert Locust preventive control. For this reason, EMPRES introduced contingency planning and encouraged member countries to prepare national dynamic contingency plans. It was anticipated that the plans would be put into practice by organizing field simulation scenarios but this could not be implemented due to lack of resources.

All of the CRC activities during EMPRES years made the original scope and role of the Commission more dynamic than before EMPRES and the Commission became stronger and more effective and valuable.

#### **IV. Activities**

Since the termination of the donor support to the EMPRES programme in the Central Region in 2006, the Commission has taken over many EMPRES activities and has expanded its own scope. Each year the Commission conducts a variety of national and regional training courses for member countries. It also organizes joint surveys of Desert Locust breeding areas along both sides of common borders, for example Egypt/Sudan and Yemen/Saudi Arabia. Several publications are prepared and translated into Arabic, including a recent glossary of locust terminology, which are distributed to member countries. The Commission provides and supports the member countries with the necessary references and information regarding the Desert Locust, as well as with all research results and documentation. It is also responsible for translating the monthly FAO Desert Locust Bulletin into Arabic and distributing it to Arab-speaking countries. CRC maintains an updated web site ([www.crc-empres.org](http://www.crc-empres.org)) that contains country profiles, publications and other important resources and information pertaining to Desert Locust with emphasis on the Central Region.

The Commission works very closely with regional organizations. A memorandum of understanding with DLCO-EA was agreed upon and signed in 2005 regarding research, aerial training courses, joint activities such as the use of experts in training courses, and aerial operations in Eritrea and northern Somalia. The Commission also collaborates with the Commissions for Controlling the Desert Locust in South West Asia (SWAC) and in the Western region (CLCPRO) in the inter-regional workshops on RAMSES/eLocust2 and Master Trainers (ToT). Further coordination and cooperation has occurred with CLCPRO in the exchange of expertise and participation in specialized workshops such as spray equipment maintenance and testing of spray equipment used in Desert Locust control operations.

The Commission is active to implement and strengthen the Environmental and Health Standards for Desert Locust Control in the Central Region (EHS), to define the requirements that a Desert Locust control campaign should meet with the aim to minimize environmental and human health impacts of insecticide use, and to ensure that these impacts are avoided or kept to an acceptable minimum.

#### **V. Constraints of the Commission**

In spite of the positive role played by the Commission in support of Desert Locust operations, e.g. information dissemination, capacity building, and applied research, there are a number of constraints that hinder the streamlining of professional accomplishments and obligations of the Commission. It should be noted that all technical, monitoring, administrative and political measures of the Commission are handled by a single person, which impairs proper technical backstopping in the field on a regular basis. Specific constraints are:

- No additional funds or support to the Commission after the termination of donor support to EMPRES/CR at the end 2006 has caused difficulty in implementing the expanded Commission's responsibilities and activities;
- Irregularity in settling contributions of a number of member countries and accumulated arrears endangers activities and efficiencies of the Commission;
- Weak responses from a number of member countries to send information and implement agreed workplans jeopardize the effectiveness of preventive control and early warning and reaction in the region.

## **VI. Future orientation and improvements**

In view of the above constraints, the Secretariat of the Commission proposes the following points:

- As a means of encouraging the payment of contributions and settlement of arrears in a more regular manner, member countries that do not pay their contributions and settle their arrears should not be chosen in the Executive Committee;
- The Chairman of the Commission and the Chairman of the Executive Committee with the Secretariat of the Commission should visit Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and United Arab Emirates to meet with the concerned ministers and discuss the financial status of the Commission and raising the countries' contribution. This will boost the technical capacity of the Commission and its ability to conduct more activities to support and upgrade locust operations and to facilitate the introduction of new technologies for preventive control;
- There is a need to increase and promote interaction between member countries and the Secretariat of the Commission through regular back-stopping visits and support to exchange of experience among countries.
- Support should be given to facilitate more frequent inter-regional exchange and participation in joint workshops and training sessions.