



DESERT LOCUST UPDATE

FAO Emergency Centre for Locust Operations



(16 March 2004)



General Situation as of 16 March 2004

The situation continues to be extremely serious in Northwest Africa. Despite intensive control operations, swarms are laying eggs in the spring breeding areas south of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco and perhaps in western Algeria. More swarms are expected to arrive in these areas from Mauritania and Western Sahara where swarms are forming. Control operations continue to be hampered in Mauritania due to a lack of resources, especially pesticides. The situation may be improving in Saudi Arabia where control operations declined on the Red Sea coast. A few swarms appeared in northern Sudan and southern Egypt, and hopper bands were treated on the coast near the Egyptian/Sudanese border.

During the first week of March, late instar hopper bands were fledging in the **Western Sahara** and an increasing number of immature and mature swarms were forming. In **Morocco**, mature swarms continued to lay eggs south of the Atlas Mountains in the Draa Valley. Ground and aerial control operations have intensified, treating up to 20,000 ha/day. During the first week of March, more than 113,000 ha were controlled. In **Mauritania**, widespread hatching and band formation continue in the north near Zouerate and to a lesser extent near Akjoujt and Atar. Adults are forming groups in parts of the north and northwest where vegetation is drying out, and a few swarms have been seen moving northwards. Control operations declined during the first ten days of March and treated only 775 ha (and another 145 ha using barriers) due to insufficient pesticide supplies. In

Niger, adult densities are increasing in the southern Air Mountains where egg-laying and hatching are in progress. Many small swarms were seen moving northwards in early March. Control operations treated nearly 3,000 ha during the first week of the month. Isolated adults persisted in northern **Mali** where the situation is calm. Although no new information has been received from **Algeria**, locusts are almost certainly present in the west near the Moroccan border. More swarms are likely to arrive and lay eggs south of the Atlas Mountain in Morocco and Algeria. A few swarms may also appear in southern and central Algeria from Niger.

During the first week of March, locusts moved from the Red Sea coastal plains to the interior of northern **Sudan** and southern **Egypt**. In Sudan, groups of immature and mature adults and a few small mature swarms appeared near Dongola. The swarms were reported to be copulating. In Egypt, an immature swarm was seen near Lake Nasser and adults appeared in the New Valley. On the Red Sea coast, control operations continued on both sides of the Egyptian-Sudanese border against late instar hopper groups and bands. No locusts were reported in the Tokar Delta. Control operations treated 1,200 ha in Egypt and 45 ha in Sudan during 1-8 March.

In **Saudi Arabia**, locust numbers have reportedly declined along the Red Sea coastal plains where only low numbers of solitary and gregarious adults were seen in early March. No information has been received about the situation in the spring breeding areas where adult groups were laying eggs last month. Control operations treated 1,900 ha on the coast during the first half of March.

The FAO Desert Bulletin is issued monthly, supplemented by Updates during periods of increased Desert Locust activity, and is distributed by fax, e-mail, FAO pouch and airmail by the Locusts and Other Migratory Pests Group, AGP Division, FAO, 00100 Rome, Italy. It is also available on the Internet.

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The most up-to-date information on the situation and photos are available on the Internet (www.fao.org/news/global/locusts/locuhome.htm) as well as maps of the latest infestations (193.43.36.11/mapper).