



DESERT LOCUST UPDATE

FAO Emergency Centre for Locust Operations



(26 July 2004)



General Situation as of 26 July 2004

More swarms have arrived in Mauritania, Senegal and Mali from Northwest Africa in the past two weeks. Reports were also received of the first swarms arriving in Niger. Egg laying has started in some places in the Sahel. No swarms have been reported in Chad or Sudan yet. There are signs that the situation is starting to calm down in Northwest Africa where intensive control operations continue. Control efforts in the Sahel are hampered by a lack of resources and the difficulty of locating and treating the highly mobile swarms. Several countries have made new appeals for international assistance that is urgently required to supplement the major efforts already made and to prevent the situation from developing into a plague.

In mid-July, numerous swarms were seen moving south in the Adrar region of central Mauritania, causing damage to date palms. Most of the swarms dispersed throughout the summer breeding areas in southern Mauritania between Boutilimit and Kiffa. Other swarms continued east into the two Hodhs and south into northeastern Senegal (the Senegal River Valley between Matam and the Malian border) and western Mali (near Kayes and Niore). Egg laying has commenced much further south than normal in Mauritania, near the Senegal River in Guidimaka. Breeding has also started in Assaba. Consequently, hatching and band formation are expected to start by the end of July and could threaten summer agriculture. Ground control operations treated 1,731 ha in Mauritania (11-20 July) and 872 ha in Senegal.

In northern Mali, numerous swarms arrived in the Adrar des Iforas at mid-month and some of these continued south towards the Niger River. Although the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone is currently oscillating between 15N and 20N, there is a potential risk that a few swarms could appear in Burkina Faso and western Niger if the ITCZ descends below 15N. In northern Niger, a large swarm was seen in the Tamesna west of Agadez on 20 July, suggesting that the first swarms from Northwest Africa have started to arrive. Local breeding is in progress in the Air Mountains where hatching was reported, and mature adults were seen in the south near Zinder. As good rains have fallen throughout the Sahel and ecological conditions are favourable, large-scale breeding will commence shortly, causing locust numbers to increase further in West Africa.

Intensive ground and aerial control operations continued in Morocco and Algeria against numerous immature swarms that persist along the southern side of the Atlas Mountains. Crop damage, locally heavy in some places, has occurred in both countries. During the second decade of July, there was a decline in the number of hectares treated in Morocco (194,430 ha) and Libya (213 ha), indicating that the situation is starting to improve in both countries. Control operations are thought to be in progress in Tunisia but details are not forthcoming. The situation should become calm in the Region in the next few weeks.

So far, no swarms from Northwest Africa have been reported in Sudan where only scattered adults are present in the summer breeding areas west of the Nile.

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).

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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