

# **Dramatic locust situation in West Africa - donor response positive**

**26 August 2004 -- The international community has responded positively to an appeal launched by FAO to assist countries in west and northwest Africa in their fight against desert locusts, FAO said today.**

**26 August 2004, Rome --** The international community has responded positively to an appeal launched by FAO to assist countries in west and northwest Africa in their fight against desert locusts, FAO said today.

The UN agency warned, however, that the locust situation in the countries affected remains dramatic and that more international support is urgently needed.

So far, a total of \$32 million from the international community have been approved or are in the pipeline. Some of the funds have been provided bilaterally direct to the countries, but the great majority has been routed through FAO.

An additional \$5 million have been provided from FAO's own resources.

Affected countries have mobilized their own resources for national locust control campaigns. Maghreb countries, namely Morocco and Algeria, are sending survey and control teams as well as vehicles and sprayers to Mauritania, Mali and Niger to bolster their control efforts.

## **Lack of funds**

But many African countries do not have sufficient funds to finance national control campaigns fully and avoid crop losses, FAO said.

Aircraft, pesticides, vehicles, sprayers, monitoring capacity and technical support are lacking in all affected countries.

"Additional donor support is urgently needed for targeted aerial and ground spraying and for environmental monitoring," the UN agency said.

The worst affected country is currently Mauritania, with large areas of locust infestations requiring control. The situation is also deteriorating in Mali and Niger. Locust swarms have also been reported in Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Chad and Senegal.

There are unconfirmed reports from northwestern Nigeria, and there is a moderate risk that swarms will also reach Darfur, Sudan, though none have so far.

## **Crops at risk**

FAO warned that the locust situation could further deteriorate in the next few weeks with new swarms starting to form in September, seriously threatening crops that will be ready for harvest in the affected countries.

"The main effort should be now to protect as much as possible of the next harvest, which is crucial for the food security situation of millions of people in the region," FAO said.

FAO estimated that up to around \$100 million are needed to control the current locust upsurge and stop it from developing into a full-scale plague.

The main donors supporting the locust control campaign are the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, the Common Development Fund (FCD), Canada, the European Community, France, Islamic Development Bank, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan Province of China, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

In the pipeline is assistance from the African Development Bank, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), the European Community, Germany, the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD), Italy, and Japan.

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**Contact:**

Erwin Northoff  
Information Officer, FAO  
erwin.northoff@fao.org  
(+39) 06 5705 3105

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