



Locust Crisis in Madagascar

15 May 2013

HIGHLIGHTS

- Since April 2012, Madagascar has been facing a **serious locust plague** of the Malagasy Migratory Locust, that threatens the livelihoods of **13 million people** in the country, nine million of whom earn a living from agriculture. Locust infestations, if untreated, could wipe out food crops and livestock grazing lands – and with it a family's ability to provide for itself.
- At least **1.5 million hectares (ha) could be infested** by locusts in two-thirds of the country by September 2013. Preliminary findings from an ongoing damage assessment indicate that **rice and maize crop losses due to locusts** in the mid-western part of Madagascar **vary, on average, from 40 to 50 percent, reaching up to 100 percent in some fields.**
- The Ministry of Agriculture of Madagascar declared a **national disaster on 27 November 2012** and requested assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to address the current locust plague.
- In response to the locust plague, an emergency programme, with the objective to safeguard the food security of rural populations, has been jointly prepared by FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture. An appeal to donors was launched in December 2012. It is estimated that at least three successive locust control campaigns (from September 2013 to September 2016), costing **USD 41.5 million, are required** to treat 1.5 million ha (2013/14), 500 000 ha (2014/15) and 150 000 ha (2015/16) respectively.
- The three-year programme includes:
 - **Improving the monitoring and analysis of the locust situation**
 - **Large-scale aerial and ground control operations**
 - **Monitoring and mitigating impact of locust control operations on human health and the environment**
 - **Assessing the effectiveness of each locust campaign and the impact of locusts on crops and pastures**
- In late February 2013, **Cyclone Haruna** worsened the situation. The cyclone, which hit the southwestern part of Madagascar, not only damaged crops and homes but also provided ideal breeding conditions for locusts for a longer period than usual.
- Out of the required USD 41.5 million over the three-year period, **USD 22.4 million are needed by June 2013** to implement the **first emergency campaign** (from September 2013 to September 2014).
- The **current funding gap is USD 41.5 million**. Should all the required funds not be available on time to undertake the locust campaigns, the plague will persist several years, severely affecting food security, nutrition and livelihoods.

LATEST UPDATE

During the 2012/2013 campaign, two generations of the Malagasy Migratory Locust developed under relatively suitable weather and ecological conditions and a third one under favourable breeding conditions thanks to Cyclone Haruna. As a result, at the end of April 2013, hopper bands were still present in the northern part of the outbreak area together with numerous dense swarms of medium size (average of 500 ha and up to 5 000 ha). These swarms are progressively moving to the north, increasingly contaminating mid-west Madagascar (where two generations of breeding have already occurred) and settling the north-west (Betsiboka Basin). About half the country is contaminated by gregarious locust populations and the level of infestation has been reinforced throughout the rainy season. As swarms are already observed as far north as Antsirabe, it is expected that the western side of the island will be contaminated by the end of the winter (September 2013), meaning that, at that time, about two-thirds of Madagascar will be affected by the plague.

RECENT ACTIONS TAKEN

Locust Watch Unit: In February 2013, FAO mobilized funds to establish a Locust Watch Unit within the Plant Protection Directorate (PPD) of the Ministry of Agriculture in Antananarivo. Led by the Director of the PPD, it is mandated with the collection and analysis of locust and weather data and provides a regular overview of the situation. It has already carried out three field assessments between March and April 2013 and produced two monthly bulletins. From September 2013 onwards, the Locust Watch Unit will be essential for guiding survey and control operations.

Damage assessment: An assessment of locust damage to crops and pastures started in April 2013. This study, financed by FAO, is expected to throw light on the impact of the locust plague on local agricultural production and on the food security of the rural populations. Recent (preliminary) findings show that rice and maize crop losses due to locusts are high in the mid-western part of Madagascar. The winter season, which is starting, will last five months; little or no crop production takes place during this dry and cold period and farmers will have to rely on food stocks which, in some cases, will last three months only. Detailed results of the assessment will be available in late May 2013.

Funding required (USD)	Pledges (USD)	Funding received by FAO (USD)	Funding received bilaterally (USD)	Funding gap (USD)
41.5 million FAO Appeal* - 18 Dec.2012	0	0	0	41.5 million

* This amount includes the USD 22.4 million required by June 2013 to implement the first emergency locust-control campaign.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Three-year Programme in Response to the Locust Plague in Madagascar: [English version](#) / [French version](#)
- Situation updates: [English](#) / [French](#)
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