



Locust Crisis in Madagascar

23 August 2013

HIGHLIGHTS

- Since April 2012, Madagascar has been facing a **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.
- Two-thirds of the country could be infested by September 2013. Findings from a damage assessment conducted in May 2013 indicate that **rice crop losses due to locusts in 2012/13 vary from 10 to 40 percent** in 17 of Madagascar's 22 regions.
- 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.
- It is estimated that at least **three successive locust control campaigns costing USD 41.5 million are required** to treat over 2 million hectares between September 2013 and September 2016 (1.5 million hectares in 2013/14; 500 000 hectares in 2014/15 and 150 000 hectares in 2015/16).
- The three-year programme jointly prepared by FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture in response to the plague, implemented and coordinated by FAO, focuses on:
 - **Improving the monitoring and analysis of the locust situation**
 - **Large-scale aerial control operations**
 - **Monitoring and mitigating the 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**
- The **current funding gap is USD 24.8 million of which USD 5.7 million are still urgently** required for FAO to be able to carry out an effective large-scale locust campaign in 2013/14 and **USD 19.1 million** are required for the 2014/15 and 2015/16 campaigns. Should all the funds not be available on time to undertake the campaigns, the plague could wipe out food crops and livestock pastures – and with it, a family's ability to provide for itself.

LATEST UPDATE

During the 2012/13 rainy season, huge areas have been infested by increasing numbers of the Malagasy Migratory Locust produced by the three successive generations of breeding, which developed under relatively suitable weather and ecological conditions. As a result, numerous dense gregarious swarms formed in all infested areas, whose size varied from 300 to 5 000 hectares. As vegetation is progressively drying out during the winter period, swarms are highly mobile throughout the infested areas and beyond 16°S. Up to the beginning of the rainy season, the swarms as well as the non-swarming locust populations will continue to be mobile and take advantage of any suitable ecological conditions for their survival and local breeding.

RECENT ACTIONS TAKEN

Locust Watch Unit, mandated with the collection and analysis of locust and weather data, provides a regular overview of the situation. Since February 2013, it has carried out five field assessments. From September 2013 onwards, the Locust Watch Unit will be essential for monitoring the locust situation and guiding survey and control operations. The Locust Watch Unit was established earlier this year within the Plant Protection Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture.

A **damage assessment** was conducted in April-May 2013 to estimate the impact of the locust plague on agricultural production. Field observations in the three regions of Atsimo Andrefana, Menabe and Bongolava showed that crop losses due to locusts are high in the mid- and southwestern parts of Madagascar. Forecasts indicate that Madagascar could suffer rice crop losses of up to over 309 000 tonnes (worst case) this year, with the losses concentrated in the south, where as much as 30 to 40 percent of the crop may be lost due to locusts. In the worst case, the damage to the total rice crop would equal more than three times the level of rice imports in 2012. In addition, a Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) concluded in July 2013 and the results will be available by the end of August 2013.

Preparedness for the first locust campaign (September 2013 – August 2014): The procurement of critical inputs such as pesticides, vehicles and equipment for survey and control operations is underway. Aerial survey operations to identify and map out the areas requiring treatment by pesticides will begin on 15 September. The recruitment of key technical specialists including a Campaign Coordinator, Logisticians, Locust Expert, Environmentalists, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) Expert, Pesticide Stock Management System specialist etc. is also underway.

Funding required (USD)	Pledges (USD)	Funding received by FAO (USD)	Funding gap (USD)
41.5 million FAO Appeal, 18 December 2012	650 000	16.7 million (Austria, Belgium, CERF-OCHA, France, Norway, World Bank loan to Madagascar)	24.8 million

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Three-year Programme in Response to the Locust Plague in Madagascar: [English version](#) / [French version](#)
- For more information: [English](#)
- FAO Response Coordinator: Dr Annie Monard, +39 06 570 53311, annie.monard@fao.org
- FAO Operations / Donor Focal Point: Daniela Mangione, +39 06 570 54107, daniela.mangione@fao.org