



Locust Crisis in Madagascar

30 October 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, 9 million of whom earn a living from agriculture.
- Almost two-thirds of the country are currently infested. Findings from a damage assessment conducted in May 2013 indicate that **rice crop losses due to locusts in 2012/13 vary from 10 to as much as 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 return to a recession period by treating over 2 million hectares between September 2013 and September 2016. **One or two campaigns alone, will not be enough to reach this objective.**
- 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 15.3 million** 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

With the onset of the rainy season in late September, ecological conditions are becoming suitable for the maturation of the swarming populations and their subsequent mating and egg-laying (adequate soil moisture and grass greening). Hatching of non-swarming populations was already reported. Several swarms, whose size was of 3 600 hectares on average but could exceed 10 000 hectares, were observed since the beginning of the extensive aerial survey, on 26 September. These swarms consisted of immature, maturing or already mature adults. Currently infested areas extend as far North as the northwestern part of the invasion area. It is expected that hoppers groups and bands will form from mid-November in the West.

RECENT ACTIONS TAKEN

Locust Watch Unit, mandated with the collection, storage and analysis of locust, weather and socio-economic data, has been strengthened thanks to a one-month consultation of an International Expert in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and the recruitment of a national GIS Expert, in addition to its three members. The Locust Watch Unit now produces regular ten-day and monthly bulletins illustrated by more pertinent and updated maps. With the deployment of helicopters and related aerial surveys, the unit will have much more data to analyze and will now mainly operate from the capital.

The first locust campaign (September 2013 – August 2014): Aerial survey operations to assess the locust situation and localize the hotspots of the locust populations in order to forecast their likely movements and deploy the aerial control bases started on 26 September in the west and are still in progress; almost 45 hours have been flown so far. The two aerial bases are about to be deployed, one in the West (Tsiroanomandidy) and one in the Southwest (Ihosa). First batches of critical inputs such as conventional pesticides, insect growth inhibitors, and biopesticides, vehicles and equipment for survey and control operations have been delivered. The Human Health and Environmental Management Plan has been elaborated and is about to be distributed and implemented. Key technical specialists, including a Campaign Coordinator, a Locust Expert and two Logisticians are on site and are organizing the field activities and delivering training and refreshing courses to the national staff. National specialized expertise is also being mobilized in close collaboration with the National Anti-Locust Centre, the Plant Protection Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture and the National Coordination Unit.

Pesticide triangulation (donation of pesticides from a country with available stocks to a recipient country). More than 30 percent of the 200 000 litres of pesticide donated by Morocco was airlifted to Madagascar on 2 October. Transport by sea is being organized for the remaining quantities donated by Morocco and 30 000 litres donated by Mauritania (for the time being).

Funding required (USD)	Funding received by FAO (USD)	Funding gap (USD)
41.5 million FAO Appeal, 18 December 2012	26.2 million (Government of Madagascar through a Work Bank loan, Austria, Belgium, CERF-OCHA, European Union, France, Italy, Norway, and USA)	15.3 million

FURTHER INFORMATION

- All up-to-date information is available on our Website: www.fao.org/emergencies/crisis/madagascar-locust/en/
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