8,054 hectares have been treated

2 million hectares of cropland threatened in Acholi, Karamoja, Lango and Teso regions

8,000 households to receive livelihood and food security assistance

USD 12.8 million needed for Desert Locust control and livelihood protection in Uganda

The Desert Locust crisis poses a potential threat to the food security of 1.32 million people

DESERT LOCUST SITUATION IN UGANDA

In August, Uganda experienced four Desert Locust swarms. The first swarm arrived on 12 August from Turkana County in Kenya, entered Uganda through Napak district and landed in Ngoleriet Sub-county and Kangole Trading Center. The second swarm entered on 22 August through Moroto District and settled in Naput Sub-county and Lokopo Sub-county in Moroto and Napak Districts respectively. Another swarm entered through Amudat District on 24 August and settled in Kalochonga Sub-county in Napak District, while the last swarm entered on 26 August through Moroto District and settled in Tapac Sub-county, Moroto district. The August swarms covered a cumulative area of over five square kilometers (km), but were duly controlled by the Uganda People’s Defence Forces (UPDF) ground spray teams.

Desert Locust swarms continue to pose a threat to the food security and agriculture-based livelihoods of communities in Karamoja and Teso Sub-regions. Swarms have entered Uganda from Kenya since February 2020, mainly through Amudat District in Karamoja sub-region and spread to other districts in north and northeastern Uganda. Desert Locusts were sighted in 89 locations across 21 districts in February, 16 locations in March, 34 locations in April and only eight in May. Through April, the Desert Locust swarms were mainly mature adults and did not cause significant damage to vegetation cover. Those that have appeared since May have been mostly immature adults. Unlike previous invasions, the swarms reported in July and August landed in maturing crops that are nearing the point of harvest.

In Rupa and Ngoleriet Sub-counties, farmers reported damage to their vegetable gardens and maize crop. In some instances, the immature swarms have destroyed crops, such as sorghum, sunflower and vegetables. The extent of the damage will be determined during the Detailed Livelihood Impact Assessment to assess the impact on livelihoods and food security of Desert Locusts.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

In the Horn of Africa, aerial control operations continue against immature swarms prevailing in northwest Kenya. Some of the adults are starting to mature, suggesting the possibility of a generation of breeding once the short rains start in October.

On 22 August, a Desert Locust swarm entered from northern Kenya to South Sudan to the south of Kapoeta in Eastern Equatoria State. This swarm is mobile and not expected to mature or breed in South Sudan.

In northeastern Ethiopia, mature swarms from Afar concentrated along a 400 km stretch of the escarpment on the eastern edges of the Amhara and Tigray highlands where egg-laying will cause hopper bands to form. So far, at least one band has formed in Tigray, south of Mekele. Aerial and ground control operations are in progress.
Immature swarms persist in the Harar Highlands in nearby eastern areas and on the plateau in northwest Somalia, where aerial control operations are in progress using bio-pesticides. The swarms in Somalia could mature and eventually breed in areas receiving rainfall, including the northwest coast of Somalia where adult groups are present.

**CURBING THE SPREAD OF DESERT LOCUSTS**

Training and enhancing skills of national and local government personnel as well as community members involved in surveillance and control activities is a critical component of curbing the spread of the Desert Locusts. The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF), Desert Locust Control Organisation for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA) and FAO conducted two trainings in surveillance and reporting on Desert Locusts, that targeted district agriculture officers and civil society structures through a training of the trainers (TOT) approach. These trainings are expected to increase reporting frequency and data quality on Desert Locust surveillance. FAO conducted the trainings from 10 - 12 August in Mbale District, covering Bugisu and Sebei Sub-regions, and from 14 - 17 August in Gulu District, covering Acholi Sub-region.

Across the two trainings, more than 25 people from 18 districts and five Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), namely Mercy Corps, Self Help Africa, Sustainable Agriculture for Rural Development Network (SARD-Net), Teso Religious Leaders Efforts for Peace and Reconciliation (TERELEPAR) and World Vision were trained on the use of the eLocust suite for surveillance and reporting and Desert Locust biology and behaviour. The training team also briefed participants on the status of the national and regional Desert Locust invasion and response.

Since the July eLocust suite trainings that FAO conducted in partnership with MAAIF, partners have already begun to roll out the eLocust training at community level. One such partner is Catholic Relief Services (CRS), which conducted a series of trainings among youth, to create awareness about the Desert Locust threat in Uganda and increase community capacity in Desert Locust surveillance and response. These trainings were conducted in Moroto, Nabilatuk and Nakapiripirit Districts in Karamoja Sub-region as well as Kapelebyong and Katakwi Districts in Teso Sub-region.

To support Desert Locust control efforts, CRS handed over five motorized spray pumps and five sets of personal protective equipment to Kapelebyong District.

Furthermore, to ensure efficient control measures, FAO procured and delivered 47,000 litres of chlorpyrifos pesticides that will be used to control future Desert Locust swarms. MAAIF received an additional 50,000 litres of pesticides.

FAO continues to support improved coordination of surveillance and forecasting activities to ensure that swarms do not inflict significant damage to crops and pastures.
SAFEGUARDING LIVELIHOODS AND PROMOTING EARLY RECOVERY

In collaboration with the Government of Uganda (GoU), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), MAAIF, Ministry of Local Government, Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), World Food Programme (WFP) and civil society structures; and under the coordination of the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), FAO is conducting a detailed Livelihoods Impact Assessment to assess the impact of Desert Locusts on livelihoods and food security. The Assessment is being conducted across 22 districts in Acholi, Elgon, Karamoja, Lango and Teso sub-regions that have thus far been affected by Desert Locust and will reach an anticipated 5,500 households. Information obtained from the exercise will support GoU, FAO and other stakeholders’ interventions by helping to determine the magnitude of impact of Desert Locusts on food security and livelihoods in affected districts in order to inform livelihoods assistance that will be provided in the coming months by various stakeholders. To this end, 90 enumerators have been trained and currently are collecting data across five sub-regions. In collaboration with FAO, CRS together with its partners Caritas Moroto and Caritas Soroti (SOCADIDO), participated in the enumerator training. CRS recruited and trained 20 additional enumerators and equipped them with smart phones to support the ongoing data collection exercise. Preliminary results are expected in late September.

COORDINATION AND PREPAREDNESS

On 20 August 2020, GoU, through MAAIF, appointed a Technical Working Group on Desert Locust Control Operations in Uganda to support the response to current and future Desert Locust invasions. The Technical Working Group was formed based on current projections that Desert Locust invasions could persist into 2021. It is therefore important to sustain the current preparedness and coordination efforts by all stakeholders. The Technical Working Group comprises officials from the Office of the Uganda Prime Minister, DLCO-EA, MAAIF, National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO), National Environment Management Authority (NEMA) and FAO. The Group’s tasks include: 1) Assessing Uganda’s capacity and readiness for the control of Desert Locust and guiding on mitigation measures, 2) Lobbying Government and other development partners to support the contingency plan for mitigating Desert Locust, 3) Reviewing and updating Desert Locust control information and education materials and 4) Coordinating Desert Locust response activities of all stakeholders (including civil society).

Contact

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