



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

# The 2020–2021 desert locust upsurge

How anticipatory action prevented  
a full blown humanitarian crisis.



# The **desert locust** upsurge

**In late 2019, a massive outbreak of desert locusts swept across the greater Horn of Africa and Yemen.**

This pest can devour a staggering volume of crops and pastures that rural communities depend on – a major threat in a region already hit by frequent climatic hazards and high levels of food insecurity.

**The situation was dire**

Swarming desert locusts reproduce exponentially

**20x after 3 months**  
**400x after 6 months**  
**8000x after 9 months**

In one day, a small swarm of one square kilometer can consume the same amount of food as

**35 000 people.**

# Acting fast Mobilizing time-sensitive resources

\$10M

January 2020

\$243M

January 2022



Africa Solidarity Trust Fund



SFERA



Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

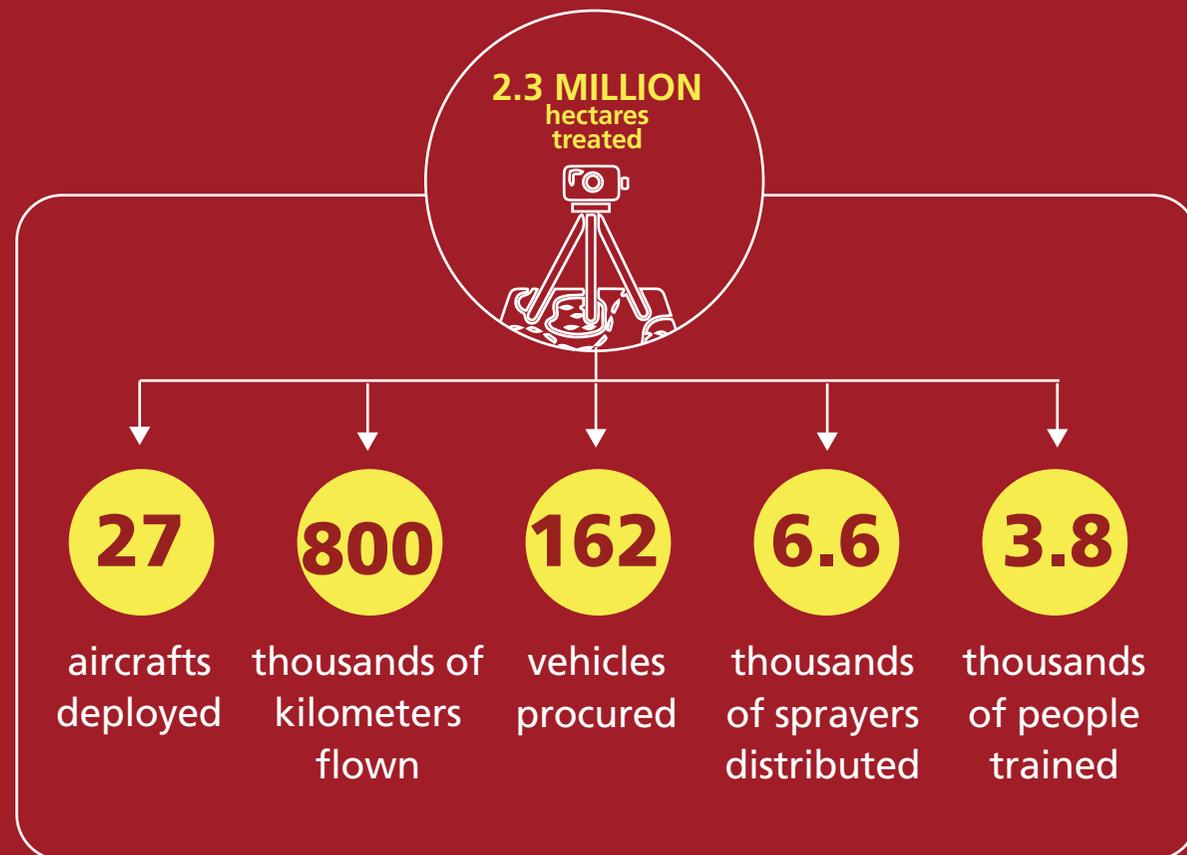


Louis Dreyfus  
Fondation d'entreprise



# Action at scale

## Neutralizing the threat

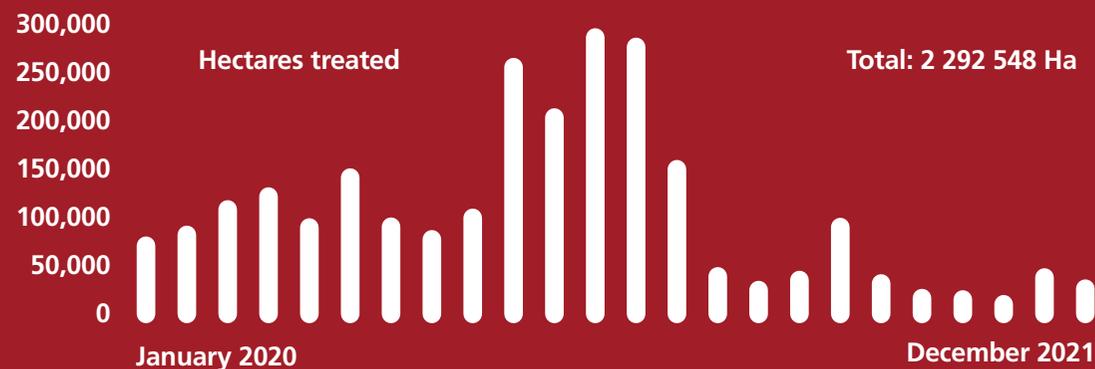


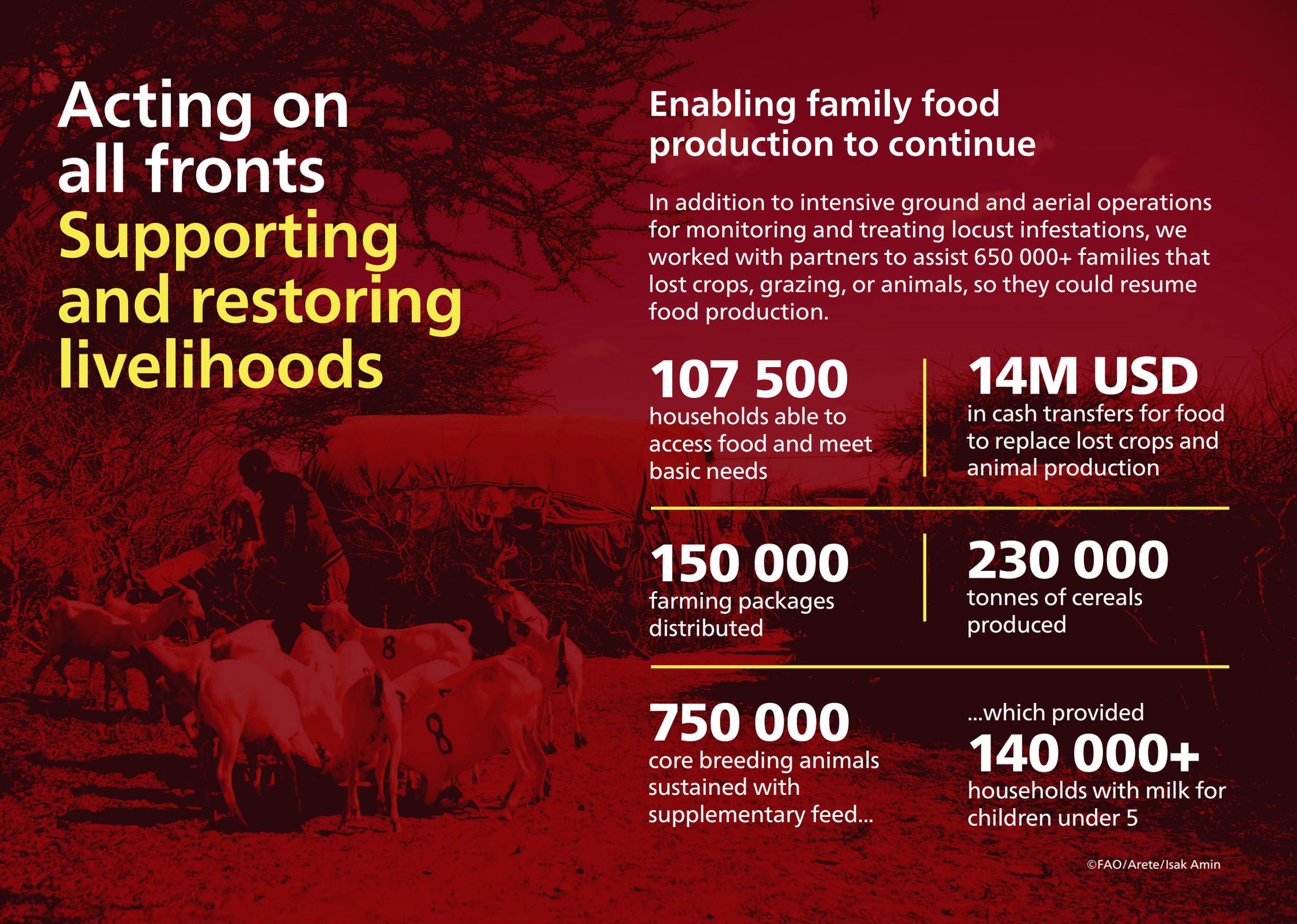
### Innovating for results

Biopesticides + insect growth regulators  
in addition to traditional pesticides

eLocust3 app and tablets, survey drones,  
predictive computer modelling

### Locust control operations in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia



A man in a dark shirt is tending to a herd of goats in a rural setting. The goats are white and some have black markings. The background shows a simple structure and trees.

# Acting on all fronts Supporting and restoring livelihoods

## Enabling family food production to continue

In addition to intensive ground and aerial operations for monitoring and treating locust infestations, we worked with partners to assist 650 000+ families that lost crops, grazing, or animals, so they could resume food production.

**107 500**

households able to  
access food and meet  
basic needs

**14M USD**

in cash transfers for food  
to replace lost crops and  
animal production

**150 000**

farming packages  
distributed

**230 000**

tonnes of cereals  
produced

**750 000**

core breeding animals  
sustained with  
supplementary feed...

...which provided

**140 000+**

households with milk for  
children under 5

# Reaping the rewards

## Acting early, fast and at scale

An unprecedented locust threat was halted from spiraling into a plague or a food crisis.

Major losses of crops, pasture and animal production were avoided. Livelihoods were reinforced. Governments now have the tools and capacity to act fast to disrupt future infestations.



**41.5M**  
people protected from  
food insecurity



**4.6M**  
metric tonnes of cereals  
saved from destruction



**900M**  
litres of milk losses  
prevented



**\$1.8B**  
in economic losses  
avoided



**Greatly**  
strengthened national  
locust response capacities

# Staying the course

## Delivering results

Working with governments during the pandemic, FAO and other UN partners scored major wins.

- In Southwest Asia, the upsurge was brought under control by late 2020.
- West Africa was spared invasion due to control efforts in the greater Horn of Africa.
- In East Africa and Yemen, the upsurge was eliminated after a long-fought campaign.
- Locust management capacity has been strengthened across all affected and at-risk countries.

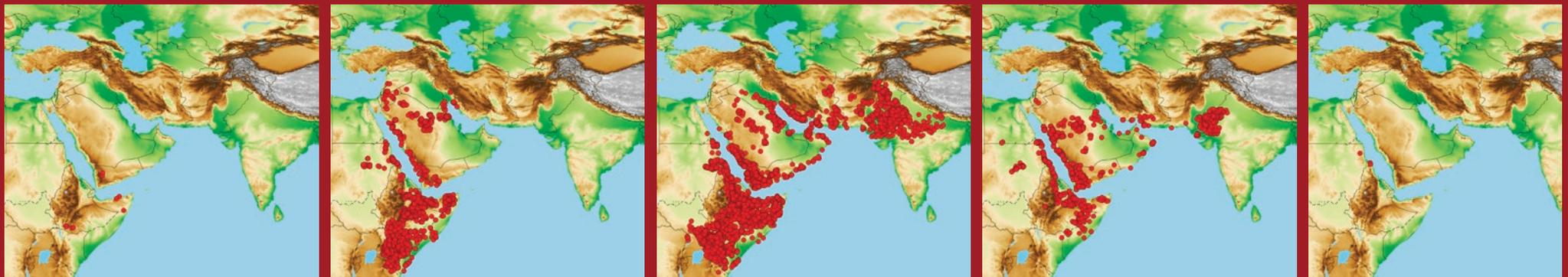


# Tackling future threats Replicating a model of success

## What if we invested in protecting people from disasters – rather than wait for the worst to happen?

Acting fast and early when threats like pests, droughts or animal diseases appear on the horizon can prevent food crises from breaking out in the first place and helps contain their scale and severity when they cannot be avoided.

### Evolution of desert locust swarms, 2018 – 2022



2018

Late 2019

Early 2020

2021

2022



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