



Yemen receives pesticides from Mauritania to battle locust outbreaks

Joint FAO/WFP effort to battle locust outbreaks in Yemen

21 July 2007, Sana'a – Yemen has received a pesticide donation from Mauritania to combat the worst locust outbreak in nearly 15 years.

The donated chemicals were transported by air to Yemen in a joint operation between FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP). They will be used in an intensive campaign to prevent massive locust infestations and serious damage to food crops in Yemen and neighbouring countries.

An aircraft leased by WFP on behalf of FAO arrived in Sana'a 21 July 2007 carrying 35 000 litres of pesticides donated by the government of Mauritania. In addition, an agricultural spray plane chartered by FAO will be arriving in Sana'a within the next days for locust control in the interior of Yemen. A helicopter from the government of Yemen will also participate in the emergency operations.

Overall, an estimated 50 000 to 75 000 hectares infested by locusts may have to be treated through air and ground control for which FAO has leased vehicles from WFP's logistics centre in Dubai.

Desert Locusts have infested large areas in the remote interior of Yemen along the southern edge of the Empty Quarter, stretching from Marib to the Oman border. Locust numbers are likely to increase dramatically as a second generation of breeding continues in these areas over the next months. Agricultural crops in Wadi Hadhramaut and other areas including the Sanaa highlands can only be protected by successful locust survey and control operations.

Massive control campaign to be launched

“The pesticide donation made by Mauritania shows the country's commitment in the global control of Desert Locust. With the arrival of aircraft and pesticides, a massive control campaign can be launched over a large and remote area of rough terrain,” said FAO locust expert Christian Pantenius. “This should help to minimize the locust threat to local crops in most affected areas and to neighbouring countries.”

“With WFP's logistical strengths combined with FAO's technical expertise and operational assistance we are in a strong position to provide valuable support to the Government of Yemen at this critical time,” said Mohamed El-Kouhene, WFP Representative in Yemen. “It is vital to work fast to minimise the crop damage that these locusts cause

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and its impact on already vulnerable communities.”

WFP has also included in the mission an expert to assess the impact of the insects on peoples’ livelihoods and access to food.

The United Nations Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has provided US\$2.4 million to FAO to support the government of Yemen’s control of the Desert Locust over the next three months. The funds will support aircraft, pesticide, equipment, vehicles, and locust control and logistics experts.

Although Yemen imports around 75 percent of its food needs, anything that might impact the country's limited agricultural areas – estimated at between just one and two percent of the country's land mass – could lead to a sharp price increase of domestically grown food. The rural people will be most affected and they are already the most vulnerable being on average much poorer than the urban population.

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