

REPORT OF THE

Held in Kuwait,
State of Kuwait
30 August-2 September 1975

**SIXTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION
FOR CONTROLLING THE DESERT LOCUST
IN THE NEAR EAST**



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

Earlier reports of sessions of the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East have been issued as follows:

First Session	Baghdad, Iraq	1-4 February 1969	(Report No. PL: 1969/M/1)
Second Session	Beirut, Lebanon	26-29 April 1971	(Report No. AGP: 1971/M/2)
Third Session	Amman, Jordan	29 July-1 August 1972	(Report No. AGP: 1972/M/6)
Fourth Session	Cairo, A.R. Egypt	15-18 September 1973	(Report No. AGP: 1973/M/8)
Fifth Session	Jeddah, Saudi Arabia	12-16 September 1974	(Report No. AGP: 1974/M/4)

Meeting Report No.
AGP : 1975/M/5

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Rome 1975

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INTRODUCTION

The Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, at the kind invitation of the Government of the State of Kuwait, convened the Sixth Session of the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Near East in Kuwait from 30 August to 2 September, 1975. He invited all the member countries of the Commission to be represented by Delegates; and the Government of Turkey, the League of Arab States, the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, and the Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DICO-EA) to be represented by Observers.

The Session was opened by H.E. Mr. Salem Ibrahim Al Mannai, Asst. Under-Secretary for Agricultural Affairs, Agriculture Department, Ministry of Public Works, Government of the State of Kuwait, who welcomed all the participants to the Commission on behalf of his Government. He gave a brief history of the Desert Locust plague which invaded Near East countries in the past and wrought untold misery on the inhabitants by causing serious damage to agricultural crops and grasslands. He pointed out to the fact that the collaboration and cooperation established during the recent years within the Near East countries to fight this enemy collectively had yielded very valuable results. It was due to this concerted action that no serious plague had developed during the last 13 years. He appreciated the role of FAO, particularly the work of the Regional Locust Secretariat at Jeddah in developing the above cooperation for the benefit of all concerned. He hoped that this useful work would not only be continued but will also be intensified in future so as to ensure continued protection of our growing agricultural production from the ravages of this destructive insect. He wished the Delegates a pleasant stay in his country.

In reply, Mr. J. Moy, Senior Officer, Locust Control and Emergency Operations, Plant Production and Protection Division, FAO, Rome, Italy, thanked the Government of the State of Kuwait for their kind invitation to convene this Session in Kuwait and for the numerous facilities provided by the Government for the same. He emphasized the importance of collective action against the Desert Locust which he considered was the only way to achieve success against this migratory pest. He further stated that similar Commissions and Organizations were also functioning in the other parts of the invasion area of the Desert Locust and FAO was maintaining close collaboration amongst all such bodies in order to ensure that the Desert Locust is timely controlled whenever it might appear. He assured the Commission of full support of the FAO and the UNDP in all activities of the Desert Locust Control Programme.

Officers of the Session

Chairman: Mr. Gharib Khamis El-Gharib (State of Kuwait)
Vice Chairman: Mr. Dawood Ahmad Ali (Sultanate of Oman)

The work of preparing the draft report was entrusted to the Delegate of Kuwait along with the FAO Secretariat. Mr. J. Roy, Dr. J. S. Gill and Mr. A. Khasawneh, staff members of the FAO, acted as Technical Secretaries, and Mr. Gurdas Singh as Consultant.

Acknowledgements

The Delegates learnt with profound regret that Mr. Gurdas Singh had decided to voluntarily retire from FAO after 17 years of service with the Organization. They expressed their warmest gratitude for his services rendered in the international field of the Desert Locust and were very appreciative of the success achieved in keeping this pest at its lowest level of activity. They thanked him for the establishment of a superb organization for the benefit of millions of inhabitants of the developing countries. They were pleased to see him with them once again and expressed their sincere wish that his services would be available to the Commission even in future. The delegates welcomed the appointment of Mr. J. Roy and Dr. J.S. Gill at FAO Headquarters and assured them their full cooperation in matters of common interest.

In his concluding remarks H.E. Mr. Salem Ibrahim Al Mannai expressed his appreciation of the very useful and constructive work being done by the Commission in keeping the locust menace under check and hoped that the Commission would continue to play this valuable role in future as well with active co-operation of FAO of the United Nations. He assured the Commission that his Government would fully support the recommendations of the Commission. He thanked the Delegates for their participation in the deliberations of the Commission. The Delegates expressed their sincere thanks for the generous hospitality and facilities provided by the Government of State of Kuwait. They also wished to place on record their keen appreciation of the efficient and tactful manner in which the Chairman had conducted the proceedings. They also thanked the FAO Secretariat for their efficient and prompt service.

PARTICIPATION IN THE SESSION

The following Delegates from Member Countries of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Observers and Members of the FAO staff participated in the Session and contributed to the discussions summarised in this report.

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A G E N D A

1. Opening of the Session
2. Election of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Commission
3. Adoption of the Agenda
4. Election of the Drafting Committee
5. The Desert Locust Situation during 1974/75 and Forecast
6. A review of the Desert Locust Survey and Control Activities carried out by Member Countries during 1974/75 and Plans for the Future
7. Special Survey carried out in Strategic Areas
8. Consideration of the Report of the Executive Committee
9. Anti-Locust Survey and Control Potentials Available in Member Countries of the Commission
10. Assistance to Member Countries of the Commission
11. Any Other Business
12. Date and Place of Next Session
13. Adoption of the Report

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Desert Locust Situation during 1974/75 Forecast

1. The Commission received from the FAO Secretariat a report on the locust situation. This was brought up-to-date by additional information supplied by Delegates and Observers.
2. In the Arab Republic of Egypt a few scattered locusts were observed during November 1974 in the south eastern part of the country in Shelatan area, whereas the rest of the country was reported free from any locust activity during the period under review.
3. In Saudi Arabia there had been good rainfall in northern Tihama during October-November whereas southern Tihama remained comparatively dry. In the month of November there was a sudden development in the locust situation in areas between Mastura and Rabigh of northern Tihama where a mature swarm measuring approximately 96 sq. km. was observed on 5 November; at the same time another pink swarm was reported near Rabigh flying to the north. In view of suitable ecological conditions, the mature swarms started laying which subsequently resulted in the production of numerous hopper bands in the month of December. Control operations were organized immediately both against hoppers and swarms. There was, however, some regrouping of the escapes with the result that sporadic breeding continued during January and February 1975. Because of the continued pressure of well organised control operations, there was a decline in the locust population in March and thereafter only scattered individuals were observed in the area.
4. In other areas of Saudi Arabia, scattered locusts continued to be observed until July 1975. In August, a few groups of locusts were observed in northern Tihama, 100 km. north of Jeddah and control operations were carried out against those concentrations.
5. In PDR of Yemen there were marching bands and mature adults distributed over 600 sq.km. in Wadi Sofra, Wadi Rumh, Wadi Markha and in Wadi Diysur. Locust population was also reported from Shuqra-ana Ahwar on the eastern coast. During October, there was further development in locust situation in Wadi Hadramouth where control operations were started against hoppers and adults and continued during November and December. A few solitary locusts were reported at the western coast of the PDR of Yemen during January, February, March and April 1975. During May, 39 solitary locusts were found along the western coast of the country. Some hoppers were also reported during June, July and early August.
6. In Yemen Arab Republic a swarm was reported on the 18 August, 1974 from Wadi Habil area where, later on, fledglings and hopper bands were noticed and control operations were carried out during September. A few scattered adults and V instar hoppers at a low density were reported to the north and south of Hodeidah during October. In November, solitary population persisted at a low density in Wadi Habil, Harad and Beitul Faqieh; only 3 solitary locusts were seen in Tihama of Yemen during December. There was no significant development in the locust population from January, 1975 onwards.

7. In Sudan, during September-October, there were groups of maturing adults at a density of 3,000 to 42,000 per hectare at Gash Delta in Kassala province over an area of 8,000 hectares. There were also mature and immature adults in Sinkat, Haiya and the Gash delta including the Red Sea hills. The total infested area was estimated at 155 sq. kms. Also large groups of locusts and hopper bands were reported along the western bank of River Atbara and the Nile El Hassaneya area over 163 sq. kms. at a density of 30,000 adults per hectare.

8. In the winter-spring breeding area of the Red Sea coast, the infestation consisting of moderate to heavy groups of immature and mature adults was confined to the southern sector of the coast, mainly to Tokar delta, during December 1974-March 1975. Small pockets of hoppers and fledglings were also found in the coastal area of Sudan-Ethiopian border. Because of control measures undertaken in these areas, very few locusts were seen in Khartoum Province during June, July 1975. No locusts were reported in any other areas throughout the summer breeding zone.

9. In United Arab Emirates, from February until June 1975, the strategic locust areas were surveyed by a Pakistani Anti Locust Mission and no locust activity was observed by the survey teams. Apparently, the territory was free from major locust populations.

10. Other countries of the Region were reported free of locust activity during the period under review.

FORECAST

11. Because of good rainfall during October-November 1974, a threatening locust situation developed in northern Tihama of Saudi Arabia; oviposition occurred on a large scale and control operations against swarms, fledglings and numerous hopper bands were undertaken during the period from November 1974 to March 1975. Thereafter, the locust activity in Saudi Arabia declined considerably although solitary populations persisted in many parts until August 1975. In the coastal plains of Sudan Republic, egg-laying started in October-November 1974 and control operations against locust swarms and hopper bands remained in progress until February 1975 bringing the situation under control. Thereafter, only solitary adults at low density were reported from the Tokar delta area until May 1975. Gregarious locust populations, controlled through timely operations, were reported from coastal areas of PDR Yemen during November-December 1974. Some locust activity was also reported from the Yemen Arab Republic during the period under review. There were no significant developments in the locust situation in the Indo-Pakistani sub-continent, eastern Arabian Peninsula, East Africa and North-west Africa.

12. In view of this, no serious developments in locust situation were anticipated during the coming few months. However, the coastal areas along the Red Sea need to be kept under careful surveillance because solitary locust populations were persisting in these areas, and under suitable ecological conditions might assume unmanageable proportions. It would also be necessary to keep sufficient resources in readiness for undertaking control operations which might have to be undertaken in the Red Sea Coastal Plains during the winter-spring of 1975-76.

13. There had been good rains in India and Pakistan during June-August, 1975, and renewed locust activity had been reported from certain areas over the sub-continent, a strict watch and vigilance was essential over the eastern Arabian Peninsula during the coming months.

Exchange of Information

14. The Commission once again emphasized the importance of prompt and direct exchange of information of any significant developments in the locust situation especially between neighbouring member countries of the Commission in addition to the usual communication channels through the FAO Regional Locust Secretariat, Jeddah. Nevertheless, the Commission noted with satisfaction that the FAO Regional Office at Jeddah kept all the member governments of the Commission informed of the prevailing locust situation through monthly locust situation summaries and by issue of special reports whenever the situation so demanded.

Locust Control and Survey Operations carried out during 1974-75

15. Locust breeding took place in Saudi Arabia, Sudan, PDR of Yemen and Yemen Arab Republic where control operations were undertaken by the national Organizations. In all about 1250 sq. kms. were infested with locusts and were treated by using 50,000 litres of liquid insecticides, 25,000 kgs. of BHC Dust and 45,000 kgs. of BHC Bait.

16. While considering the world-wide concern about the continued use of persistent organic-chlorine insecticides, the Commission reiterated its earlier recommendation (Report Fifth Session, paras 24 to 32) that the use of Dieldrin and BHC for control of locust hoppers should be continued until equally effective and economical alternative insecticides for large scale application were found. The Commission, however, re-emphasized the need to take all precautionary measures for their safe application. The Commission also noted with satisfaction that FAO had initiated research Projects to study residue implications of such applications in the field of locust control.

17. All the member countries of the Commission kept their areas under regular surveillance. Particular attention was paid to important breeding areas in Saudi Arabia, PDR of Yemen, Sudan and Yemen Arab Republic.

18. In accordance with the recommendation of the Commission, a special survey was carried out of the strategic locust breeding areas in Sultanate of Oman during April 1975 by a Locust Officer from Egypt specially appointed for the purpose. During the survey, no locusts were observed in the area. The special survey also provided an opportunity for training the national staff in survey techniques.

19. The locust breeding areas of the United Arab Emirates were surveyed by a locust team from Pakistan from March to end of May 1975. No locusts were observed during this special mission. The Commission noted that the locust activity was at a low ebb in the eastern Arabian Peninsula during Spring 1975.

20. The Commission recorded its appreciation of the assistance provided by the Government of Pakistan for survey and control of the Desert Locust in this important breeding area of the Region, and expressed the hope that such assistance for undertaking these annual surveys would continue to be made available by the Government of Pakistan in future.

Future Plans

21. The Commission noted with appreciation the prompt and effective control operations undertaken by the Member Countries as a result of which serious developments in locust situation notably in Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Yemen were brought under control at its early stages, preventing a possible dangerous build-up in locust population. The Commission also expressed its satisfaction of the regular locust surveillance work undertaken by national organizations in their respective areas. To augment survey and control potential in the Region, the Commission proposed the following arrangements for special surveys during 1975-76.

- i) survey operations should be maintained in the strategic areas of Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen Arab Republic and PDR of Yemen and control operations should be undertaken when necessary.
- ii) two special surveys should be arranged during 1975-76 of strategic locust areas in Oman and an experienced locust officer may be engaged for two months: (i) November, 1975 & (ii) mid-March-mid-April 1976. In addition to surveys the expert should provide in-service training to the national anti-locust staff.
- iii) Aerial survey and control operations in Saudi Arabia and other strategic areas of the Arabian Peninsula may be arranged if necessary.

22. The Commission noted with appreciation that as a follow-up of the recommendations made at the Fifth Session of the Commission (Report. paras 16 to 18), the Government of Saudi Arabia was actively considering the question of the establishment of an aerial unit for anti-locust operations.

Report of the Executive Committee

23. The Commission considered the report of the Executive Committee (Appendix I) and adopted the recommendations contained therein. The Commission laid special emphasis on the following recommendations:

a (i) Scale of Contribution: Because of world-wide inflation over the past years, the prices of commodities and services have increased considerably (more than double in many cases), it was therefore necessary to revise the scale of contribution by the member countries to the Commission's Trust Fund in order to sustain the on-going programmes and also to finance future plans. The Commission considered and agreed to the revised scale of contribution submitted by the Executive Committee (Report. para 11, 12) subject to approval by the member governments. The Commission requested the Director-General of FAO to approach the member governments seeking their agreement to the new proposed scale of contribution.

(ii) In agreeing to the above revised scale of contribution, the Commission considered in detail the three main criteria, viz. frequency of locust visitations, extent of area prone to damage and the economic status of a Member Nation, which formed the basis for fixing the revised scales of contribution of the member countries; and noted that while there had been not much change in the frequency of locust visitations since 1960 (the present scales of contribution though fixed in 1969 were actually based on the percentages worked out during the year 1960), the other two criteria had undergone significant changes: agricultural area had increased generally and the economic situation of some member countries had also improved considerably. In the interest of mutual cooperation and assistance the Commission recommended that the new scales of contribution should be accepted as given below:

Proposed Revised Scale of Contributions

<u>Member Country</u>	<u>Present Contribution (US\$)</u>	<u>Proposed Contribution (US\$)</u>
Arab Republic of Egypt	26,032	22,000
Bahrain	4,784	8,000
Iraq	16,464	26,000
Jordan	11,486	8,000
Kuwait	12,486	22,000
Lebanon	8,970	8,000
Oman	5,506	8,000
Qatar	5,506	12,000
Saudi Arabia	16,154	40,000
Sudan	14,934	12,000
Syria	13,350	10,000
United Arab Emirates	10,500	23,000
Yemen Arab Republic	4,224	640
Yemen PDR of	360	360
Total (US\$)	<u>151,066</u>	<u>200,000</u>

- b. Monitoring of locust populations using satellite techniques: The Commission expressed its keen interest in the FAO project proposal for undertaking experimental studies to explore the possibility of using earth satellites for monitoring of locust populations and agreed to allocate US\$10,000 from the survey component from its budget as a contribution to the new Project. While agreeing to the above, the Commission stressed the need for training of personnel from the countries directly concerned with the Desert Locust problem in interpretation of satellite imagery and other techniques with a view to develop local talent in due course. Consideration should also be given to make use of technical information which might be available with certain other satellite ongoing Projects within FAO and other Specialised Agencies.
- c. Regional Training Project (INT/71/030): The Commission appreciated the very useful contribution made by the Regional Training Project in organizing training courses, long and short term fellowships and study tours, and, thus, improving the overall locust control potential. The Commission was of the opinion that, because of their intimate knowledge of requirements and available facilities in individual member countries, FAO Regional Locust Control Officers may be more actively associated in the Project activities especially in matters of nomination of candidates and follow-up action.
- d. The Commission emphasized that special consideration should be given to the training needs of personnel from the Sultanate of Oman, PDR of Yemen and Yemen Arab Republic where adequate number of trained staff was not available. While organising training for these countries, special arrangements should be made to accommodate staff which might not possess usual minimum basic academic qualifications. Attention should also be paid for fellowship/exchange visit awards to the countries which had not previously received sufficient number of grants to meet the technical requirements.

Anti-Locust Control Potentials in the Member Countries

24. The Commission brought up to date the information on the available resources of the various member countries for anti-locust operations. Details are given in Appendix II.

25. The Commission noted that some member countries required assistance in the supplies of application equipment and laboratory apparatus especially for items which were not locally available and requested the FAO Secretariat to arrange supplies subject to availability of resources and as per established procedure.

Assistance to member countries

26. The Commission was informed that in order to provide continuity of anti-locust operations, the UNDP had approved a sub-regional project to cover PDR of Yemen and Yemen Arab Republic for a period of five years. Under

this project, the UNDP would only be financing the salaries of two experts, one in each country and the rest of the expenditure had to be met from Trust Fund (9409) of the Commission. In view of this, the Commission agreed to allocate a sum of US\$20,000 per annum as operational cost in PDR of Yemen and US\$10,000 for the operation expenses in Yemen Arab Republic.

27. In order to meet the additional needs of some of the member countries of the Commission for material assistance, the Commission requested FAO to explore the possibility of obtaining financial support from other sources in particular from Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development.

Post of Regional Locust Control Officer

28. The Commission noted with concern that the UNDP had decided to discontinue financial support for the three posts of FAO Regional Locust Officers including one at Jeddah with effect from January 1976. It considered that these posts were vital for the success of Desert Locust Programme in order to co-ordinate survey and control activities, to issue timely forecasts and warning of locust situation, to institute special surveys, to undertake timely emergency action and to ensure its follow-up. It further recognised the need of these posts for the continued active role which they have to play in the various training activities to meet the growing needs of the member governments and to provide technical assistance in various aspects of the Desert Locust problem.

29. In view of the above, the Commission requested the Director General of FAO to provide for these posts within the regular budget of the Organization as recommended by the Seventeenth Session of the FAO Conference (Report C/73/Rep, para 209) and duly endorsed by the FAO Near East Regional Conference. The Commission, therefore, requested the Director General of FAO to provide for the Regional Locust Control Officers from other sources in the event of withdrawal of UNDP financial support.

Insecticide Manufacturing

30. The Commission referred to its earlier recommendation made at its Fifth Session (Report, para 34) concerning the possibility of establishing insecticide manufacturing or at least formulation plants for insecticide production to meet the growing needs of the countries of the Region and even for export and noted that some of the member countries were considering the feasibility of this proposition. It was pointed out that, before embarking on any such enterprise, serious consideration should be given to various factors related to technology, marketing, consumption and environmental hazards. Furthermore, there should be a proper co-ordination in the form of Regional planning amongst the countries interested in manufacture and sale of insecticide in order to avoid duplication.

31. The Commission considered the suggestion for approaching the local agricultural chemical industry for allocating certain funds annually for assistance in the field of locust control; and recommended that the member governments would take appropriate action on bilateral basis. The funds so allocated could be used to augment the resources of the Commission or national organisations.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION

32. The Delegates welcomed the suggestion made by the Delegate of Sudan of the possibility to convene the next Session of the Commission in Khartoum during August/September 1976 and requested the Director General of FAO to convene the Session at a date to be decided by him in consultation with the host government. This Session of the Commission will be preceded by the next Session of its Executive Committee.