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DESERT LOCUST CONTROL COMMITTEE

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EMPRES Western Region Programme, Progress and Directions (Agenda Item 20)

Why the EMPRES Programme in the Western Region?

In order to better address the Desert Locust problem, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) introduced the *Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases* (EMPRES) in 1994. This programme emphasizes early warning, rapid response and operational research and has a component dedicated to the Desert Locust. The programme strategy of preventive control is recognized by the Desert Locust Control Committee (DLCC) as the only one with a lasting impact.

The last major upsurge in the Western Region (WR) in 2003-05 indicated that the affected countries had inadequate resources to deal promptly with the Desert Locust crisis and were slow in responding to the alert in October 2003 and building timely and rapid response capacities. Thus the EMPRES (Desert Locust) Programme implemented in the Central Region since 1995 was extended to the Western Region in early 2006, when the first financial contributions were received. The programme's member countries are Algeria, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal and Tunisia.

The objectives of the EMPRES-WR Programme are:

- Overall objective: "The risks of Desert Locust invasion are reduced in the Western Region, thus helping fight poverty, build food security and conserve the environment".
- Specific objective: "A system of preventive control against the Desert Locust is operational thanks to the reinforcement and/or creation of national locust control units and a regional coordination mechanism, and the groundwork is laid for its (financial, technical and environmental) regional sustainability".

The programme's main donors are: the African Development Bank (AfDB), France, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Fund for

Agricultural Development (IFAD), FAO and the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Western Region (CLCPRO). The programme's overall budget for phase I (2006-09) is 13 million US dollars. The World Bank contributes indirectly to the programme to five of its member countries (Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal).

Progress of each expected output of the EMPRES-WR Programme

There are six expected outputs from the programme.

Outputs 1 and 2: (i) A surveillance and early warning mechanism is operational and; (ii) rapid interventions are assured in each country by national units operating according to quality control standards

The programme's first three years were marked by an important institutional development. Each of the four so-called frontline countries (Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) established an autonomous National Locust Control Unit (NLCU). These ensure the continuity of preventive control. In addition, the procurement of equipment and the appointment of personnel for rapid control interventions are now more than 70 percent complete and the infrastructure for the NLCUs has been or is being built, depending on the country.

The preventive control mechanisms are therefore operational thanks to national budgets and collaboration from the technical and financial partners. They will also address environmental and public health requirements. In 2008, work began on defining harmonized environmental specifications for the WR and meeting those specifications to minimize the impact of insecticide application.

Since September 2008, work has been under way to establish a system to monitor the control mechanisms and ensure they are continuously operational. The work should be finalized by late 2009.

One major constraint to have arisen is the difficulty since 2007 of conducting surveys in frontline areas that are not safe. Remedial measures have been identified and are being put in place.

Output 3: An operational network exists for the exchange and storage of information at national, regional and international level

The collection and processing of locust information are crucial for successful surveillance and control operations. The nine member countries of the programme have therefore established a locust information cell within their respective NLCUs and have assigned at least one information officer. These cells are now functional in all countries, as they have access to the RAMSES locust information management database and the *eLocust2* system for real-time entry and transmission of field data (except Chad where these tools should be installed in 2009). Ten-day and monthly locust bulletins are regularly sent by each country to the other member countries of the programme, to the CLCPRO and to the FAO Desert Locust Information Service (DLIS). Training in locust information management was provided during the first three years of the programme. Training is needed to further develop capacities in this area and to make better use of the potential of the tools available.

Output 4: Regional coordination is operational

Coordination of the EMPRES-WR Programme is provided by the CLCPRO Secretariat based in Algiers, Algeria. Strategic thrusts have been developed for the continuity of preventive control in the WR. These include:

- preparation of a procedural manual for the EMPRES-WR Programme Monitoring and Evaluation System (MES);
- production of two risk-management-plan matrices for the Desert Locust: matrix of the Locust Risk Prevention Plan for preventive control and matrix of the Locust National Contingency Plan for the management of locust crises. These matrices now need to be converted into individual national plans and WR regional plans.

Reliable financing mechanisms are also needed to make these plans fully operational, especially for countries to gradually assume the recurring costs of preventive control and for the creation of one or more contingency funds for rapid response to locust crises. Work on these matters began in 2008 and will continue in 2009 and 2010.

The EMPRES-WR Programme also envisages the definition and implementation of a communication plan at regional and country level, to promote preventive and curative control actions in the WR and their impact. Work is under way to determine the regional communication plan. For the same purpose, the CLCPRO Secretariat runs an Internet site: www.clcpro-empres.org.

Output 5: The capabilities of national unit personnel are reinforced

A regional training plan was drawn up in 2007 for the period 2007-09 and is currently being implemented in the form of long- and short- duration, regional and national training courses. At regional level, 90 training officers have been trained in locust survey and information management techniques, spraying methods, public health and environment. At national level, some 250 technicians have been trained in the same fields.

A university course in acridology was introduced in 2006 in Morocco, in close collaboration with the CLCPRO and financed by the host country. The first group of four students graduated in mid-2008, and the second and third groups, of seven and six students respectively, will finish late 2009 and late 2010. Two M.Sc. courses are under way at the INA in Algiers.

Different financial partners and the CLCPRO are supporting this training which will serve to provide further generations of acridologists.

Output 6: An operational research programme has been defined and initiated

A review of the status of research is ongoing in all member countries of the CLCPRO. A regional workshop to determine WR research orientations for the next years will be held in 2009. Also several research activities have been or are being conducted in the WR on environmental topics or the characterization of areas vulnerable to locusts, as part of doctoral or graduate training or research funded by programme partners.

Directions of the EMPRES-WR Programme: towards the sustainability of preventive control

All programme partners affirm that actions undertaken since 2006 have made a significant impact on strengthening the preventive control capacities of affected countries. The creation of autonomous national locust control centres in the frontline countries and Mauritania's successful handling of the locust upsurge in December 2008 are evidence of the programme's success.

Bolstered by these results, the EMPRES-WR Programme should now embark on a further stage aimed at consolidating achievements and ensuring the sustainability of preventive control. This will mean:

- pursuing the strengthening of NLCU capacity in all WR countries;
- evaluating the impact of training in order to draw lessons and define priority areas for the next years and update the regional training plan;
- activating the risk management plans, the system of monitoring control mechanisms, environmental specifications and the regional and national communication plans;
- defining and installing mechanisms for the sustainable financing of preventive control in the WR.

Given that phase I concludes at the end of 2009 and that the funding projects for the EMPRES-WR Programme will almost all finish late 2009 - early 2010, the member countries recommended at the Fourth Steering Committee Meeting (Niamey, 22-23/12/2008) that the CLCPRO, member countries and donors should prepare a second phase to consolidate outputs and further develop national and regional capacities.

The programme should therefore focus on defining and implementing a global framework of governance and financing of locust control in the WR to ensure the continuity of preventive control.