



منظمة الأغذية
والزراعة
للأمم المتحدة

联合国
粮食及
农业组织

Food
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Agriculture
Organization
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the
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Organisation
des
Nations
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l'agriculture

Продовольственная и
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организация
Объединенных
Наций

Organización
de las
Naciones
Unidas
para la
Agricultura
y la
Alimentación

FAO DESERT LOCUST CONTROL COMMITTEE

Thirty-ninth Session

Rome, 10-13 March 2009

Activities of the Regional Locust Commissions Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in South-West Asia (SWAC) (Agenda Item 22c)

Introduction

The FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in Southwest Asia (SWAC) is the oldest of FAO's regional locust commissions and has four member countries: Afghanistan, India, I.R. Iran and Pakistan. The Secretary of the Commission is the Senior Locust Forecasting Officer based at FAO Headquarters. The last session of the Commission was held in Kabul, Afghanistan in December 2008 and opened on the 44th anniversary of the commission's establishment. The hosting of the sessions is normally rotated amongst the member countries, although the last time a Commission meeting was held in Afghanistan was the 4th session in 1968.

This paper provides a brief overview of the Commission's activities. Please refer to the report of the 26th session held last month in Kabul for more details¹.

Commission activities

The primary activity of the Commission is an annual 30-day joint border survey. Other important activities include border meetings, training courses, and improvements to the information and reporting system.

Joint survey. A 30-day survey is conducted every year in April by a joint team consisting of three locust experts each from I.R. Iran and Pakistan who cover about 10,000 km by 4WD vehicle to check locust habitats in the spring breeding areas along both sides of the border in southeast I.R. Iran and western Pakistan. With the assistance of FAO and the Commission, the survey was re-established in 1995 and serves as a model for other countries. The results of the survey are used by

¹ <http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/common/ecg/1663/en/SWAC26e.pdf>

Pakistan and India for planning the summer campaign. Joint Survey reports are available on the Internet². The Commission funds the joint survey every year.

Joint border meetings. The national locust information officer and locust experts from India and Pakistan meet once a month every year during the summer (June to November) on their common border to exchange information about ecological conditions and the locust situation in the summer breeding areas. These meetings help to facilitate early warning and reaction.

National information and reporting system. The frontline countries (India, I.R. Iran and Pakistan) use eLocust2 and RAMSES on a regular basis that helps to ensure that high quality reports are regularly provided to FAO DLIS on time. The Commission pays for the use of eLocust2 in the member countries. It also provides funds for the development and support of new technologies. The countries have adopted several new technologies that supplement and improve the use of eLocust2, RAMSES and remote sensing imagery.

Training. Countries normally train their own staff in locust survey, reporting and control using national funds, supplemented by the Commission. For example, the locust information officer in India conducted courses for survey officers in each of the four districts of Rajasthan on the use of eLocust2 in November 2008. Nevertheless, more training is required in the coming years to ensure that field officers are adequately prepared and have a thorough understanding of locust operations.

Translations. As a means of strengthening national locust programmes, the Commission funds the translation and dissemination of useful publications such as FAO's *Standard Operating Procedures for Survey and Control* and the *Desert Locust Master Trainer Manual* into local languages (Farsi, Hindi, Pashto and Urdu). The Secretary has prepared a *Standard Operating Procedure for Joint Surveys* that is being translated.

Workshops. Several national, regional and inter-regional workshops were organized and funded by the Commission on eLocust2/RAMSES (June 2007; April, May, June 2008). The locust information officer in India was trained at FAO DLIS for 11 months in 2007-08.

Contributions. Annual contributions are paid on a regular basis by India and Pakistan. Afghanistan paid all of its arrears (14 years worth) in 2008 and I.R. Iran is making good progress in paying part of its substantial arrears. Nevertheless, some US\$ 400,000 remains outstanding from the member countries.

26th Session. The delegates made 21 recommendations for strengthening locust early warning and early reaction in the countries and the region. These recommendations will be addressed within the framework of the two-year work plan for 2009-10, costing nearly US\$ 268,000. The work plan consists of standard expenditures (joint survey, Commission meeting), carry-over expenditures from previous years (eLocust2, computers, vehicles, Desert Locust Master Trainer kits, and translations) and new expenditures for additional equipment and training. The 26th Session emphasized the importance of and need for training. Consequently, the delegates allocated funds to train one person from Afghanistan at the MSc level in entomology with emphasis on locusts in order to build the technical capacity of Afghanistan in locust management. An inter-regional workshop that follows a similar workshop held in Cairo in 2008 will be organized for national locust directors and information officers to discuss early warning and forecasting. A two-week regional workshop, with technical support provided by the Secretary of the Central Region Commission, will be organized to train nationally designated master trainers in the SWAC region as a means of strengthening training programmes in each of the countries.

² see LocustWatch: <http://www.fao.org/ag/locusts/en/publicat/meeting/topic/jointsur/848/index.html>