

Meeting Report No.
AGP/1973/M/2

REPORT OF THE
SECOND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION
FOR CONTROLLING THE DESERT LOCUST
IN NORTH-WEST AFRICA

held in
Tripoli, Libyan Arab Republic
2-5 May 1973

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Rome, 1973

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INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the invitation extended by the delegate of the Libyan Arab Republic at the First Session of the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in North-West Africa, held in Algiers from 27 to 30 March 1972, the Director-General, on receipt of the formal invitation from the Government of the Libyan Arab Republic, convened the Second Session of the Commission in Tripoli from 2 to 5 May 1973. He invited the Member Governments of the Commission namely : Algeria, Libyan Arab Republic, Morocco and Tunisia to be represented by delegates, the Government of France, the Organisation Commune de Lutte Anti-acridienne et de Lutte Antiaviaire (OCLALAV) and the League of Arab States by observers.

The session was opened by Mr. Mohamed Khalifa Bokar, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform, Government of Libyan Arab Republic, who welcomed, on behalf of his Government, all the participants to the session. Mr. Bokar stressed the importance of the matters to be discussed, particularly in view of the locust situation which had recently developed in the countries lying around the Red Sea. He expressed his appreciation for the steps taken by FAO to control the infestations in its initial stage. He was of the opinion that, in spite of all the efforts made by the countries concerned to keep the plague under control, the possibility of some swarms reaching the countries of the region during the summer months could not be ruled out. He, therefore, emphasized the need for constant watch and the need to be prepared for the impending threat.

He referred to the First Session of the Executive Committee and suggested that the Commission should give consideration to the various recommendations made by this Committee during its deliberations. He assured the fullest cooperation of his Government in the work the Commission might plan to implement under its programme. He further wished all the participants a pleasant stay in this country.

Mr. Ibrahim Adly, UNDP Resident Representative, on behalf of FAO, thanked the Government of the Libyan Arab Republic for their kind invitation to convene the session in Tripoli and for providing numerous facilities for the same. He reviewed in brief the action taken by FAO for timely control of the infestations which appeared in large numbers particularly along the Tihama of the Red Sea. He assured the Member Governments that FAO would do everything possible to assist the Commission in its work of survey and control of the Desert Locust and to strengthen research and training within the region.

Both Mr. Bokar and Mr. Adly paid tributes to the late Professor R.G. Pasquier and stated that his death had deprived the science of Entomology of one of its most eminent men, best known for his work in the field of Acridology with particular reference to the Desert Locust.

Officers of the Session

The Commission unanimously elected the following officers :

Chairman : Mr. Mustafa Ibrahim Muafa, Libyan Arab Republic
Vice-Chairman : Mr. Mustapha Labiod, Tunisia

Drafting Committee

The delegates of Algeria, Libyan Arab Republic and Tunisia and the FAO secretariat formed the Drafting Committee. Mr. Gurdas Singh and Mr. N. Mahjoub of the FAO secretariat served as technical secretaries.

Acknowledgments

At the closing of the Session the delegates expressed their warm appreciation of the kind hospitality and the facilities provided by the Government of the Libyan Arab Republic. They also thanked the Chairman for the efficient and courteous manner in which he had conducted the proceedings.

PARTICIPANTS IN THE SESSION

The following delegates from Member Nations 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 summarized in this report.

Delegates from FAO Member Nations

Algeria

Ramdane Kellou
Sous-directeur de la protection des végétaux au
Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Réforme Agraire
Algiers

Saïd Zitoune
Ingénieur agronome
Protection des végétaux
Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Réforme Agraire
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Libyan Arab Republic

Mustafa Ibrahim Muafa
Assistant Director
Plant Production Department
Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform
Tripoli

Ali Khaled
Chief
Plant Protection Section
Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform
Tripoli

Lufti Salem Sadik
Chief
Desert Locust Control Bureau
Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform
Tripoli

Ali Mohamed Murgani
Desert Locust Officer
Ministry of Agriculture and Agrarian Reform
Tripoli

Mustafa Souyouty
Desert Locust Expert
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Mustapha Labiod
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Tunisia (continued)

Mohamed Lahbib El Adjmi
Ingénieur à la division de la défense des cultures
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Observers

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Pascal Tirot
Chargé des questions acridiennes et aviaires
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FAO Staff

Gurdas Singh
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Locust Control and Emergency Operations
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AGENDA

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 1972/73 and Forecast
6. Report of the Executive Committee
7. Any Other Business
8. Date and Place of Next Session
9. Adoption of the Report

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

The Desert Locust Situation in North-West Africa and Neighbouring Countries (April 1972 to April 1973)

1. The Commission had before it a summary of the Desert Locust situation prepared by the FAO Secretariat. This was brought up-to-date by additional information supplied by delegates and observers.

North-West Africa

2. In Algeria, during routine surveys conducted over all sectors of the Algerian Sahara between March 1972 and April 1973, locusts were found either isolated or in low-density populations. All reports received regularly transmitted to the countries and to the regional and international organizations. From these reports the situations in two areas, those of Mouydir and Ajjers, are of special interest :

(a) Mouydir (Maaders In Somar, Tigant and Amserha). The rain that fell in the region during December 1971 caused favourable conditions for spring breeding : copulations were observed from the end of March and very weak hopper bands formed during April over an area of 300 hectares. During May, of the populations observed in the previous month, only those of Amserha Wadi remained in the adult and hopper stages in insignificant densities, on about one hundred hectares. During June the Mouydir populations virtually disappeared except for a few isolated individuals observed in Wadi Amserha.

(b) Ajjers (In Debirène and Tarat). Considerable rainfall fell at the end of April and caused flooding in Wadi Djanet. There was staggered breeding by individuals through April and May. During June, sparse clusters of hoppers in all instars and of adults were observed over about 100 hectares at Ihr In Debirène and Tarat. During July, adults of the new generation were still sparsely present on an area of 100 hectares at Ihr In Debirène. In August, the populations were dispersed by poor ecological conditions, and only rare individuals were reported in that region. In both cases, Mouydir and Tassili, it was felt that there was no need to carry out any control operation : the sparseness of the populations in question and the unfavourable ecological conditions (very high temperatures, drying-up vegetation) made it unlikely that the situation would become dangerous. There has been no sign of any major locust activity during recent months.

3. In the Libyan Arab Republic no Desert Locust populations were reported from March to August 1972. During June and July rainfall was reported over several places in western Tripolitania and Fezzan, and some wadis were flooded in Ghadames areas. In September very small groups of hoppers of all instars were reported from Draga wadi in eastern Tripolitania. The groups consisted of three to five individuals per clump of vegetation over a total area of 25 hectares. At the same time, scattered immature and mature adults were found in the same area over 500 hectares. In October scattered immature adults and hoppers were reported from Tripolitania. Large numbers of adults were also found in Tanazouft wadi in the Fezzan near the Algerian border. Control was undertaken against scattered adults and hoppers. In November, 17 hectares of second to fifth instar hoppers at densities ranging from 5 to 15 per clump of vegetation were reported in eastern Tripolitania. From the same area immature adults at densities of 500 to 700 per hectare were observed over 25 hectares and to a lesser extent over three hectares. The total treated area was 625 hectares. All the infested area was treated. From December onwards no locust activity was reported.

4. Morocco and Tunisia remained free from any desert locust activity.

West Africa

5. In Mauritania Desert Locust populations continued to be low. Two immature adults were found during March 1972. Rain was reported in Nouakchott, Adrar and Chinguetti areas which resulted in green vegetation in these areas. Again, in April and May, a few adults were found and rainfall was received in the south-east of the country. By May, ecological conditions were reported to be suitable in Aioun, Timbedra and Nema. From July to September scattered maturing locust adults and a few scattered hoppers were reported. During October several adults at various stages of maturity were found in Trarza. Vegetation was reported to be green in the regions of Zemmour, Adrar and Inchiri-Tijirit. In the subsequent months the locust population was on the decline.
6. In Mali no locust population was reported in March 1972, whereas in April one adult was found and scattered adults were reported from West Tamesna in June. Following rain at the end of May and at the beginning of June in Adrar des Iforas, conditions were favourable for breeding. In July a small number of hoppers were reported in Adrar des Iforas. In August a few immature adults were seen in the same area and also in Manaka region. In September a low density population was found in Azaouad over a large area. Rainfall was below average in Mali during October and November, and the locust population continued to be low and was reported to be on the decline in the subsequent months.
7. In Niger the Desert Locust population continued to be very low from March to June 1972. In July a small rise was noticed when a few maturing adults and some hoppers were observed in Tamesna. From August to December no populations of any significance were reported.
8. The surveys undertaken in Spanish Sahara only reported an immature adult in April. The countries of Chad, Senegal and Nigeria were reported free.

Eastern Africa

9. In eastern Africa, the control which ended in July 1972 in the north of the Somali Democratic Republic caused a considerable reduction in numbers of locusts, so that only scattered adults and a few concentrations of adults remained. However, substantial areas had remained suitable for breeding. Rainfall was especially heavy in late October and November when three cyclones affected the area. The cyclone of late October may have carried locusts into this area from south-west Arabia. Sufficient locusts were present in or reached the area to give rise to gregarious infestations. By November some marching bands were present among widespread scattered populations.
10. On the coastal plains on the west of the Red Sea for most of the period, conditions suitable for breeding were confined to the Tokar Delta in Sudan and Wadi Teclai in Ethiopia. Very few locusts were present in these areas when surveys were made in October. However, following rain and flooding of the Tokar area in October and November and of the Teclai area in November, breeding was successful and numbers increased considerably leading, by December, to the formation of groups of hoppers and fledgelings over 47 square kilometres in Wadi Teclai and to extensive concentrations of hoppers and fledgelings over 65 square kilometres in the Tokar Delta. In the latter area, a medium-sized laying swarm and laying groups of adults were seen in December; the total area infested by these mature locusts was 100 square kilometres. Control was carried out in both areas. In December rain fell over much of the coastal plain of Ethiopia and scattered populations continued to be reported. Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda were reported to be free from any locust activity.

Near East

11. In the south-east of the Arab Republic of Egypt a few locusts were found near the Elba mountains in November and December ; no breeding was reported.

12. In Oman, widespread rain fell at the beginning of July during the passage of a tropical depression. At the end of July and in August, scattered locusts were seen in a few areas, but there were considerably fewer seen than during the more extensive surveys which were made in June. It is possible that locusts had moved out of Oman in July, but it seems probable that a considerable proportion of the locusts remained and bred in Oman, because in September one dense, medium-sized and one small, immature swarm were reported, and considerable numbers of locusts were seen in seven other areas. There have been no further reports from Oman, but some further breeding might have occurred as showers of rain fell at the end of October near Salalah and standing water was reported inland from Masirah in December. It seems possible, however, that some of the locusts seen in September moved to the south-west of the Arabian Peninsula.

13. Much of the south-west of the Arabian Peninsula received heavy rain from a cyclone in late October. Conditions were suitable for breeding throughout the second half of 1972, especially in the coastal areas of Saudi Arabia and the Yemen Arab Republic. Control began in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen in July, and has continued there in one or two areas each month. In Saudi Arabia, control was carried out in August against groups of hoppers and fledgelings on the coast in the Qunfidah area, and inland near Najran and Sulayyih ; only scattered locusts were recorded in September and October. In early November, a mature swarm was reported to be laying near Qunfidah ; survey teams found mature groups over 20 square kilometres at a maximum density of 4,000 per hectare. At the same time other populations were found laying and groups of hoppers and fledgelings were seen. Control was carried out in this area, and further south near Jizan where groups of copulating locusts were reported to extend for 50 square kilometres at a maximum density of about 3,000 per hectare. Breeding continued in December in both of these areas. Many infestations were present from just south of Qunfidah for about 150 kilometres northward ; hoppers including many bands, fledgelings and mature locusts were present in many areas, their densities varied considerably and the maximum reported were about 5,000 per hectare. Hopper bands were reported from Jizan and one area in the north of the Yemen Arab Republic. Control was being carried out in all these areas. By January a number of swarms were formed in Saudi Arabia. Control operations were intensified and by the end of March most of the swarms and even concentrations of scattered populations were controlled.

South-West Asia

14. In south-western Asia, control was completed against groups of hoppers and adults in south-eastern Iran at the beginning of July ; breeding on a small scale continued in Iran and Afghanistan until August. In Pakistan, control was carried out against concentrations of hoppers and adults in central Baluchistan in July. Breeding continued unusually late in Mekran and control which began against hopper bands in August did not end in the Dasht Valley until September. Further east, in the summer breeding areas, breeding was already in progress in the Las Bela district of Pakistan in July. Swarms reached India at the beginning of July and in the Las Bela district of Pakistan in early August. Control against hopper bands and groups of hoppers and fledgelings continued in the Las Bela area until the beginning of September. Elsewhere in India and Pakistan, breeding was not successful and only very few scattered hoppers occurred between August and October. Since October very few locusts have been reported from anywhere in south-west Asia although small scale scattered breeding was reported in Iran in October and December and low density adult populations have been reported in India and Pakistan in the subsequent months.

Forecast

15. Effective control operations undertaken in the Near East and Eastern African countries during the past months (December 1972 - March 1973) has considerably reduced the threat of any significant incursion of locusts into West Africa. Nevertheless, during the coming summer, the developments in the Eastern African countries particularly in Sudan, had to be watched with due care and similarly in areas of OCLALAV Member Countries.

Survey and Control Operations

16. During the period under review all the member countries of the Commission kept their respective areas under surveillance. No control operations were undertaken with the exception of the Libyan Arab Republic, where control was carried out against hoppers and scattered adults in Tripolitania and Fezzan from September to November 1972.

Summary of the Control Operations undertaken in the
Libyan Arab Republic

Period	Area treated in ha.	Type of infestation	Insecticide used		
			Bait (in tons)	Dust	Liquid
Khar Al-Giffa Sept.	500	adults hoppers	25		
Haraj Al-Aswad Sept.	60	" -	3.750		
Khar Al-Giffa Oct.	10	" hoppers	5		
Wadi Drega Nov.	45	" "	23		
Wadi Tanazouft Oct.	10	" - (mixed with local locust)	1/2		

17. The Commission noted with satisfaction that all the member countries were fully aware of the present locust situation and were preparing themselves to deal with it. The Commission emphasized the importance of joint surveys and recommended that such surveys should be organized in future.

18. Recognizing the importance of exchange visits for qualified personnel from the various anti-locust organizations of the Member Countries, the Commission requested FAO to arrange such visits in consultation with the Member Governments.

19. The representative of OCLALAV reviewed the survey work undertaken within its member countries. The Commission noted that in spite of certain financial limitations, the Organization (OCLALAV) had maintained constant watch and kept all Member Countries and Organizations concerned well informed of the locust situation in its area. While appreciating the assistance provided by UNDP to OCLALAV in the past, the Commission recommended that the post of the Regional Locust Research Officer, Dakar, should continue to be financed in future by the UNDP from the regional IPF.

20. The Commission received a detailed statement from FAO on the locust situation in the Arabian Peninsula and in Eastern Africa and noted with appreciation that the timely action taken by the national and regional organizations concerned and supported by FAO had averted, for the present, the chances of initiation of a new plague. This, however, should not allow any relaxation and the locust situation had to be watched very carefully in the summer of 1973 and resources had to be kept in readiness for any anti-locust operations which might be necessary.

Report of the Executive Committee

21. The Commission considered the report of the First Session of the Executive Committee (Appendix I) and adopted the recommendations contained therein.

Any other business

22. The Commission received a report from the FAO Secretariat on the progress made in implementation of the recommendation made at the 16th Session of the FAO DLCC (Report para.38-44) concerning the training programme on Crop Pests with special reference to Desert Locust Control and Research. It noted that the majority of the governments were not willing to pay any additional amounts to cover the cost of trainees, more than the contributions which they were already paying into the various Trust Funds. The Commission, having recognized the importance of training, authorized FAO to pay the cost of trainees belonging to the Member Countries of the Commission estimated at approximately \$40 000 annually from the unobligated balance of the Trust Fund 9169 of the Commission.

23. It was pointed out that it would be useful if the various representatives at the future Sessions of the Commission brought with them prepared statements on locust surveys and control in their respective countries. This would facilitate discussion to evolve a common strategy for the control of the Desert Locust.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION

24. The delegates welcomed the invitation extended by Algeria to convene the next session of the Commission in May 1974, to be preceded by the second session of the Executive Committee, in Algeria and requested the Director-General of FAO to convene these sessions at a date to be decided by him in consultation with the Host Government.