



# DESERT LOCUST UPDATE

FAO Emergency Centre for Locust Operations



(21 May 2004)



## General Situation as of 21 May 2004

Despite intensive control operations in the spring breeding areas of Northwest Africa, breeding has occurred over large areas south of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Being the second successful season of gregarious breeding, following that which occurred in Mauritania and the Western Sahara from October onwards, an upsurge can be considered as underway in the region. Swarms are expected to start forming by the end of May and continue to form during June in these countries as well as in Libya. Smaller-scale swarm formation has already started in northern Mauritania. Swarms will move south towards the Sahel in West Africa where they could start to appear from about the second week of June onwards.

Numerous hopper bands continue to develop along the southern side of the Atlas Mountains from the Atlantic coast to the Algerian border in Morocco. By mid-May, hoppers had reached the third to fifth instar stage and fledging had started. Some damage has been reported. In the Western Sahara, small hopper infestations were present in the north. Aerial and ground control operations treated more than 200,000 ha on 1-18 May. In Algeria, widespread hatching and band formation commenced in early May along the southern side of the Atlas Mountains from Morocco to Tunisia. More than half of the country's provinces were reportedly infested. Ground and aerial control operations treated 140,000 ha on 1-14 May. In Tunisia, nearly 80,000 ha of swarms and hopper

bands were treated in the centre and south during April and up to 18 May. During late April and early May, mature swarms continued to arrive from the west in northwestern Libya and laid eggs. Some of the swarms reached the coastal plains and interior near Tripoli. Hatching and band formation have started near Ghadames and Nalut. Ground and aerial control operations treated 23,000 ha during the first decade of May. In mid-May, there was a report of two yellow locusts on a ship south of Sicily, suggesting that a few locusts may have been blown out to sea.

Swarms have started to form and some damage has been caused to oasis crops and pastures in northern and central Mauritania. Some swarms in the north in Tiris-Zemmour were seen moving towards the south. Hopper bands were present near Zouerate and in Inchiri. Control operations treated 921 ha on 1-10 May but have been hampered by shortages of pesticide. In Niger, fledging occurred in early May in the southeastern Air Mountains. Local populations have dispersed throughout the central and southern parts of the Air where immature transiens and gregarious adults and a few small immature swarms were seen.

**Appropriate preparations should be made immediately in southern Mauritania, northern Senegal, Mali, Niger and Chad in response to the possibility of swarms arriving from Northwest Africa. These are likely to appear in those areas where the first summer rains occur. Although the scale of the invasion is difficult to estimate with precision because it depends on the success of survey and control operations in the spring breeding areas, there is a risk that a substantial number of swarms could appear in the Sahel in June and July.**

The FAO Desert Bulletin is issued monthly, supplemented by Updates during periods of increased Desert Locust activity, and is distributed by fax, e-mail, FAO pouch and airmail by the Locusts and Other Migratory Pests Group, AGP Division, FAO, 00100 Rome, Italy. It is also available on the Internet.

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Elsewhere, a few late instar hopper bands persisted in northern **Sudan** near Dongola where teams treated 6 ha on 9-11 May. No locusts were seen in the spring breeding areas in the interior of **Saudi Arabia** during April.

The most up-to-date information on the situation and photos are available on the Internet ([www.fao.org/news/global/locusts/locuhome.htm](http://www.fao.org/news/global/locusts/locuhome.htm)) as well as maps of the latest infestations ([193.43.36.11/mapper](http://193.43.36.11/mapper)).