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## Agenda item 4. Review of Desert Locust outbreaks, June 2012 to December 2019

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### Overview and background

Since June 2012, approximately 21 outbreaks developed in the recession area as a result of precipitation anomalies associated with unusual rainfall events and cyclones<sup>1</sup>. Unrelated outbreaks occurred simultaneously in several countries during 2013 and 2016. A total of 2.9 million ha has been treated since 2012 of which more than half was in 2019. Control operations successfully contained most of these outbreaks and prevented their spread to adjacent countries or regions. However, several outbreaks were difficult to control because of (a) poor early warning due to the limits of remote sensing imagery in accurately detecting rainfall and green vegetation, (b) inaccessible and insecure areas, (c) insufficient survey and control resources, (d) late detection and response, and (e) unusually favourable weather and environmental conditions. The current Desert Locust situation has deteriorated recently despite intensive control operations and swarms continue to form and migrate to other countries in the Central and Eastern regions.

It may appear that outbreaks are occurring more frequently, which could be a result of climate change but it may also be due to improvements in detecting outbreaks that have been achieved through the use of tools and technologies such as eLocust3, GIS and remote sensing and by better planning and field operations. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are an increasing number of issues that continue to make Desert Locust monitoring, early warning and preventive control challenging. These should be thoroughly examined and discussed during the session to avoid becoming complacent.

### Points for discussion and decisions

- Surveys are not always conducted regularly every month during breeding periods or after rains
- Locust numbers suddenly increase but survey results indicate few locusts
- There are not enough eLocust3 to record and transmit increased field data during emergencies
- Trained staff are transferred, leaving the National Locust Control Unit with no capacity, for example in using eLocust3 and RAMSES
- eLocust3 equipment are not handled carefully or managed properly
- Not all NCLUs utilize the expertise and advice of their Desert Locust Information Officer
- Fast and reliable Internet connections are not available in all frontline countries
- Countries often blame other countries for locust invasions
- Intensive control operations are not bringing an end to the current emergency
- Some countries rely on FAO and donors for emergency support
- Climate change is causing more cyclones that impact locust outbreaks

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<sup>1</sup> 2012: Algeria/Libya that spread to Mali/Niger; Sudan (207 103 ha treated); 2013: Eritrea, Mauritania, N Somalia, Sudan, Yemen (493 672 ha treated); 2014/2015: Eritrea, Mauritania, Sudan, Saudi Arabia (478 851 ha treated); 2016: Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Mauritania, Sudan, Eritrea (58 389 ha treated); 2017: Saudi Arabia, Somalia (27 000 ha treated); 2018: Sudan/Eritrea (10 577 ha treated); 2019: Saudi Arabia / Yemen that spread to SW Asia and Horn of Africa (1 657 320 ha treated)