



**EMERGENCY PREVENTION SYSTEM FOR TRANSBOUNDARY ANIMAL AND
PLANT PESTS AND DISEASES (EMPRES) – DESERT LOCUST COMPONENT**

6th MEETING

of the

EMPRES CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

for the

CENTRAL REGION PROGRAMME

Cairo, 13 – 15 November 2005

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

2005

Opening

1. The meeting was officially opened on behalf of the FAO Director-General by the Assistant Director-General/Regional Representative for the Near East, Mr. M. Albraitheh. He underlined the importance of the EMPRES Central Region Programme (EMPRES/CR) and its efforts during the recent Desert Locust outbreak to prevent a major multi-country upsurge. This was achieved by the strengthened capacities of national Locust Control Units of the EMPRES member countries during the past nine years and by close collaboration with regional Desert Locust organizations particularly the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region (CRC). He concluded by wishing the participants fruitful discussions, a successful meeting and a pleasant stay in Cairo.

2. The Director Plant Production and Protection Division, AGP, Mr. M. Solh, welcomed the donor representatives and the delegates from the member countries and provided an overview of the EMPRES Desert Locust Programme in the Central Region since its beginning in 1997. He referred to the steady progress that has been achieved during the nine years of its implementation. Mr. Solh said that the close interaction and good collaboration among the EMPRES member countries and inter-regional solidarity had been major factors in effectively combating the Desert Locust during the last upsurge. He mentioned that it was the objective of the current Phase III to gradually transfer the responsibility for the Programme to the CRC and to the member countries and added that the EMPRES Programme in its current form is scheduled to phase out by end of 2006. He further referred to the decision of FAO to maintain the Desert Locust Component of EMPRES as a permanent Programme in order to support the new EMPRES Programme in the Western Region, to continue and further develop the achieved level of preventive Desert Locust management in the Central Region beyond 2006, and eventually to extend the Programme to the Eastern Region (South-West Asia). He pointed out that several potential donors have been approached by FAO to support continued CRC/EMPRES activities and the affected countries. He added that FAO looked to the 6th Consultative Committee Meeting to provide the appropriate recommendations for the future of the Programme.

3. Thereafter, each participant briefly introduced himself. A list of participants is given in Annex 1.

Adoption of the Agenda

4. The proposed agenda was adopted with no changes and the daily schedules were agreed.

Selection of the Drafting Committee

5. A drafting committee composed of two member countries, EMPRES/CR Coordinator and the CRC Secretariat was nominated.

Review of EMPRES/CR Progress and Constraints since 2003

6. The Team Leader of the 4th Evaluation Mission for the EMPRES/CR Programme, Mr. B. Bultemeier presented a summary report of the findings and recommendations of the EMPRES/CR evaluation conducted from 12th September to 11th October 2005 in six of the nine EMPRES/CR member countries, namely Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Eritrea.

7. He mentioned that important achievements have been made in integrating preventive management components into national programmes in a sustainable way and that the member countries attach high importance to prevention of Desert Locust outbreaks. He further presented details of the various other achievements of the programme but also highlighted some observed

constraints, namely concerning the unbalanced use of some of the technologies and approaches provided by EMPRES/CR in some of the countries. This variation requires further attention and follow up also in the future when the EMPRES Desert Locust component is being coordinated by the Secretary of the Commission. The mission recommended appointing a Regional Technical Officer to assist the Secretariat of the Commission to ensure follow up of standards of preventive Desert Locust strategies in the member countries. The mission also recommended that CRC member countries should in their next meeting determine the required level of support to be provided by the Commission to EMPRES participating countries.

8. The team member of the Evaluation Mission, Mr. Bateno Kabeto, presented the findings of the mission particularly concerning the member countries. He reminded participants that EMPRES was a joint effort to develop and introducing preventive Desert Locust management strategies and mentioned that all countries needed to adopt all the components of preventive management. But he also referred to the differences of the adoption rate and mentioned the need for continuous attention to this matter. He further recommended that in order to secure preventive Desert Locust management, the countries themselves should make more effort to allocate sufficient funds to their Locust Control Units (LCUs). He also stated that participating countries should identify areas in their preventive control systems to solicit bilateral donor funding where external support is required.

9. In the following discussion, questions were raised concerning which of the key EMPRES activities should continue beyond 2006 and whether the capacities of the Commission were enough to handle the additional activities. Also the future of the EMPRES Liaison Officer Meetings as a forum for discussing important strategic and technical issues of preventive management was raised. It was recommended by the participants to clearly define the areas of future support particularly with regard to making full use of early warning technologies such as RAMSES, eLocust and remote sensing.

10. The delegate from Eritrea questioned the logic for transferring the EMPRES/CR responsibilities to the Commission because of its different objectives and mandates. He said that most of the member countries value EMPRES/CR very highly and recommend that the Programme continues. With regard to the evaluation report he pointed out that the evaluation team did not correctly cover the Eritrean issue and requested some revision. It was agreed that the Eritrean delegate will provide the Mission Team Leader with his comments by e-mail.

11. The Mission Team Leader replied that the original concept was for an EMPRES/CR Programme over 10-12 years and that the Commission was understood as the natural host institution to assure the sustainability of the EMPRES approach. Furthermore EMPRES/CR activities were not exclusively to be taken over by the Commission but also by the participating countries and referred to efforts made by EMPRES/CR and CRC to integrate the previously non-CRC EMPRES countries within the Commission in order to assure further cooperation. However, he again stressed the need to raise the capacity of the Commission in order to fulfil the expectations satisfactorily.

12. The delegate of the Netherlands observed that the recommended further support in terms of material and equipment contradicts the donors' expectation of the Programme's objectives to achieve sustainability by the end of 2006. The EMPRES/CR Coordinator explained that the support required is mainly for very specific technological equipment in order to assure regional standardization, which cannot be procured by the countries themselves. The meeting recommended that this point should be clarified in the evaluation report in order to avoid misunderstanding.

13. The delegate from USA observed that in the Evaluation Mission report no reference has been made to the donors' reaction and recommended that the donors' view should also be included in the final report.

14. With regard to research the delegate of the Netherlands questioned the observation of the Evaluation Mission that the research initiative under the Programme was not satisfactory. He said that the Desert Locust population dynamics study conducted in collaboration with the University

of Wageningen as integral part of EMPRES/CR was quite effective and lead to several publications. These publications should be included in the evaluation report as achievements of the EMPRES/CR. He recommended that a research network involving research institutions from the north and the south should be established to allow more efficient collaboration particularly regarding research on alternatives to chemical pesticides.

15. The reasons for the limited use of RAMSES, satellite maps and *eLocust* by some countries were discussed. It was explained that only in two countries out of seven equipped with the RAMSES locust data management system was adoption/use below expectation. Several technical assistance visits had not yet resolved the difficulties. It was further clarified that a technical backstopping mission has been prepared to retrain the Information Officers of the concerned country and provide advice on trouble-shooting.

16. With regard to *eLocust* it was explained that the wireless data-transmission system has been introduced to few countries only for testing purposes. The experiences showed that the first *eLocust* systems based on HF radio technology was too complicated to configure and not user-friendly enough. Furthermore, it was mentioned that the original platform of *eLocust* was no longer available and that it was necessary to identify appropriate alternatives. The new *eLocust2* version, based on the satellite communication technology, has recently been field-tested in two countries and showed significant advantages as compared to the version 1. It was further stated that *eLocust2* is in the process of being introduced comprehensively to all EMPRES/CR countries and that training will be provided in due time.

17. Concerning the use of NDVI satellite maps it was explained that this technology is not yet fully developed to be used on a routine basis by the management for decision making and directing survey teams. Work is still needed to better calibrate the satellite imageries to avoid false-positive or false-negative information on the satellite pictures. For that reason it was recommended that the countries should assist in this matter and conduct more systematic ground verification surveys in collaboration with the Desert Locust Information Service (DLIS) at FAO headquarters.

18. The Evaluation Mission identified that management systems for evaluating survey and control operations had not been established by EMPRES/CR. The EMPRES/CR Coordinator clarified that the Programme management had given his priority to this question. A campaign evaluation team had been identified and kept at stand-by for several months, but no control operations were conducted during the expected period. He further referred to the difficulty to launch real-time campaign evaluations given the rapidly changing occurrence of Desert Locust infestations and control operations.

19. A survey and campaign evaluation mission had been conducted by the Secretary of the Commission, the EMPRES/CR Coordinator and the Director of the Locust Control Centre in Egypt in April 2005. They had jointly reviewed operations in the Red Sea coastal areas in Southern Egypt. This experience showed that the results of the evaluation have been taken on by the management immediately and translated into practical improvements of the survey and control system in Egypt. This proved that campaign evaluations can be very important instruments that should be carried out jointly with the counterpart institutions as much and wherever possible.

20. The delegates from Eritrea and Ethiopia welcomed the proposal to hire independent consultants to evaluate the control operations retroactively that had been conducted in both countries from July to September 2005.

21. The delegate from USA questioned the statement of EMPRES/CR Phase III evaluation that it was “probably the final evaluation” and stressed the donors’ expectation that an ex-post Programme evaluation should be conducted after the EMPRES Programme in the Central Region has phased out. He further requested explanation with regard to the evaluation methodology that had been used.

22. In his reply the Team Leader said that the Phase III evaluation was originally planned as the final scheduled evaluation but agreed in principle that an ex-post evaluation could be held in due time. In view of a possible Phase IV of the Programme a further routine evaluation could be scheduled for 2007. The Mission agreed to incorporate a chapter regarding the quantitative and qualitative approach of the recent evaluation in the final report.

23. The delegate of the Netherlands requested FAO's view regarding the continuation of the Programme in particular as far as the funding for 2006 and 2007 is concerned. The Secretariat pointed out that the ongoing EMPRES operations will be handled by the Commission with support from FAO and expected support from new donors. The meeting was briefed of FAO's efforts to address project proposals to the Government of Saudi Arabia, Islamic Development Bank and OPEC for funding and that a positive reply was expected soon.

Review of the Workplan for 2005/2006

24. The EMPRES/CR Coordinator, Mr. C. Pantenius reviewed the unaccomplished and pending activities of the EMPRES Programme for the remaining months in 2005 and the year 2006 by referring to the Phase III indicators. The Meeting was informed that despite EMPRES/CR involvement in the recent emergency operations most of the activities had been accomplished. Only a slight deviation from the planned activities has been observed which needs to be addressed during the remaining period of Phase III until the end of 2006. These pending or unfinished items include:

- A regional workshop on appropriate management approaches in Desert Locust control, including visits to well managed and well organized Locust Control Centres,
- Re-establishment of the early warning system in Eritrea,
- A regional workshop on RAMSES data and NDVI map interpretation,
- Production of vegetation index cards,
- A regional workshop on preventive control,
- Assessment of the comparative economic advantage of preventive control vs. emergency control,
- Participation in a demonstration of the effects of semio-chemicals organized by ICIPE.

25. He also referred to some subjects and activities that might be of equal interest and concern to the EMPRES/WR Programme which could be carried out jointly. These included the planned study regarding the comparative economic advantage of preventive Desert Locust management versus emergency control, and the production of vegetation identification field cards for use by Locust Officers for the better identification of potential Desert Locust breeding areas.

26. In the following discussion, the Meeting appreciated the proposed collaboration between the two Regions in these matters and suggested that existing publications should be taken carefully into consideration in order to avoid duplication.

27. The meeting recommended that consultants from both Regions should be involved in the preparation of the vegetation identification cards. In the same context, the Director of DLCO-EA, Mr. P. Odiyo suggested that the DLCO Research Officer could be involved in this matter if needed. The meeting recommended that the vegetation identification cards should be made available in the three main languages (English, French and Arabic), and that the Commissions and EMPRES should follow up their practical use in the field by the member countries.

28. The participants of the meeting raised their concern regarding the limited capacity of the Commission to take over EMPRES activities and requested clarification with regard to the future of EMPRES Liaison Officers including their annual meetings. The Meeting strongly recommended that sufficient funding and technical support should be provided to the Secretariat

of the Commission to enable it to coordinate and monitor the implementation of all additional EMPRES related activities. The Meeting recommended further that a special committee comprising the EMPRES Coordinator, the CRC Secretary and the EMPRES Liaison Officers from Eritrea, Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen should determine the additional tasks and activities during the next ELO Meeting in Sana'a, Yemen in December 2005 and make recommendations to the Commission at its next Session in April/May 2006.

Review of 2005 Expenditures and the Budget for the Remainder of Phase III

29. The FAO Senior Officer, Locust and Other Migratory Pests Group, Mr. C. Elliott, presented an overview of EMPRES/CR financial situation including the estimated expenditure for the year 2005 and the likely balances available to complete Phase III in 2006. He mentioned that the source of funding was mainly from three donor countries and three regional organizations namely, Netherlands, Switzerland, USA, FAO-CRC, FAO-DLCC, and FAO-RP. Mr. Elliott indicated that the available funds for the year 2006 were estimated to be 803,016 US\$. He also added that the USA has created a new project for EMPRES and Obsolete Pesticides under Office For Disaster Assistance (OFDA) (GCP/INT/767/USA), which will continue up to 2009 with no limitation on the countries that could benefit. Approximately US\$ 200,000 was expected to be available for EMPRES/CR each year.

30. According to Mr. Elliott, the total budget for EMPRES activities for a possible three year Phase IV (2007-2009) is estimated to be US\$ 1,515,000 and that support from Saudi Arabia has been requested of up to US\$ 2.7 m. A summary table of the financial position is given in Annex 2.

31. In the following discussion the participants referred to the generous bi-lateral support by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Sudan in 2004 and to Eritrea in 2005. The Eritrean Delegate pointed out that the Government has opened a special bank account for the Saudi funds and indicated that the donation will be used for procurement of vehicles and sprayers in addition to covering operational expenses. .

EMPRES Role in the Emergency 2003-2005 in the Central Region

32. The EMPRES/CR Coordinator gave a detailed overview of the role of EMPRES during the emergency from 2003 to 2005 in the Central Region particularly in Sudan, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Yemen. He explained the different scenarios and counter measures that were performed in close collaboration with the Commission, DLCO-EA, the affected countries and FAO, to effectively contain the outbreaks and to deal with swarm invasions from Northwest Africa. Particular emphasis was given to the excellent regional and interregional collaboration in the emergency and the rapid response provided in particular by Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Sudan.

33. The participants appreciated the presentation and commended the efforts made by the Commission and EMPRES/CR in the containment of the emergency situation in the Central Region. They particularly emphasized the integration of the preventive Desert Locust management by the countries into their national programmes and recommended that CRC would continue these efforts to sustain these achievements. CRC should document these into an action plan.

Presentation of CRC/EMPRES Website

34. The EMPRES/CR Coordinator presented the proposed CRC/EMPRES Website. He demonstrated the objective of the website, its different applications and links, and highlighted all relevant documents such as reports, references and guidelines as well as profiles regarding the participating countries and the regional organizations.

35. The participants appreciated the efforts made in preparing this website and acknowledged its usefulness in order to be fully up-to-date as far as the various on-going activities and upcoming events are concerned and proposed only few minor modifications. However the question was raised by the Team Leader of the Evaluation Mission on the legal aspect of the inclusion of evaluation reports in the website prior to approval from the ownership of the reports, in this case the participating countries, FAO and the donors. He concluded that this issue should be determined after consultation with the Legal Department of the FAO.

Any other Business

36. The delegates from the Netherlands and the USA strongly endorsed the meeting's recommendation on the creation of an expert post as soon as possible under the Commission to support EMPRES/CR activities. This recommendation should be tabled and reviewed in the next Session of Commission.

Closure

37. After adoption of the meeting report, Mr. C. Elliott thanked the participants for their support to the EMPRES/CR Programme and the open and constructive discussions. He referred to the scheduled end to the Netherlands-funded project by December 2005 and took the opportunity to particularly thank the delegates from the Netherlands and the USA for their unfailing solidarity and the important contribution of their Governments to the success of EMPRES/CR Programme since its beginning. He expressed his optimism that this fruitful collaboration may continue in one way or another in the future. He wished the participants a safe journey back home and declared the meeting closed.

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	Global Budget	Global exp. as at 31/10/05 for CR	Estim. Exp. Year 2005 as at 31/10/05	Committed but not yet reflected as expenditure in 2005 (excluding supp. cost)	Estimated Project Bal. as at 31.12.05 to pursue Phase III CR	Estimated Budget available in 2006	Estimated Budget available in 2007	Estimated Budget available Phase IV (Jan 07-Dec 09)
FAO	250,000	381,574	400,000	19,000	0	100,000	100,000	100,000 per year = 300,000
Netherlands	2,498,000	2,498,000	130,236	0	0	0	0	0
Switzerland (817)	750,000	538,979	30,408	20,000	190,000	190,000	0	0
USA (720) Cap.Buid.	700,000	591,984	30,335	-	108,016	108,016	0	0
U.S.A.(757) EMPRES	500,000 (1)	500,000	37,879	0	0	0	0	0
USA(767) New EMPRES Grant	3,000,000 (2)	9,020	9,020	75,000	2,916,000	200,000	200,000	200,000 up to Dec 2009 = 600,000
Central Reg.Com.	7,482,000 (3)	5,332,647	196,280	23,000	(depending contributions received)	200,000	200,000	200,000 per year = 600,000
DLCC	5,000	-	5,464	-	-	5,000	5,000	5,000 per year = 15,000
Secure funding						803,016	505,000	1,515,000
Additional potential donors								
Saudi Arabia	2,760,000 ?						920,000	1840,000

- (1) Divided between Central and Western Regions.
- (2) The project is ending in December 2009. The annual contribution is USD 600,000 from which USD 350,000 are for EMPRES activities in the Central (USD 200,000) and Western Regions (USD 150,000), and USD 250,000 are for Obsolete Pesticides activities.
- (3) Approx. US\$ 300,000 per year for EMPRES CR activities.