



DESERT LOCUST UPDATE

FAO Emergency Centre for Locust Operations



(13 July 2004)



General Situation as of 13 July 2004

A major redistribution of Desert Locust populations is in progress as swarms move from the spring breeding areas in Northwest Africa to the summer breeding areas in the Sahel in West Africa. Numerous swarms continue to arrive in Mauritania and a few have reached the Cape Verde Islands. More swarms are expected to appear in Mauritania, Mali and Niger in the coming weeks. A few could also reach Chad and western Sudan. Significant damage has occurred in Mauritania. In Northwest Africa, intensive control operations have continued against newly formed swarms in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. International assistance is urgently required to supplement the major efforts already made and to prevent the situation from developing into a plague.

During the past two weeks, a substantial number of immature swarms up to 10 km² each in size continued to arrive and disperse throughout central and southern Mauritania from Northwest Africa. There have been at least 45 reports of swarms since early June in the summer breeding areas where good rains, more than 80 mm in many places, have fallen recently and ecological conditions are favourable. This will allow the swarms to mature rapidly and lay eggs, leading to hatching and the formation of hopper bands in the coming weeks. Although damage has been reported in oases and to dune-fixing trees, only a few swarms could be treated because they are high-flying and mobile, making them difficult to follow. In Mali, a survey team found only traces of the highly mobile

swarms that were reported in late June in the north where conditions are now favourable for breeding. In Senegal, there were no new reports of swarms entering the country and the swarms that arrived in June are thought to have dispersed. On 7 July, Desert Locusts, at densities up to 60 adults/m², were reported from the Cape Verde Islands on Boa Vista, Santiago and Fogo. These probably arrived from the West African coast between Senegal and Western Sahara on unusual easterly and northeasterly winds on 5-6 July. More swarms are expected to arrive in Mauritania, Mali and Niger from Northwest Africa. Some of these could extend to Chad and reach western Sudan. The probability of additional swarms arriving in Senegal and Cape Verde Islands is much lower.

Intensive ground and aerial control operations continued in Morocco and Algeria against numerous immature swarms that were forming at densities up to 150 adults/m². In Morocco, the heaviest infestations were reported in the northeast near Bouarfa and along the southern side of the Atlas Mountains near Ouarzazate and Errachidia while in Algeria the largest populations were in the north near El Bayadh, Djelfa and M'Sila. During the first decade of July, Morocco treated nearly 454,000 ha and Algeria 326,000 ha. Late instar hoppers were still present in a few places in both countries. Control is also in progress in Tunisia and Libya but more details are awaited. While these efforts are likely to have made a considerable impact on the number of swarms that will migrate south, spring breeding this year has been so widespread that substantial numbers of escaping swarms are inevitable.

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

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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