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Main features, obligations and benefits under the *Agreement for the Establishment of an FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in South-West Asia (SWAC)*

OVERVIEW

Desert locusts (*Schistocerca gregaria*) are among the most destructive transboundary pests in the world. In their migratory phase, they can form vast swarms made up of hundreds of millions of individuals. These swarms, driven by prevailing winds, can travel up to 150 kilometers in a single day, consuming nearly all vegetation in their path, including crops and pastureland. In plague years, they strip areas of nearly all vegetation, severely impacting agriculture and food security. According to FAO data, Desert Locust upsurges or plagues can affect one-tenth of the world's population in up to 60 countries. In the Caucasus and Central Asia, locusts can affect the livelihood of over 25 million people.

The Southwest Asia Region (the Region) - defined under the [Agreement for the Establishment of an FAO Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in South-West Asia](#) (the Agreement) – has been vulnerable to desert locust invasions. Many States in the Region also face structural challenges, such as marginal agricultural zones, fragile food systems, and limited emergency response capacities – factors that amplify the impact of locust infestations and underscore the need for sustained regional coordination.

To address this ongoing threat, the Agreement was adopted in 1963 by the FAO Conference and came into force in 1964, with amendments in 1977 and 2000. The Agreement established a formal platform for regional cooperation, joint action, and long-term planning to manage locust threats more effectively across Members. It provided a structured framework for coordinated surveillance, monitoring, and control, enhancing cooperation among affected countries. Through the Commission, Members share resources, technical expertise, and early warning systems, enabling more timely and effective responses. These efforts promote sustainable control measures, strengthen preparedness, and help reduce crop and pasture losses – ultimately contributing to regional food security and economic stability.

The current Members of the Commission are Afghanistan, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan.

OBJECTIVES

As stated in the Preamble, the ultimate objective of the Agreement is to **prevent losses to agriculture in certain countries of central and western Asia caused by the Desert Locust**, and to create a framework for collaboration between countries in the Region to promote national and international research and action with respect to the control of the Desert Locust in that Region.

The Agreement provides a **framework for coordinated surveillance, monitoring, and control, enhancing cooperation among affected countries**. Through the Commission, Members share resources, technical expertise, and early warning systems, enabling more timely and effective responses.

MAIN ELEMENTS

The Agreement is designed to **foster regional cooperation and coordinated action against locust outbreaks**. For that purpose, Members undertake to maintain a **regular exchange of information on the current locust situation** and the progress of control campaigns within their countries and to share such information with FAO.



365 days of action



- Members also agree to carry out all possible **preventive measures to control Desert Locust** within their countries and to reduce crop damage by doing the following:
- Maintaining a permanent locust information and reporting service;
- Maintaining an adequate permanent locust control service;
- Holding reserves of insecticides and application equipment;
- Supporting the creation and maintenance of training, survey and research activities, including maintenance of national research stations for the study of the Desert Locust, as compatible with the resources of the Member;
- Participating in the implementation of any common policy of locust control or prevention which may be approved by the Commission;
- Facilitating storage of anti-locust equipment and insecticides held by the Commission and permitting their duty-free import and export, and their free movement within the country;
- Submitting periodic reports to the Commission on actions taken within the country to fulfil the above obligations.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR PARTIES

States in the Region at risk of invasions of Desert Locust, may enjoy a wide range of benefits by adhering to the Agreement, clustered into three main areas: sustainability, economic benefits, and governance:

A. SUSTAINABILITY

The Agreement enhances the long-term management of locust control through the development of sustainable strategies and access to technical expertise and resources. This collaborative effort helps **Members improve their capacities to handle future outbreaks while minimizing environmental impacts**. Furthermore, coordinated pest management measures promote a more effective and environmentally responsible approach across the region.

B. ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The Agreement advances **early detection and rapid response to locust outbreaks**, enabling Members to reduce crop losses, protect agricultural assets, and sustain rural livelihoods. It promotes coordinated regional action, which is often more cost-effective than isolated national efforts, and facilitates access to international funding and partnerships that strengthen resources for locust control and broader agricultural development. Members also benefit from established response mechanisms that can help minimize economic losses during outbreaks.

C. GOVERNANCE

The Agreement fosters regional cooperation and promotes a harmonized approach to locust monitoring and control. It provides **a structured platform for joint action, enabling Members to address a shared transboundary threat through collective effort**. Through standardized mechanisms, the Agreement strengthens governance by enhancing coordination, transparency, and institutional knowledge-sharing. It supports collaborative decision-making, reinforces shared responsibility, and encourages diplomatic engagement – contributing to more effective and efficient locust management across the region.

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the Agreement, model instruments for adherence to the Agreement and treaty processes in FAO, please contact: treaties@fao.org

