

INFORMATION BULLETIN



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

WEST AFRICA: LOCUST INVASION

10 November 2004

The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 181 countries.

In Brief

This Information Bulletin (no. 2/2004) is being issued for information only. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

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The Situation

This year the Sahel region witnessed one of the worst locust invasions in the past 20 years. In recent weeks, the locust swarms have decreased in the Sahel region, and started moving north towards the Mediterranean coast.

The FAO created an early awareness about the impending crises in October 2003, but concrete actions were only taken in late August 2004, when massive swarms started to invade Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Cape Verde and Chad. Having the requisite expertise and organizational structures in place, the FAO took the lead role in fighting the locust invasion: they took initial steps by spraying pesticides from aircrafts.

In October, the FAO and the Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) carried out an assessment mission to nine countries. The WFP collaborated in the five most affected countries and the synthesis report is expected to be published by end of November.¹

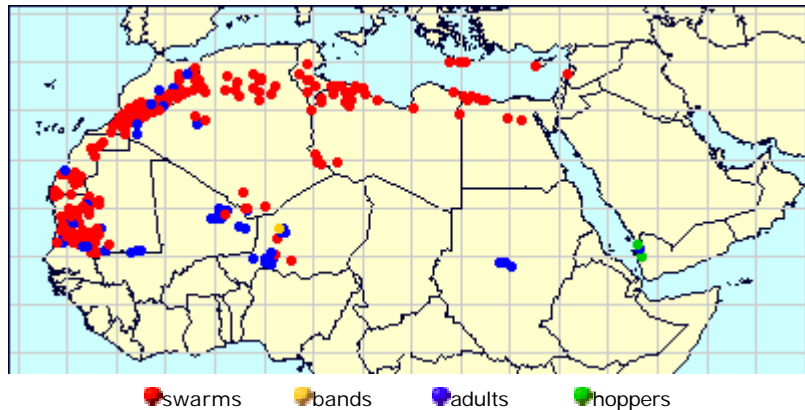
As per the preliminary findings of the joint Mission with the exception of Mauritania the situation is not as bad as anticipated earlier. "Regional cereal production in the Sahel will not be affected in a major way this year", says the press release. However, many rural communities suffer from severe localized damage to crops, pasture and vegetables.

¹ This Information Bulletin (2/2004) has referred to FAO Situation Report no. 4. Please refer to the following FAO website - <http://www.fao.org/news/global/locusts/locuhome.htm>

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As mentioned above, the worst affected country is Mauritania where up to 50 percent of cereal production may be lost, FAO said. The country has already suffered several years of drought making households largely depending on agriculture and livestock herds especially vulnerable. Pastoral groups are moving earlier than usual with their animals to zones of better vegetation, leading very likely to an overgrazing.

The FAO intends to call for donor emergency funds to support early agricultural rehabilitations for the most affected farmers.



Desert Locust swarms continue to move north from W Africa to NW Africa. A few swarms moved east in the Mediterranean to northeast Libya, northern Egypt, Crete, Cyprus and Lebanon.

source: <http://www.fao.org/news/global/locusts/locuhome.htm>

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

The National Societies of the affected countries are in close contact with Government and other agencies to monitor the impact of the invasion and participate in relevant meetings. Concrete steps to mitigate the impact and prevent an even worse invasion 2005 are taken by the Red Cross of Mauritania:

- Development of a contingency plan
- Mobilization of volunteers of the local committees with the objective to prevent breeding of larvae
- Sensitization and awareness programmes among the most affected populations
- Launch an Appeal if the Government officially declares the country's situation is so critical that it needs assistance by the international community

Coordination

The Federation, represented by the Regional Delegation for West and Central Africa and the Sahel Sub-Regional Office, is in close contact with OCHA, WFP, FAO and other organizations to define their role and input for the present situation and preparedness for a potential invasion in 2005.

Depending on the final results of the FAO-CILSS and WFP missions expected to be published end of November, the Federation will determine its role in rehabilitation and prevention of future invasions. Special attention will be put on Mauritania where an Appeal might be launched.

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For longer-term programmes, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeals:

- Sahel sub-region, Appeal 01.39/2004 - http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual04/013904.pdf
- West Africa region, Appeal 01.49/2004 - http://www.ifrc.org/cgi/pdf_appeals.pl?annual04/014904.pdf

Please also watch for the 2005 Annual Appeals, due to be launched in Geneva on 23 November 2004.