SITUATION UPDATE

Locust Crisis in Madagascar

20 June 2013

HIGHLIGHTS

- Since April 2012, Madagascar has been facing a **serious locust plague** of the Malagasy Migratory Locust, that threatens the livelihoods of **13 million people** in the country, nine million of whom earn a living from agriculture. Locust infestations, if untreated, could wipe out food crops and livestock grazing lands – and with it a family's ability to provide for itself.
- At least **1.5 million hectares could be infested** by locusts in two-thirds of the country by September 2013. Findings from a recently concluded damage assessment indicate that **rice and maize crop losses due to locusts** in the mid- and southwestern part of Madagascar **vary, on average, from 40 to 70 percent, reaching up to 100 percent in some plots.**
- The Ministry of Agriculture of Madagascar declared **a national disaster on 27 November 2012** and requested assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to address the current locust plague.
- In response to the locust plague, an emergency programme, with the objective to safeguard the food security of rural populations, has been jointly prepared by FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture. An appeal to donors was launched in December 2012. It is estimated that at least three successive locust control campaigns (from September 2013 to September 2016), costing **USD 41.5 million,** are required to treat more than 2 million hectares (1.5 million hectares in 2013/14, 500 000 hectares in 2014/15 and 150 000 hectares 2015/16)**.**
- The three-year programme includes:
  - **Improving the monitoring and analysis of the locust situation**
  - **Large-scale aerial and ground control operations**
  - **Monitoring and mitigating impact of locust control operations on human health and the environment**
  - **Assessing the effectiveness of each locust campaign and the impact of locusts on crops and pastures**
- In late February 2013, **Cyclone Haruna** worsened the situation. The cyclone, which hit the southwestern part of Madagascar, not only damaged crops and homes but also provided ideal breeding conditions for locusts for a longer period than usual.
- Out of the required USD 41.5 million over the three-year period, **USD 22.4 million are needed by June 2013** to implement **the first emergency campaign** (from September 2013 to September 2014).
- The **current funding gap is USD 41.5 million**. Should all the required funds not be available on time to undertake the locust campaigns, the plague will persist several years, severely affecting food security, nutrition and livelihoods.

LATEST UPDATE

During the 2012/13 rainy season, which is coming to an end, huge areas have been infested by three successive generations of the Malagasy Migratory Locust, which developed under relatively suitable weather and ecological conditions. As a result, at the end of May 2013, an increasing number of gregarious swarms formed and were still forming, whose size varied from 100 to 3 000 hectares. As vegetation dried out, swarms progressively moved north and it is expected that they will soon arrive north of 18°S (north of Maintirano). In addition, they will merge with local populations and their size will increase. It is likely that they will reach northern parts of Madagascar such as the Majunga, Sofia and Alaotra basins.

RECENT ACTIONS TAKEN

Locust Watch Unit: In February 2013, FAO mobilized funds to establish a Locust Watch Unit within the Plant Protection Directorate (PPD) of the Ministry of Agriculture. Led by the Director of the PPD, it is mandated with the collection and analysis of locust and weather data and provides a regular overview of the situation. It has already carried out four field assessments between March and early June 2013 and produced three monthly bulletins. From September 2013 onwards, the Locust Watch Unit will be essential for guiding survey and control operations.

Damage assessment: An assessment of locust damage to crops and pastures was conducted in April 2013 to estimate the impact of the locust plague on local agricultural production and on the food security of the rural populations. Field observations in the three regions of Atsimo Andrefana, Menabe and Bongolava showed that rice and maize crop losses due to locusts are high in the mid- and southwestern parts of Madagascar. Findings indicate that Madagascar could suffer from rice crop losses from 480 000 tonnes (best case) to 630 000 tonnes (worst case) this year, as a result of locust damage; this is roughly equivalent to 20-26 percent of the total estimated (rice) needs of Madagascar.

Funding required (USD)	Pledges (USD)	Funding received by FAO (USD)	Funding received bilaterally (USD)	Funding gap (USD)
41.5 million FAO Appeal* - 18 Dec.2012	**5 million**	**0**	**0**	**41.5 million**
*** This amount includes the USD 22.4 million required by June 2013 to implement the first emergency locust-control campaign.**				

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Three-year Programme in Response to the Locust Plague in Madagascar: English version / French version
- Situation updates: English / French | All related items: English / French
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