

EVALUATION SERVICE

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Multilateral evaluation of the 2003-2005 desert locust control campaign

FAO and desert locust control

Countering locust emergencies has been an important role of FAO since 1951 when the Desert Locust Control Committee (DLCC) was established. FAO coordinates Desert Locust forecasting based on reports received from national locust units and weather information, and in the case of an outbreak coordinates an international response. Specific services provided by FAO to combat desert locust upsurges include: a forum for discussing policies, strategies, and plans; gathering of information for regular bulletins and early warnings; strengthening national locust control units and promoting collaboration at the regional level; declaring Desert Locust emergencies, organizing international assistance and providing technical advice and other support for control activities.

Multilateral evaluation of the 2003-2005 desert locust control campaign

FAO coordinated the Desert Locust Campaign of 2003-2005 in response to an upsurge in the Western region of the Sahel. The Campaign was carried out by affected countries, donors working directly with affected countries, donors working through FAO, Desert Locust Commissions and technical and operational units of FAO itself. The total cost of the campaign is estimated at US\$ 400 million, of which US\$ 280 million were used for control operations and US\$ 90 million for food assistance and rehabilitation of communities affected by the upsurge. Most funding for the control operations was provided by the affected countries, especially Algeria, Morocco and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

A multilateral evaluation of the Campaign was proposed at the extraordinary session of the Desert Locust Control Committee in December 2004, with the objective of assessing the campaign in its entirety (i.e. the effectiveness and impacts of the work by all parties). The evaluation was funded from extra-budgetary resources, carried out by an independent team and overseen by a Steering Committee with representation from all partner countries and donors. The FAO Evaluation Service provided secretariat and methodological support to the independent team.

Findings

Donors generally considered that they were not adequately informed by FAO on the actions to be undertaken to address the Desert Locust invasion. The bulk of contributions arrived relatively late and affected countries believed that costs of the control operations would have been reduced, and the impact of the locust invasions more limited, had interventions started earlier. This having been said, a combination of effective control operations, especially the aerial control undertaken by Algeria and Morocco, and poor locust breeding conditions owing to unusually cool weather resulted in an early end to the emergency. This, the evaluation emphasized, could not have occurred without the substantial assistance to countries and prevented further threats to livelihoods.

Findings cont.

Invasions contribute heavily to the **degradation of socio-economic conditions** of affected communities and an estimated eight million people in the Sahel suffered to varying degrees from the Desert Locust invasions. However, Livelihood protection and rehabilitation were largely overlooked in the campaign. The extent of the negative impact on food security and livelihoods was attributed in part to the primary focus of control campaigns on the regions with high agricultural potential to the detriment of more marginal and pastoral areas, sometimes already affected by drought. In these areas, locust further threatened livelihoods through:

- loss of crops and pastures;
- migration for grazing by pastoralists and ensuing tension between pastoralists and farmers;
- severe food shortages, inflation of food prices and falling prices for livestock;
- reduction in non-food expenditures to face the rise in food costs (clothing, social expenditures, travel, and in some cases health and schooling).

Another area of concern was the **effects of pesticides on human health, livestock and the environment**. Although, this was given considerable attention in the Campaign, the measures taken were not always adequate and instances of human and animal poisoning and negative environmental effects were recorded in some countries. Most Plant Protection Services staff members who participated in the Desert Locust control operations did not undergo cholinesterase tests before the start of the campaign, and the negative effects on their health could not be determined. Pesticide stocks may represent a substantial disposal problem in the near future (more than 6.3 million litres of pesticides were left over after the campaign). In the wake of the invasions, significant numbers of empty pesticide containers were not collected and plastic containers provided to handle pesticides were used for domestic purposes.

While the evaluation found that staff in all affected countries made enormous efforts and often worked under harsh conditions to limit the impact of the Desert Locust invasion, the level of **preparedness of affected countries** was insufficient. Sahel countries were generally unable to launch timely, effective control operations to minimize damage to crops and pastures. The substantial costs incurred by the affected countries were not foreseen by national budgets and resulted in fewer available resources for other national development activities.

The **evaluation team concluded** that in the future the frequency and impact of Desert Locust invasions can be further reduced, provided effective action is taken on recommendations.

Recommendations

This evaluation was multi-lateral, addressing not only the activities of FAO, but also those of affected countries, Desert Locust organizations and donors.

■ International collaboration

The evaluation stressed the links between Desert Locust recession, the pre-emergency and emergency phases. Donors were found to have given generously to the campaign. Interest is there, but must be solicited in a more timely manner and channelled effectively, including strengthening capacity for monitoring and pre-emptive control measures. They urged donors and affected countries not to consider a Desert Locust emergency as a unique, stand-alone, event and to maintain preparedness.

Desert Locust emergency responses should fully incorporate livelihoods protection and restoral.

The Desert Locust Control Committee should be transformed from an essentially technical committee into a mechanism in which all parties (affected countries, donors and FAO) determine their coordinated work programmes.

The Commission de Lutte contre le Criquet Pèlerin dans la Région Occidentale should also be strengthened so as to play a more important role in the Western Sahel Region, working with the Maghreb countries to develop an appropriate action plan and legal framework for joint use of the existing control capacity.

■ Affected Countries

Contingency plans should be developed at national, regional and international levels for locust monitoring and control. The costs of control campaigns should be better studied to identify the reasons for the high costs of Desert Locust control operations in certain countries. Affected countries should give attention to both high and low production areas, take steps to comply with environmental and health standards in the use of pesticides, and make arrangements for a safer distribution and recovery of pesticide containers.

■ FAO

A large number of the Evaluation's recommendations are designed to address weaknesses in FAO operational efficiency, including:

- the concerned FAO units should better prepare for emergency situations by establishing categories of emergencies, a roster of experts, and working more closely with donors to understand and plan for the relief- rehabilitation- development continuum;

- FAO should establish procurement methods more consonant with Locust emergency needs and delegate authority to the lowest possible level. There should be one manager clearly responsible for operations. If it is not possible for FAO to provide improved emergency management, most operational responsibilities should be outsourced and;

- the staff handling Desert Locusts should be increased.

■ Research

More research should be undertaken on improving Desert Locust monitoring and control techniques through the use of new technologies, better understanding of Desert Locust population dynamics, and determining the overall impact on the economies of the countries affected by Desert Locust invasions.

Management response to the evaluation

A management response was submitted following requests for the strengthening of original by the Programme Committee of the Council. Management welcomed the integration of livelihood protection and rehabilitation into Desert Locust campaigns which it considered a fundamental step forward. The great majority of recommendations were accepted but it was recognised that the extent of additional Regular Programme funding which could be allocated to Desert Locust activities was limited.

The Programme Committee found the evaluation analytical and comprehensive, covering new and important ground in its examination of locust issues from the socio-economic, health and environmental perspectives. It also found major improvements in the second expanded response it had requested from management. It recommended that FAO should continue to play the lead role for locust early warning, coordination of response and control. Given the operational difficulties experienced by FAO in this campaign and in the Tsunami response, the Evaluation Service was asked to evaluate the nature of the constraints, with a view to streamlining operations and procedures, while maintaining an acceptable level of risk. It requested FAO to support the implementation of evaluation recommendations made to donors and other locust organizations and that FAO maximise the potentials of the UN common appeal mechanism for locust and similar emergencies.

FAO Governing Bodies' conclusions (Programme Committee)

References

Multilateral Evaluation for the 2003-2005 Desert Locust Control Campaign Summary PC 97/4 c).

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