

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Rains Support September Desert Locust Breeding in Much of East Africa

Desert locust infestations continue to threaten food security and livelihoods in northeastern Ethiopia and northern Somalia, where heavy rains have intensified breeding in recent weeks, causing increased bands of hoppers—immature, wingless locusts—and immature swarms to form, FAO reports. Similarly, unusually heavy rainfall has contributed to widespread breeding in Red Sea coastal areas of Eritrea and Sudan, with FAO expecting infestations in Eritrea to increase substantially in October.

Despite above-average rainfall in most East African countries in recent months, below-average rains are forecast for much of the Horn of Africa region between October and December, possibly reducing vegetation availability for locusts and limiting new swarm formation, according to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)'s Climate Predictions and Applications Center. However, FAO and IGAD expect desert locust infestations to continue threatening crop production and pasture regeneration significantly in most affected areas of Ethiopia and Somalia through at least March 2021. Additionally, immature swarms in northeastern Ethiopia and northern Somalia—possibly supplemented by additional swarms from Yemen—will likely begin moving south toward Kenya as regional winds shift in October. Swarms are likely to migrate to Ethiopia's Ogaden Desert and central Somalia in the coming weeks, potentially reaching northern Kenya—where only a few residual swarms remained as of September 30—by late October; continued surveillance will remain critical for detecting additional breeding and containing any new infestations in the coming months.

Swarms in Yemen Present Continued Threat to Horn of Africa Region

FAO and other relief actors remain concerned regarding unmitigated desert locust breeding in the interior and coastal areas of Yemen, where hopper bands and swarms continue to form; several immature swarms were also present near the Gulf of Aden coast as of late September, increasing the risk of onward migrations from Yemen. In August and September, several swarms from Yemen invaded northeastern Ethiopia, supplementing breeding among local populations. Additional swarms are likely to cross into eastern Ethiopia and northern Somalia in coming months, potentially exacerbating the situation in the Horn of Africa in late 2020. Although limited control operations are ongoing in parts of Yemen, access constraints continue to restrict large-scale surveillance and control measures. FAO and other response actors are assessing options to scale up interventions in the country, recently transferring pesticide stocks from Kenya to support control operations in Yemen.

Atypical Locust Breeding Occurs Along Red Sea Coast in Eritrea, Sudan

In late August, several mature swarms arrived in Eritrea from northern Ethiopia and Yemen, spreading throughout the country's coastal areas and southern highlands, according to FAO. While the UN agency had anticipated some desert locust breeding in Eritrea's western lowlands—a typical summer breeding area—in September, extensive breeding is now also occurring along the country's Red Sea coast due to the invasions and recent rains, which have created suitable conditions for locust breeding and development. FAO reports significant hopper group and band formations in coastal areas of Eritrea, as well as in the western lowlands bordering Sudan. Although ground control interventions are ongoing, a lack of reliable internet and telecommunications services is limiting information and data sharing regarding the desert locust situation, possibly hampering the response.

Similar atypical breeding is occurring in eastern Sudan, where substantial rainfall has supported an increasing number of swarms to lay eggs along the western side of the Red Sea Hills mountain range.

The Government of Sudan Plant Protection Directorate (PPD) has mobilized additional personnel and equipment to support control efforts in Red Sea State, and surveillance is ongoing in areas at risk of invasions from Eritrea. Although flooding has disrupted access to some areas in recent days, FAO assesses that the PPD has sufficient capacity to control new infestations and reduce locust breeding throughout Sudan.

FAO, National Governments Scale Up Locust Response in Ethiopia, Somalia

Locusts have caused significant damage to sorghum and teff crops, as well as pastureland, in northeastern Ethiopia in recent months, damaging or destroying nearly 598,000 acres of crops and pasture in Afar and Tigray regions as of early September, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). Although control measures have reduced locust populations in northern Ethiopia, the Government of Ethiopia and FAO are working to scale up surveillance and control operations to minimize further locust-related damage, dispatching additional logistics and locust control equipment to eastern Amhara Region and southern Tigray in early September. FAO has also reported several cross-border swarm movements between northwestern Somalia and Ethiopia's Somali Region in recent days, indicating the need to scale up ground control in Somali and improve bilateral response coordination as infestations in the area expand.

FAO is similarly scaling up surveillance and control efforts in anticipation of new breeding in northern Somalia, as well as possible invasions into southern parts of the country, where insecurity could restrict access for response teams. Currently, 18 survey teams are deployed to the field, an increase from the three teams operating in Somalia in early 2020. FAO is also recruiting new staff and procuring additional equipment to support surveillance, most recently delivering 16 global positioning system (GPS) tablets and 50 additional backpack sprayers to Somalia in late September.

Control Measures, Migrations Reduce Locust Populations in Kenya

Control operations and onward migrations have significantly reduced locust populations in northwestern Kenya in recent weeks, with only a few immature swarms remaining in the region as of late September, according to FAO. While recent rainfall is expected to support additional breeding across northwestern Kenya in late 2020, the scale of breeding will likely be smaller than in recent months due to ongoing control efforts and projected below-average rainfall from October to December. Interventions in Ethiopia and Somalia may also limit the number of reinvasions into Kenya as seasonal winds shift in the coming months. Desert locust swarms have damaged approximately 1.9 million acres of crops and pastureland in Isiolo, Marsabit, Samburu, and Turkana counties to date, according to FEWS NET; however, FAO and Government of Kenya officials assess that Kenya is adequately prepared to respond to new infestations, with current pesticide stocks sufficient to support control operations through early 2021.

Control Operations Prevent 1.5 Million MT of Crop Loss at Harvest Time

Control teams treated nearly 1.9 million acres in East Africa and Yemen between January and mid-September, preventing more than 1.5 million metric tons (MT) of crop loss at harvest time—valued at approximately \$458 million, FAO reports. The interventions have safeguarded the food security of approximately 9.9 million people and protected grazing areas for the livestock of approximately 687,000 pastoral households. Control operations in June were particularly critical in limiting the scale of locust-related damage, with teams in Ethiopia and Kenya treating large swathes of hopper bands prior to swarm formation. In addition, strategic control efforts during the month likely contributed to the relatively low number of migrations from northern Kenya in July and August, reducing risk to several countries in East Africa, as well as West Africa's Sahel region.

KEY FIGURES



5

Countries receiving USAID support for desert locust control



6

Helicopters contracted with USAID/BHA support in three locust-affected countries



23

Vehicles deployed with USAID/BHA support in four locust-affected countries



2.1 Million

Acres of land surveyed in USAID-supported countries since early March

U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

SURVEILLANCE AND PEST CONTROL

USAID/BHA funding provides critical equipment—including aircraft and vehicles for surveillance and control—for response teams in locust-affected countries. In areas where launching aerial control operations remains challenging due to ongoing insecurity, USAID/BHA is supporting locust control teams to conduct ground interventions through the use of backpack and vehicle-mounted sprayers. USAID/BHA has also supported helicopter deployments to reinforce surveillance and control capacity in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia. The helicopters allow response teams to verify surveillance data and determine adequacy of control in hard-to-reach areas, including areas with rough, uneven terrain—where planes are typically unable to land—and areas that are difficult to reach by ground transportation or on foot.

RESPONSE CAPACITY-BUILDING AND EARLY WARNING

To strengthen local capacity to manage infestations, USAID/BHA is supporting training on locust monitoring, detection, and control, as well as the safe handling and use of pesticides, for government officials, locust scouts, and other response personnel. USAID/BHA is also supporting the provision of equipment, including GPS, radios, and eLocust3 tablets—which collect and transmit field data in real-time to government officials and FAO staff—to enable response personnel to forecast locust movements and impacts, and to provide early warnings to at-risk communities.

The U.S. Government (USG) continues to support FAO and other stakeholders to improve locust monitoring and forecasting systems, enabling teams to strengthen preparedness and launch more timely and effective responses. USAID's Bureau for Resilience and Food Security—through SERVIR, a joint partnership with the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)—is bolstering FAO's global locust monitoring system, enabling the UN agency to identify targeted treatment areas by strengthening forecasting of breeding locations and swarm movements. In addition, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Air Resources Laboratory has developed a locust forecasting web application at the request of FAO; the application generates a graphic simulation of future swarm movements, based on weather and wind forecasts, which FAO uses to provide regular situation updates to the public.

FOOD SECURITY

In response to extant humanitarian needs, USAID/BHA implementing partners continue to provide emergency food and nutrition assistance to vulnerable populations in East Africa, including in many locust-affected areas of the region. USAID/BHA partners also continue to monitor potential additional needs resulting from the impact of desert locust infestations.

CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- The desert locust is one of the most destructive migratory pests in the world, rapidly consuming most vegetation in its path, including crops and pastureland critical to maintaining the food security and livelihoods of populations in East Africa. Locust swarms are highly mobile and carried on the wind; swarms can travel up to 100 miles per day, and even a relatively small, 0.4 square mile-sized swarm can consume an amount of food sufficient for approximately 35,000 people in one day.
- Desert locust swarms first crossed the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea from Yemen and entered Ethiopia and Somalia in June 2019. While desert locust infestations occur seasonally in parts of East Africa, above-average rainfall in the region from September to December 2019, as well as additional rains brought by Tropical Cyclone Pawan to eastern Somalia in early December, extended wet conditions conducive for breeding and generated abundant vegetation for the locusts to consume. Several successive generations of the pest formed multiple hopper bands and swarms of adult locusts, enabling several outbreaks to grow and develop into a regional upsurge, the second of three FAO levels classifying the scale of locust infestations, in late 2019.
- On November 18, 2019, U.S. Ambassador Michael A. Raynor declared a disaster due to the impact of desert locust infestations in Ethiopia. On February 19, 2020, U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Brian Neubert declared a disaster for desert locust-affected areas of Somalia, and on February 25, U.S. Ambassador Kyle McCarter issued a disaster declaration in Kenya due to the impacts of the pest across the country. U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Brian Shukan also declared a disaster due to the projected impact of uncontrolled infestations across Sudan on April 13.

USAID HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE EAST AFRICA DESERT LOCUST RESPONSE IN FY 2020¹

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	AMOUNT
USAID/BHA²			
ETHIOPIA			
FAO	Agriculture and Food Security	Countrywide	\$10,778,689
TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE ETHIOPIA RESPONSE			\$10,778,689
KENYA			
FAO	Agriculture and Food Security	Countrywide	\$4,000,000
TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE KENYA RESPONSE			\$4,000,000
SOMALIA			
Implementing Partner	Agriculture and Food Security	Countrywide	\$7,092,866
TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE SOMALIA RESPONSE			\$7,092,866
SUDAN			
FAO	Agriculture and Food Security	Countrywide	\$998,674
TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE SUDAN RESPONSE			\$998,674
REGIONAL			

FAO	Agriculture and Food Security	Countrywide	\$481,500
	Program Support	Regional	\$345,232
TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE REGIONAL RESPONSE			\$826,732
TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING			\$23,696,961
USAID/UGANDA			
UGANDA			
University of Greenwich – Natural Resources Institute	Agriculture and Food Security	Countrywide	\$134,862
FAO	Agriculture and Food Security	Acholi, Karamoja, Lango, and Teso regions	\$245,000
TOTAL USAID/UGANDA FUNDING FOR THE UGANDA RESPONSE			\$379,862
TOTAL USAID/UGANDA FUNDING			\$379,862
TOTAL USAID HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE EAST AFRICA DESERT LOCUST RESPONSE IN FY 2020			\$24,076,823

¹ Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of September 30, 2020.
² Includes non-food humanitarian assistance from the former Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance.

PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
 - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
 - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)