

Madagascar locust update for the 1st dekad of April, 2011 with a forecast for the next dekad

Meteorological conditions

During the first decade of April, medium to heavy rains fell in the northwest and the central gregarization zones, including Ihosy and in Sakaraha where conditions remained favorable for breeding. The northwest and central transient multiplication zones also enjoyed adequate moisture. However, Mahafaly Plateau, Belomotra and other gregarization zones experienced moisture deficit during this period.

Locust situation

3rd generation hoppers and bands were observed in the central and southern areas of the multiplication and gregarization zones. Dense populations of adult locusts were also present in the lowlands of Befandriana-Sud and Manombo. Hatching was signaled in Manja region in the central zone. Increased numbers of adults were noticed on Horombe Plateau in Ankazotelo on the eastern side of Isalo where adults were reported during the 3rd dekad of March. 1st-4th instar hoppers and bands were reported in the central and southern Bekily-Fotadrevo where transient hoppers at 80-150 insects/m² and solitario-transient and transient adults at 2,000-10,000 insects/ha were observed over areas measuring 100 to 600 m² and situation 100-1,000 meters apart.

In the Belomotra gregarization zone, high density 1st-4th instar transient and 3rd instar semi-gregarious hoppers and bands were observed. On Mahafaly Plateau, dense mid-size (~600 ha) immature adult swarms were seen moving eastward from Beomby. Locusts were detected on an estimated 60,000 ha in all biotopes, including low savannahs, bushy and wooded areas as well as residues of bush (in Itomboina and on the tray of Ankazomanga). Medium to high density transient 3rd-5th instar hoppers mixed with low to medium density immature adults continued appearing over some 20,000 ha in the south and southeast regions on the coastal lowland in Karimbola. Hoppers and bands were also reported in Androy and Ambohangy during this period.

Impacts of current locust invasions on crops and pasture

Crop or pasture damage from locust attacks has not been reported during this period as most locusts were in their natural habitat and the ongoing control operations have reduced the risk of locusts escaping. However, as populations continue increasing and swarms start moving between outbreak and invasion areas, the threats to crops and pasture remain eminent.

Intervention actions

During this dekad more than 25,000 ha were surveyed and 2,340 ha of swarms were controlled by air in Mahafaly Plateau in Ejeda Zone using 2,340 liters of Chlorpyrifos 240 ULV. Another 28,750 ha were protected against hoppers and bands in Belomotra–Andranovory Plateau in Sakaraha Zone and Mahafaly Plateau in Ejeda Zone with 5,750 liters of Nomolt 50 UL applied by air. As of April 10, aerial operations controlled locusts on 78,180 ha using Chlorpyrifos and protected an additional 51,250 ha with Nomolt.

Ground control operations treated 3,018 ha with 3,018 l of Chlorpyrifos 240 ULV during this dekad. This brings the total number of ha treated to date by ground means to 17,094 (mostly in Sakaraha, Ambovombe and Ampanihy Zones). A grand total of 146,524 ha have been treated and/or protected by air and ground means since the current spray campaign began on November 28, 2010.

One of the two helicopters that arrived in Betioky Sud on April 2nd after undergoing a scheduled maintenance in Antananarivo continued control operations until April 6th and then moved to Ejeda for survey and control operations in Mahafaly. During this period, the helicopters logged 27 hours and 16 minutes which brings the total hours logged by the two helicopters as of April 10 to 609 hours and 10 minutes.

Note: The UN/FAO and the Malagasy Center for Locust Control are spearheading the current control campaign and USAID through its Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance responded in time and favorably to the appeal issued in support of the locust emergency campaign operations. Other donors have pledged and/or made contributions and it is anticipated that this will likely continue. End note.

Pesticide inventory and empty container management

As of April 10, 2011, CNA-FAO pesticide inventory stood at 17,790 l of Chlorpyrifos 240 ULV, 8,300 l of Nomolt 50 UL and 900 kg of GreenMuscle(biopesticide).

As part of an effort to ensure safety of humans and protect the environment, four hundred and sixty four (464) two hundred-liter empty pesticide containers have been recovered and stored under the supervision of the zonal CNA agents and the central pesticide store manager in Tuléar. Environmental monitoring activities are scheduled to commence in Belomotra and Mahafaly.

Forecast and planned activities

As vegetation continues drying up and conditions begin becoming less favorable in the primary breeding areas, adult swarms will continue moving to areas in the east and the North where conditions are favorable for breeding. Hoppers and bands will follow adults in Mahafaly Plateau, Bekily-Fotadrevo, and coastal lowland of Karimbola and Androy and further develop and form new swarms in the coming months. Given the potential for continued development of swarms, hoppers and bands in many of these places, the need for continued preventive and curative control interventions will likely increase over the coming months to abate the threat the locust poses to crops and pasture. The FAO-CNA team will plans to undertake intensive and control operations in Mahafaly and probably Bekily-Fotadrevo (Source: Amadou KAMARA, FAO-CNA, 4/14/2011).

Recommendations

Survey and timely preventive and curative control interventions should continue to mitigate locust populations and abate further developments. Prepositioning supplies and materials in time for survey and control operations will be necessary and can prevent major and unnecessary developments. Vigilance and timely interventions remain essential to avoid any major losses to crops and pasture.

OFDA/TAG will continue monitoring the situation and issue updates and advice accordingly.

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