WFP EAST AFRICA

Update on the Desert Locust Outbreak

12 June 2020

Overview

- East Africa is currently experiencing a desert locust outbreak of an unprecedented nature. The outbreak, which began in January 2020, is now in its second phase, with FAO projecting that this phase could be 20 times worse than the first one. Already, tens of thousands of hectares of farmland and pasture have been damaged by locusts in Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda. Given that most of these countries are heavily reliant on agricultural production, this outbreak could not only threaten the livelihoods and food security of residents, but the respective countries' economies as well.
- The triple threat of COVID-19, floods and locusts pose a major threat to food security in East Africa. These shocks do not just have immediate, short-term effects, they exacerbate prevailing food insecurity and undermine livelihoods and development gains that took years to build.
- WFP estimates that 20 million people are food insecure in nine East African countries: Ethiopia, South Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Djibouti and Eritrea. WFP projects that the number of food insecure people in the region could increase to 34 million or more in the coming months due to the impact of COVID-19, locusts and flooding
- The region is now seeing the spread of swarms of desert locusts that may eat crops in many countries before the main harvest from July to September. FAO currently projects that an additional 1.5 to 2.5 million people could become severely food insecure as a result solely of locust outbreaks.
- WFP anticipates a localized impact on the harvest, though at this stage the impact is still uncertain pending on control operations, locust surveillance and other factors such as wind and weather conditions.
- The restrictions imposed by countries in the region to contain COVID-19 are creating logistical challenges to the supply of pesticides, bio-insecticides and delays in obtaining equipment for control operations.

WFP Preparedness

- At a regional level, WFP works through the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group to harmonize methodologies and tools for ongoing ground impact assessments, food security projection and reporting on the locust outbreak.
- WFP and FAO have worked together in a number of ways since the beginning of the locust crisis, including by supporting logistical capacity and opportunities for the triangulation of equipment. FAO has launched a regional appeal for the fight against desert locusts in the Greater Horn of Africa and Yemen amounting to US$231 million for the period January to December 2020. This appeal aims at enhancing gains made in surveillance and control efforts, especially, in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, which are the three worst affected countries in the region.
- WFP is assessing the situation closely and preparing more detailed estimates on potential locust-related requirements for our country level responses together with FAO, the World Bank and governments.
- WFP is supporting ongoing food security assessments in the affected countries which are seeking to quantify the impact the locusts are having on food production and availability. While these assessments will further inform response strategies, anticipated needs are already being incorporated within the existing Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) in the affected countries. The support to affected communities will include a combination of relief, social protection and livelihood support interventions, in conjunction with the host Governments and FAO
- In East Africa, WFP's existing funding requirements for the next 6 months are US$813 million. However, as the impacts of COVID-19 deepen and new swarms continue to spread, needs are expected to increase significantly.

Country Updates

Ethiopia

- Since January 2020, 180 woredas in seven regions have been impacted by the desert locust infestation. While desert locusts are mainly in the east and south of Ethiopia, changing weather conditions have caused swarms to move westwards from Somali region towards Oromia and SNNP regions. There are also reports of new swarms in the southern and western parts of the country, which could contribute to reduced crop harvest in 2020. WFP is working with the Government on assessing the number of people who will require humanitarian assistance due the impact of desert locusts and COVID-19 related shocks, including income losses for people in informal sectors, increases in food prices and disruptions to food supply chains.
- The rapid incursion of desert locusts across many regions in Ethiopia has resulted in significant cropland losses and jeopardized the livelihoods of smallholder farmers who depend on crops. By the start of the school year in September 2020, the infestation will have likely led to a considerable drop in agricultural production, which will further exacerbate the existing food insecurity situation and malnutrition in the regions. Furthermore, WFP and the Government school-feeding programmes in some regions such as SNNP (Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region) and Oromia are entirely reliant on home-grown crops, whereby food is purchased from smallholder farmers.
- With additional funding for locust operations, WFP will focus on building the resilience of people affected by locusts to complement government and FAO actions. An interagency impact assessment on food security and livelihoods conducted in February indicated that nearly 1 million people are food insecure due to desert locust infestation.

Djibouti

- The Government of Djibouti, through its technical department in charge of agriculture and livestock, and technical partners remain attentive and are part of initiatives and consultations in neighboring countries to stop the spread of desert locusts. Activities include: 1) ground control operations with supplies of bio-pesticides and equipment, storage, training, human and environmental safety, and the disposal of chemical drums and containers, and 2) air traffic control operations against adult locusts with aircraft subcontracting, the purchase of biopesticides, human and environmental safety, training and the disposal of chemical barrels and containers.
- WFP Djibouti is working on strengthening the resilience of affected people, to improve household food security and restore the livelihoods of vulnerable farmers affected by locusts in rural regions. Through general food assistance and food assistance for assets affected communities will be able to rehabilitate assets and help them to boost resilience over time.

Kenya

- The locust invasion in Kenya is classified as the country's worst in 70 years. From December 2019 to March 2020, more than 26 counties were invaded and affected by locust swarms.
- An Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) report issued in April by the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) warned that continued conducive breeding conditions and limitations on the surveillance and control of locusts could potentially lead to "massive crop damage as well as significant pasture and browse destruction" that could prompt a significant change in food security status of affected populations. The peak period of concern is forecast to be from August through October 2020, which represents the peak of the lean season in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands. The lean season may be prolonged and exacerbated for households and communities affected by growing locust swarms.
- The Government of Kenya has conducted aerial spraying, ground control operations and empowering local communities to respond to the desert locusts from day one. Unusually heavy rains were reported from March into May 2020 across East Africa, creating an ideal environment for locusts to breed. These rains will allow new swarms to mostly stay in place, mature and lay eggs while a few swarms could move from Kenya to Uganda, South Sudan and Ethiopia.
- Though there are currently no hopper bands in the country, desert locust worms are maturing, and adult hoppers were spotted in three counties. Surveillance in Mandera, Marsabit, Wajir and Garissa shows 40% of total land were at risk of destruction. However, surveillance is limited in some areas by insecurity. Losses from the initial wave are estimated at 30% of crop yields and 15-40% for pastureland in affected areas
- WFP will complement the efforts of Government and FAO in their response plan for the recovery of livelihoods affected by locusts.

Somalia

- In December 2019 after long and heavy Deyr rains triggered flooding in Somalia, small clusters of desert locusts were detected in northern parts of the country. By February 2020, these clusters had increased, transforming the situation into the worst desert locust infestation in 25 years, and prompting the Federal Government of Somalia to declare a state of emergency.
- Latest projections are that over 2.6 million people are in areas affected by the locust outbreak. In the most likely scenario, more than 500,000 locust-affected people are classified as in Crisis (IPC 3) and in need of urgent food assistance throughout September 2020. In the worst-case scenario, this number is expected to increase to over 700,000 people.
- Efforts to control the outbreak are underway, and WFP is closely coordinating with FAO and the government on control measures and is on standby to support scale-up responses.

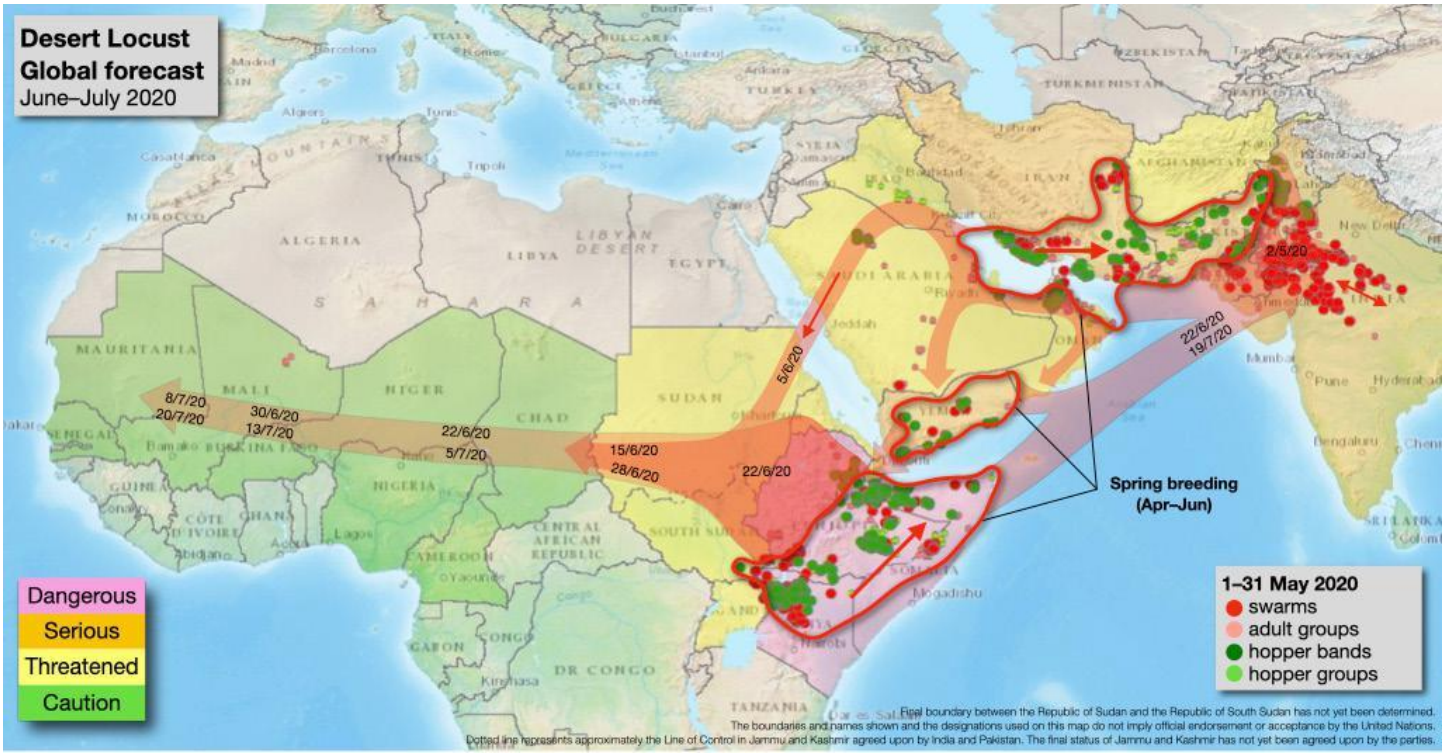
- WFP's plan from July to December 2020 is to reach 600,000 locust affected people through relief activities. The number is an estimate and the actual might slightly change. WFP and the Government expect a US$40 million contribution from the World Bank for the Shock Responsive Safety Net for Locust Response (SNLRP).
- This will be complemented by the Somalia Crisis Recovery Project (SCRP) and provide cash transfers to 100,000 households or 600,000 people in the event that food production is severely affect-ed by locust infestations.
- The Food Security Cluster completed its initial review of 2020 Humanitarian Response Plans (HRP) with 81 partners, resulting in a revision of funding requirements by 32% upwards to US$506 million. The increase is consistent with the latest IPC projections. The IPC numbers are however currently being revised.

South Sudan

- In South Sudan 2.76 million people are under threat from expanding locust swarms. As desert locusts continue to invade farms, eat vegetation and reproduce, the likely im-pact is that farmers will harvest little or no crops. The main crops affected are maize and sorghum – most of which are in the vegetative stage.
- FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security continue to lead the response to the desert locust outbreak by enhancing control, surveillance and monitoring and impact assessment. Damage assessment is ongoing for a current invasion in Eastern Equatoria.
- A high-level desert locust response committee was established in January 2020. WFP is actively monitoring the situation and working closely with FAO and the Government. WFP has provided logistics support to FAO and will continue supporting national response activities

Uganda

- According to information shared by the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda continues to receive more desert locust swarms. In addition, eggs laid by the February swarms in Uganda are expected to start hatching in mid-year, which coincides with Karamoja's planting season and therefore jeopardizes the region's only annual harvest. Crops most under threat include sorghum, cassava, sweet potato, maize and millet, the main staple crops in Karamoja.
- The Government of Uganda, FAO, WFP and partners are taking several steps to control a second wave of locust swarms, including training of extension officers in invasion control, sensitizing communities, ground and aerial spraying operations and surveillance of invasions to provide maps and advisories about the extent of the impact of swarms.



Source: ***FAO Desert Locust Watch***

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