

Madagascar locust update for the third dekad of February, 2011 with a forecast for the next dekad

Meteorological conditions

Although detailed information was not available at the time this update was compiled, the whole gregarization areas were drenched with very heavy rains with Belafika-Haut recording 360 mm and Befandriana basin receiving optimum amounts of rainfall during the last dekads of February. It is highly likely that this will create favorable conditions for the locusts to further develop in the coming dekads.

Locust situation

During this period, 2nd generation breeding was nearly ending. More than 90% of immature adults continued maturing and very few 5th instar hoppers were observed. About 10% of adult females have already laid eggs and populations at densities varying from a few to many insects per m² were reported in several places between Manombo and Mangoky in the northwest of the gregarization zone.

In Antandroy, southeast of the multiplication areas where the rains from Cyclone Bingiza drenched breeding and gregarization zones and created favorable conditions, assessments will be conducted to determine the level of infestation as well as the density, phenology and phases of the locust populations.

First to 3rd instar larvae of the nomadic locust (red locust) was reported on 2,000 ha on Belomotra plateau in Sakaraha during this dekad, but further detail was not available at the time this update was compiled.

Impacts of current locust populations

Considering that most locusts were still in their natural habitat, no serious damage was reported during this period. However, as populations continue increasing and swarms start moving between outbreak and invasion areas, the threats to crops and pasture will begin escalating.

Interventions

During the 3rd decade, more than 26,000 ha were reported infested and close to 9,800 ha were treated (9,000 by air and 798 by ground means). An additional 2,000 ha were protected through barrier treatments. Ground control operations started on 22nd February in Sakaraha zone in the lowlands of Tuléar. A total of 52,338 ha have been reported treated since the beginning of the current campaign. Spray and survey operations were mainly done by air due to the topography and spans of the infested areas. The two

helicopters engaged in the locust campaign have so far logged in a cumulative total of 486h and 18m.

As part of an effort to ensure the safety of vulnerable populations and protect the environment, two hundred and sixteen (216), 200 l empty pesticide containers have been temporarily stored at the pesticide storage facility in Tuléar under the direct supervision of the CNA pesticide manager. It is expected that the empty containers will be safely disposed at a latter date.

Forecast

The 2nd generation adults will regroup, mate and lay eggs as early as the first dekad of March. This will lead to hatching from the 2nd decade on mainly in transient multiplication and gregarization zones where more than 100 mm of rain fell. Gregarization will is likely in some localities over the course of the coming dekads. **Vigilance and timely interventions are essential to avoid any major impacts to crops and pasture.**

FAO-CNA plans for the next dekad

Aerial operations will continue in Tanandava and Befandriana basin and ground treatment will be carried out in Sakaraha and probably Befandriana-sud and Ejeda. FAO consultants and HQ staff will be carrying out ground assessments covering Tuléar-Ambovombe in March and April. FAO-CNA team expects to complete pre-positioning of 2,000 l of pesticides in Befandriana-Sud, 10,000 in Tanandava and 12,000 in Betioky in March.

Inventory of resources

FAO-CNA reported 67,662 l of *Chlorpyrifos* 240 ULV, 17,000 l of *Nomolt* 50 UL (IGR) and 600 kg of *GreenMuscle* (a biopesticide) inventory during this dekad. Two helicopters are strategically placed in Tuléar and in areas close to most spray operations (source: FAO-CNA, A. M. Kamara, 03/10/2011).

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