Thirty-fifth session
6 June-1 July 1988, Geneva
Item 5 (b) of the provisional agenda

PROGRAMME PLANNING

COUNTRY AND INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

Assistance for an interregional project

Emergency Assistance to Meet Short and Intermediate Needs for Desert Locust Control (INT/88/705)

Recommendation of the Administrator

Estimated UNDP contribution: $3,300,000
Duration: Two years
Source of financing: Special Programme Resources
Executing agency: FAO

I. BACKGROUND

1. For thousands of years, locusts have caused major losses to agriculture. The main species is the desert locust, which ranges from Central and Northern Africa through the Middle East to India and Pakistan. The locust can always be found in small numbers in desert vegetation. In its solitary phase, it appears as an inconspicuous and seemingly harmless large grasshopper. However, when longer spells of rainfall occur, they rapidly multiply and assume different physical, physiological and behavioural characteristics - the gregarious or swarming phase. These locusts assemble in vast swarms and are borne by favourable winds from their desert source to agricultural areas, where they consume every green plant - crops, pasture and trees. If conditions remain suitable, they will breed again in their new habitat, and a new swarming generation will be carried on by the winds to spread the devastation.
2. Throughout history, desert locust plagues have occurred in large areas from India to Senegal and from the United Republic of Tanzania to North Africa and the Middle East. Some 60 countries covering an area of 30 million square kilometres are subject to attacks of desert locusts. This area produces crops valued at nearly $25 billion per year. In fact, the history of locust plagues over the last 120 years shows that the recession periods (i.e., the absence of major swarms) covered in total a period of only 29 years. Until 1968, the recession periods varied from one to seven years. An upsurge of limited duration occurred in 1968.

3. A desert locust plague developed during the winter of 1977/1978. Intensive breeding during that period, caused by abnormally heavy rainfall resulted in the widespread occurrence of swarms in India and Pakistan, the Arabian Peninsula, Somalia, Ethiopia and Sudan. Prompt international action, consisting of donor support in the form of pesticides, aircraft and technical specialists, was responsible for controlling the outbreak.

4. Since the 1950s, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through various development projects, has helped in the setting up of a more effective system to deal with desert locust control. This assistance, amounting to over $35 million at country, regional and interregional levels, included, inter alia, the establishment of a surveillance and forecasting system, the development of more appropriate pesticide application techniques, the testing of pesticides, the provision of supplies and spraying and communication equipment. A great deal of this support was provided to the two regional desert locust control organizations: the Desert Locust Control Organization for Eastern Africa (DLCO-EA) and the Organisation commune pour la lutte anti-acridienne et anti-aviatoire (OCLALAV).

5. Thanks to effective control measures organized under the above-mentioned programme, the locust recession period lasted longer than ever before. It should, however, be realized that, as already mentioned, desert locusts always exist in small numbers in remote areas during recession periods. Regularly, the locust populations increase, but the early detection and timely control minimizes the threat of a major plague. While such a system has proved to be technically effective, the recent plague of locusts and grasshoppers in Africa in late 1985 and again in 1987-1988 clearly demonstrates that the system has several shortcomings. Substantial resources are being mobilized with the help of several donors to combat the most recent outbreak. The result of the successful control of desert locusts for over 10 years created the impression that the problems had been eliminated. Consequently, there has been a certain decrease of activity in the regional control organizations.

6. Following the 1978-1979 outbreak of locusts in Africa, several bilateral and multilateral organizations, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNDP, realized the urgent need to take adequate steps, in the form of technical assistance, to create effective and permanent regional co-operation in crop protection among the countries concerned. It was also recognized that the problem of desert locust control had to be considered within the overall framework of crop protection in order to safeguard investments in agricultural production. It is clear that unless the situation of national plant protection services improves significantly and the role and structure of regional...
organizations are carefully re-evaluated, there will always be an inability to prevent or avoid devastating outbreaks from endemic or introduced pests, and international assistance will be constantly called upon to face emergency situations. Massive crop destruction will continue or grow worse unless an effective plant protection system consisting of regional and national organizations is established. The national and regional plant protection services already in existence have been unsuccessful largely because of inadequate financing and lack of co-operation between regional and national levels. As a result, the consequences of outbreaks have customarily been remedied by infusions of emergency funds to the devastated regions. So far, $60 million in emergency assistance has been mobilized following the 1987-1988 locust outbreak.

7. Recognizing the need for preventive measures, UNDP and FAO in 1980 initiated the Action Programme for Improved Plant Protection to assess the basic needs of plant protection and elicit harmonized and sustained international assistance. Contacts were established with national and regional organizations and various donors. Comprehensive studies were conducted in 25 countries, and a number of projects formulated to strengthen national plant protection services. Financing, however, fell short of the amount needed to carry out the entire project.

8. The 1985-1986 outbreaks of grasshoppers and locusts mobilized the international donor community in support of establishing effective control measures to prevent future emergencies. At its thirteenth special session, 27 May-1 June 1986, the General Assembly adopted the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 and recommended the establishment of a network of effective pest control organizations. In addition, UNDP agreed in principle to consider a draft proposal on plant protection at a donor meeting in December 1986. The World Bank similarly confirmed its support of plant protection activities, while the European Economic Community (EEC) expressed its concern over the pest outbreaks and requested FAO to strengthen its technical assistance activities in the areas of surveillance and control. In view of these considerations, UNDP agreed to finance a one-year interregional project entitled Programme of Action for Improved Plant Protection (INT/87/019) with a modest contribution of $545,000. The project became operational in October 1987 and is being implemented by FAO.

9. This project has been designed to intensify co-operative efforts between donor agencies and affected countries to provide co-ordinated support to the strengthening of national and regional plant protection services and for the control of locusts and other migrating pests on a medium- and long-term basis. FAO has prepared specific proposals at country/regional levels for financing from donor agencies including UNDP. Meanwhile, the outbreak of locusts and grasshoppers, which began in 1986 and appeared to recede in mid-1987, has broken out again.

10. A number of factors have caused the resurgence of locusts, a resurgence which has now consolidated and is expanding. These are: unexpectedly heavy rains in the usually arid regions, contributing to the growth of desert vegetation and rapid multiplication of insect populations; avoidance of the application of effective but highly toxic insecticides; and inaccessibility of certain regions for spraying applications because of political conflicts. In October 1987, important swarms
escaped from Chad and invaded Morocco, where control measures were attempted. Another wave of swarms reached Northern Mauritania and the western Sahara in November 1987 and went through two generations. In March 1988, new swarms invaded Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya. Major control operations were undertaken against swarms but laying occurred on a large-scale in April; hatching has started but is now being controlled. Escapes of the new generation are probable and will move south in May/June towards the monsoon breeding zone in the Sahelian countries. Other swarms already moved south in late March and April and invaded southern Mauritania, Cape Verde, Senegal, Gambia, Mali and Niger. In late April/early May, many swarms were reported in Western Libya and the Western desert of Egypt. Other swarms coming from the Egypto-Sudan breeding area along the Red Sea also invaded northern Saudi Arabia in late April.

11. A major plague is therefore well-established, at least in west Africa. It is expected to last for two years. This plague is threatening all crops and is likely to extend to the Near East and South West Asia. Although the rapid destruction of all swarms is not possible, an overall interregional approach is needed in order to assist in the surveillance of swarms, ensuring rapid exchange of information and assisting Governments and regional organizations in protecting crops. Following an urgent appeal by FAO, several bilateral and multilateral donors are presently assisting a number of countries in the control of locusts through the provision of technical personnel, aircraft, pesticides and spraying equipment. While some of this assistance is going to north African countries, a great deal needs to be done for countries in West Africa.

12. In line with the cooperation being extended to the current emergency situation by a number of donors, FAO has approached UNDP for assistance. In consultation with all bureaux concerned at UNDP headquarters, it has been agreed with FAO that UNDP intends to make a financial contribution of $3.3 million, to be used for purposes outlined in the following paragraph.

II. SCOPE OF UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME ASSISTANCE

13. The main objective of UNDP assistance, with funds to be made available from the Special Programme Resources (SPR), is to supplement financial assistance being mobilized from other donors in order to contain the current outbreak of locusts through effective control operations and the provision of experienced specialists, equipment and supplies required in countries affected by the locust outbreak. UNDP will provide for:

(a) Short-term consultants to assist in surveillance and control measures;

(b) Radio communication and other items of equipment, including costs of spare parts and repairs;

(c) Facilitating the acquisition, analysis and distribution of satellite imagery to the countries and agencies concerned;
(d) Training country personnel in the use of specialized types of spraying equipment as well as aerial application;

(e) Organizing country/regional research studies, planning meetings to develop appropriate strategies in desert locust control and to strengthen national locust units in the countries concerned;

(f) Local operating costs for locust control teams not covered by other donor agencies; and

(g) Preparing detailed plans of action for medium- and long-term control of desert locusts.

UNDP assistance will cover the following components:

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<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>United States dollars</th>
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<tr>
<td>Technical assistance (short-term consultants and support staff and travel</td>
<td>1,200,000</td>
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<td>and local costs)</td>
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<td>Replacement of radios and essential items of field equipment, including</td>
<td>445,000</td>
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<td>protective clothing and spare parts not provided by other donors</td>
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<td>Communications and satellite imagery</td>
<td>300,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO/World Meteorological Organization (WHO) collaboration for provision of</td>
<td>30,000</td>
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<td>weather data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meetings and workshops</td>
<td>255,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>230,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local operating costs (supplies and materials not provided by other donors)</td>
<td>400,000</td>
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<td>Reports</td>
<td>80,000</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,940,000</strong></td>
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14. The proposed UNDP assistance will be concentrated mostly in the field at country, subregional, regional and interregional levels. At the country level, the following countries will be covered: North Africa - Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Sudan; West Africa - Mauritania, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, Mali, Chad, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Senegal. UNDP assistance will be closely co-ordinated by the support being provided by a number of bilateral and multilateral agencies. At a workshop scheduled at Nouakchott (Mauritania) towards the end of June 1988, representatives from affected countries, bilateral agencies...
and multilateral agencies, including UNDP, will discuss the present status of the control measures and strategies for action in the immediate future. This workshop will also include an officer from WMO, which has offered its assistance in the provision of meteorological data (rainfall, wind direction and temperature) relevant to the control of locusts. WMO believes that completely automated solar-powered weather stations could be set up at different locations and served by the European Satellite Service. Bilateral donor support is expected in setting up these facilities in co-operation with WMO. Based on the recommendations of this workshop and the overall support to be provided by donor agencies, a detailed draft project document covering the UNDP contribution to this project will be prepared and submitted to UNDP for its consideration.

15. The activities of the project will be carried out in co-operation with UNDP and FAO field offices in the countries concerned, in the international donor community, in bilateral and multilateral agencies, including EEC and the World Bank, and in regional and national institutions. During the course of the project, the meetings and workshops will prepare specific plans and strategies for the control of locusts and other migratory pests. At FAO headquarters, the services of a co-ordinator currently being provided by FAO through its own resources under the project entitled Programme of Action for Improved Plant Protection (INT/87/019) will be continued and assisted by secretarial and administrative staff for the project. FAO will set up co-operative arrangements with the donors and recipients to advise on the execution of the project and to ensure further support for the project activities. Furthermore, activities initiated under this programme will continue to be pursued under the FAO Co-operative Action for Plant Health, as well as funds expected under the Emergency Control Locust Operation. Co-ordination at the field level will be assumed by two senior consultants, one in north Africa and one in west Africa.

16. UNDP will keep under its direct control a sum of $360,000, which will be used for the following purposes:

(a) Monitoring progress of project activities through periodic reviews at country/regional and international levels to be carried out by independent consultants appointed by UNDP in consultation with FAO;

(b) Mid-project and end-of-project evaluations;

(c) Convening a meeting for the heads of States or the Prime Ministers of the countries affected to emphasize the importance of giving high priority to strengthen national plant protection services as well as the provision of required support to subregional organizations; and

(d) Organizing an expert panel to investigate the feasibility of developing a research programme designed to adopt biological control methods and to minimize the use of pesticides with long-term toxic residual effects on the environment.
III. RECOMMENDATION OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

17. In view of the serious situation created by the outbreak of desert locusts which, if unchecked, can cause devastating crop losses in several countries, the Administrator recommends that the Governing Council approve the emergency assistance to meet short and intermediate needs for desert locust control, at a total cost of $3.3 million, to be funded under the Special Programme Resources, bearing in mind that disbursements will be subject to the availability of resources.