

Eritrea controls new Desert Locust invasion



Ministry of Agriculture

Desert locust that crossed the border and swarmed in the Daklak Islands of Eritrea has been put under control by the Ministry of Agriculture in cooperation with members of the Eritrean Naval Force and others before it inflicted damage on agricultural activities and grazing area.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture branch in the Northern Red Sea region, the locust swarm that was detected in the administration areas of Selit, Nora, Jemhile and Dehil was put under control immediately after its prevalence was reported.

The branch office also reported that the experience gained over the past incidences in controlling the invasion of the desert locust swarm is significantly contributing in the effort. He also said that enough preparation has been put in place both in human resources, pesticides and spray equipment.

Noting that the role of the Eritrean Naval Force has been crucial in controlling the locust swarm, Lt. Colonel Yemane Gebremariam, Commander of the Northern Command at the Eritrean Naval Force, expressed readiness to carry out continuous observation in the uninhabited islands in cooperation with fishermen.

In related developments, a new desert locust invasion that appeared on February 21, 2020 covering around 400 hectares of land in the Northern Red Sea Region was put under control from February 24-26, 2020 with the

collaboration of the Ministry of Agriculture experts, the Military in the area and regional administration staff.

This newsletter interviewed coordinators of this successful control operation and their opinions are as follows.



Mr. Dawit Angesom, Head of Ministry of Agriculture Branch in Massawa Sub-Zone and a member of the coordinating team said, “We got information from the people around Mai-chew, Demas administrative area that a new locust invasion appeared in their vicinity on February 21. Then, instantly, a survey team was deployed to assess the exact whereabouts and size of the locust swarm. After all the necessary preparations, we along with the Military around us started control operations at 2 AM on 24 February. This operation was conducted with manual and motorized sprayers because the area was not suitable to deploy sprayer mounted vehicles.”

According to Mr. Dawit, some part of the swarm fled to Yangus area. There, it was relatively possible to support the man-powered spraying operation with sprayer-mounted vehicles. Finally, on February 26, the operation was concluded successfully without any harm to crops.

Mr. Ghidey Kiflay, also a member of the operation coordinating team, disclosed that the operation was just part of the ongoing locust control measures that started from July 2019 and affirmed the readiness of experts to control any new swarms that might come in the future.

Mr. Amanuel Kidane, member of the Army in the Northern Red Sea Region and one of the coordinators of the control operations informed this newsletter that thanks to the experience gained from participating in last year's desert locust control activities, all the military personnel around are now capable of protecting the land from locust infestation.

“After we got the information from the Ministry of Agriculture experts, we quickly organized our members in to different teams. Then we took the necessary spraying equipment from the Ministry and directly started our long journey to the rugged valleys and mountains. The spraying process started at exactly 2 a.m.” Mr. Amanuel explained.

According to his information, working during night-time was really challenging but thanks to the usual dedication of the military, the operation was concluded in just few days.

Based on a report from the Migratory Pests Control Unit, during the few control operation days, 11 experts, 700 people, four sprayer-mounted vehicles, seven survey and transport vehicles, water trucks, 30 motorized sprayers and six manual sprayers were deployed.

Moreover, a new mature adult locust swarm that appeared in the same region on February 29th and covered around 200 hectares of land was put under control on March 3rd around Emberemi area by four sprayer-mounted vehicles.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Agriculture conducted a preliminary trial to harvest desert locust hoppers in the Northern Red Sea Region on February 26th 2020.

According to Mr. Huruy Asghedom, Director General of the Agricultural Extension Department, the objective of the preliminary trial was to test the capacity of vacuum suckers in harvesting locusts.

The trial was found to be successful with minor amendments to adjust the size of the suckers according the stages of the locusts to be harvested.

Mr. Huruy when outlining the broad objective of harvesting locusts said that “Many countries are using different ways and technologies to use locusts for human consumption and animal feed. Therefore, it is timely and important to introduce locust harvesting and other similar environment-smart technologies to make the best use of locusts.”

Mr. Kaleab Haile, Agro-chemical Regulatory Unit Head, on his part said that continuous application of pesticides is not good for the environment as well as for human and livestock safety. “Therefore”, he said, “Such technologies have positive impact in safeguarding the health of human, animal and the environment.