



FAO and Somaliland Government Open New Desert Locust Monitoring and Pest Control Centre in Hargeisa

The centre will build local capacity to manage Desert Locusts in the future

8 February 2023, Hargeisa – His Excellency, the Vice President of Somaliland, and Mr. Ezana Kassa, Head of Programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) have officially opened the first Pest Control Centre in Somaliland. The centre, which is based in Hargeisa, will act as Desert Locust Early Warning and Control base.

The construction of the centre was implemented by FAO and generously funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through two projects in support of the Desert Locust emergency response to mitigate impacts of Desert Locusts on food security and livelihoods in Somaliland. The two resource partners have been supporting Desert Locust survey and control activities as well as supporting the livelihoods of communities affected by the Desert Locust upsurge.

The worst Desert Locust crisis in decades hit the Greater Horn of Africa in late 2019, where tens of thousands of hectares of cropland and pasture have been damaged. The invasion had severe consequences for agriculture-based livelihoods in contexts where food security is already affected by recurrent climate shocks such as droughts and floods.

In Somaliland, where vast majority of people depend on agriculture and livestock for their livelihoods, recurrent drought and floods have resulted in significant impacts on household food security, and the desert locust crisis exacerbated the crisis, threatening the livelihoods of rural families.

The opening of the centre was commissioned by His Excellency Abdirahman Abdallahi Ismail Saylici, Vice President of Somaliland and the Hon. Eng. Abdikadir Iman Warsame, Minister of Agricultural Development. Also present at the ceremony were FAO's Head of Programme, Mr. Ezana Kassa, Dr. Ahmed Adan Ahmed, Minister of Planning and National Development and Hon. Abdirisq Hussein Albaani, Minister of Endowment and Religious Affairs.

"We thank all those who made this possible, particularly FAO, the donors who funded these projects and the Ministry of Agricultural Development," said His Excellency Abdirahman Saylici, Vice President of Somaliland, at the official opening of the Centre. He added that the centre is an important facility to battle food insecurity, a threat that has increased in part due to Desert Locusts that can have a negative effect on productivity.

Collaboration Efforts by FAO and the Somaliland Government



FAO had been progressively working with the Government of Somaliland to not only control the 2019 – 2021 upsurge but also to build the capacity of the government to quickly respond to and manage future upsurges in a timely manner. The choice of Hargeisa hosting this important facility was informed by the fact that the hinterland of Somaliland extending from Zeylac to Berbera is some of the most ideal breeding grounds in the Horn of Africa and is regularly invaded by mature Locust swarms from the Arabian Peninsula.

Early action taken in Somaliland will definitely be a game changer and will help to prevent future upsurges and protect the livelihoods of millions of vulnerable communities in the whole Eastern Africa region. The newly established centre continues that collaborative effort, helping the Somaliland government to lead in management of the crisis, and ensuring they are better prepared for such challenges in the future.

Strengthening food security by managing threats to livelihoods

Somaliland has made huge gains in suppressing one of the largest desert locust upsurges in living memory. Facilities such as these will help with any resurgence that climatic conditions might trigger – and surveillance and control operations must be maintained at scale, with government taking the leading role.

“FAO has always been aware of the important role Somaliland has played in the Global Early Warning System for Desert Locusts, not only to secure the livelihoods of those who might be affected in Somaliland but also in preventing the spread of the Desert Locust spreads to other parts of the Horn of Africa and beyond,” said Ezana Kassa, FAO’s Head of Programme.

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