

# EAST AFRICA - DESERT LOCUST CRISIS

FACT SHEET #4, FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2020

JUNE 15, 2020

## NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

**9**

Countries Affected in East Africa<sup>2</sup>  
FAO – May 2020

**26.2**  
**million**

People Already Experiencing Severe Acute Food Insecurity in Affected Countries<sup>3</sup>  
FAO and FEWS NET – April 2020

**4.2**  
**million**

Acres of Land Targeted for Rapid Surveillance and Control Measures  
FAO – May 2020

**\$231.6**  
**million**

Regional Response Funding Appeal  
FAO – May 2020

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Swarm formation imminent in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia as regional harvests begin
- Desert locusts could cause up to \$8.5 billion in damages and losses by the end of 2020
- FAO requests additional \$78.4 million to sustain locust surveillance and control activities in 10 countries through December

## HUMANITARIAN FUNDING

FOR THE DESERT LOCUST RESPONSE IN FY 2020

USAID/BHA <sup>1</sup>	\$19,568,232
USAID/Uganda	\$134,862
<b>\$19,703,094</b>	

## KEY DEVELOPMENTS

- The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) continues to emphasize the need to maintain surveillance and control operations in countries affected by desert locusts in the coming months, warning that the current upsurge could develop into a plague—the highest of three FAO levels classifying the scale of locust infestations—by the end of 2020 if infestations are not adequately controlled. The UN agency projects that breeding will continue in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia in the coming months, with infestations extending further into additional areas of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan. New swarms from the Arabian Peninsula—including from Yemen, where conflict and coronavirus disease (COVID-19) restrictions are hampering effective surveillance and control efforts—may also invade Ethiopia, Somalia, and other countries in East Africa by crossing the Gulf of Aden or the Red Sea.
- In anticipation of increased breeding and additional invasions into East Africa, FAO issued a revised regional desert locust response plan on May 21, requesting an additional \$78.4 million to sustain locust surveillance and control interventions in 10 countries through December. The requested funding—which brings the total support requested by the UN agency to \$231.6 million since March—will enable FAO to purchase additional pesticides and extend contracts for aircraft and flight crews conducting response activities. In addition, the funds will support FAO to provide livelihoods assistance for up to 1 million people in locust-affected communities; however, the UN notes that heavy flooding, as well as the effects of restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, will compound the socio-economic impact of locust infestations, likely resulting in increased food and livelihood needs in affected areas in the coming months.

<sup>1</sup> USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)

<sup>2</sup> Figure includes East African countries included in FAO's regional response plan and addendum, as of late May: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, and Tanzania.

<sup>3</sup> Figure reflects combined estimates of populations in Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda currently experiencing Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) 3—Crisis—or higher levels of acute food insecurity. The IPC is a standardized tool that aims to classify the severity and magnitude of acute food insecurity. The IPC scale, which is comparable across countries, ranges from Minimal—IPC 1—to Catastrophe—IPC 5. IPC data are not currently available for Djibouti or Eritrea.

## LOCUST LOCATIONS AND SWARM MOVEMENT

- Despite ongoing control efforts, humanitarian actors remain concerned regarding the desert locust situation in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, with FAO noting the continued risk of the current upsurge developing into a plague by the end of 2020. Bands of hoppers—immature, wingless locusts—have formed in all three countries, and will begin developing into immature swarms in the coming days. The new swarms are projected to spread to previously unaffected parts of Ethiopia, reaching as far as the country’s northern highlands in July. Infestations will likely also extend further into additional areas of Djibouti, Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan during June, according to FAO.
- Relief actors are also concerned that unmitigated breeding in Yemen—where conflict and COVID-19-related restrictions are hindering efforts to scale up surveillance and control interventions—could amplify the scale of the current upsurge. Breeding is underway along the southern coast and in the interior of Yemen, and subsequent swarms could invade Ethiopia and Somalia or travel east into India and Pakistan, depending on wind patterns. Swarms from Saudi Arabia could also invade areas located along the western Red Sea coast in the coming months, FAO reports.
- The second generation of locusts is emerging as the March-to-May long rains season ends in northwestern Kenya. Rainfall typically supports locust breeding and growth by contributing to vegetation growth and producing ideal wet conditions, encouraging locusts to remain and lay eggs in expanses of moist, sandy soil. Without additional rains, locusts are unlikely to remain in Kenya for a third generation of breeding, according to FAO. Instead, aided by prevailing winds, swarms will reinvade adjacent parts of Ethiopia, moving into the Rift Valley and continuing on to Ethiopia’s Afar, Amhara, Dire Dawa, and Tigray regions, where recent rainfall and subsequent flooding have produced suitable breeding conditions. Other swarms are also expected to traverse South Sudan and enter southern Sudan’s summer breeding areas in the coming weeks.
- Seasonal rains have commenced in breeding areas in southern Sudan, near the South Sudan border; if the rains continue, locusts are likely to remain, mature, and lay eggs in Sudan. However, if rains are limited, resulting in drier conditions, swarms could migrate westward to Chad in late June, potentially reaching as far as southeast Mauritania by mid-July. Given that the rains are expected to continue to in the coming weeks, the risk of desert locusts proliferating throughout West Africa is low; FAO and other response actors are monitoring the locust situation in the region closely, though the situation remained calm as of mid-June.
- Meanwhile, desert locusts continue to invade South Sudan through neighboring countries, with several swarms from Kenya and Uganda arriving in South Sudan’s Eastern Equatoria State in May, FAO reports. Depending on wind patterns, additional swarms from Kenya could invade northeastern Uganda and spread to South Sudan in the coming weeks. Some swarms from Kenya are also likely to travel through parts of South Sudan’s Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Unity states while en route to Sudan during June. USAID/BHA staff based in South Sudan’s capital city of Juba continue to coordinate with FAO to track locust activity in and around South Sudan.

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## FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS

- Desert locusts have continued to damage vital pastureland in affected areas of East Africa in recent months, adversely impacting the livelihoods of pastoral populations in eastern Ethiopia and northern Somalia in particular, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). Additionally, the formation of new, immature swarms—the stage when locusts are most voracious and mobile—coincides with the beginning of the harvest season in parts of the region, further threatening food security and livelihoods in affected areas. Effective control measures are critical for safeguarding crops as the *belg* harvest in Ethiopia and first season harvests in parts of South Sudan begin in June, as well as preventing damage during the anticipated *gu* harvest in Somalia in July and long rains maize harvests in eastern and northern Kenya in July and August. Unless infestations in East Africa and Yemen are adequately contained, damages and losses caused by the pests could reach up to an estimated \$8.5 billion by the end of 2020, the World Bank reports; Ethiopia will be most affected, with potential losses valued at up to \$2.8 billion.
- Despite favorable rainfall in recent weeks, farmers in Ethiopia reported diminished planting activities, with a below-average area of crops planted compared to previous April-to-June *belg* seasons, according to FEWS NET; the reduction

is partially due to distribution delays of critical agricultural inputs—such as fertilizer, seeds, and tools—associated with COVID-19 restrictions. Decreased planted area—coupled with the impact of desert locust infestations in southern and southwestern parts of the country, as well as a late start to the planting season—will likely result in below-average agricultural production in Ethiopia. Given the anticipated below-average *belg* harvest, upcoming dry season in Somali Region, pasture losses associated with locust infestations, and the ongoing lean season in areas heavily dependent on the October-to-December *Meher* harvests, FEWS NET expects food assistance needs in Ethiopia to peak between June and September. During this period, conditions in most areas of eastern, northern, and southern Ethiopia are likely to deteriorate to Crisis—IPC 3—levels, with the largest population facing Crisis levels of acute food insecurity anticipated in the eastern part of the country.

- FEWS NET expects locusts to cause significant damage to cereal crops in agro-pastoral areas of northwestern Somalia during June, and notes that the pests could impact the *gu* harvest if infestations spread to southern areas of the country in July. Above-average rainfall has regenerated vegetation in northern and central Somalia; however, FEWS NET anticipates food security conditions will deteriorate in many northern and central parts of the country—as well as some riverine areas and parts of Bakool and Bay regions—during the July-to-September dry season due to locust-related damage, the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, and crop damage associated with heavy flooding during the April-to-June *gu* rains. Locust- and flood-related damage alone may reduce agricultural yields in Somalia by 10 to 15 percent compared to the long-term average, FAO reports. In the absence of sustained, large-scale humanitarian assistance, up to 3.5 million people across Somalia could face Crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity in the coming months, according to FEWS NET.
- Based on preliminary assessments, FAO estimates that locusts could devour up to 20 percent—approximately 40,000 metric tons—of crops in affected areas of South Sudan, an amount sufficient to feed approximately 278,000 people for one year. Households in the country are already facing limited food access due to the impact of COVID-19 mitigation measures, unusually heavy flooding in late 2019, ongoing conflict, poor macroeconomic conditions, and high food prices. The number of households experiencing Emergency—IPC 4—levels of acute food insecurity is expected to increase during the peak of the July-to-August lean season, when food is most scarce, according to FEWS NET; some populations—including internally displaced persons, flood-affected households, and populations dependent on daily wage labor for income—could face Catastrophe—IPC 5—conditions during this period.
- An atypically high number of households in Kenya likely experienced Stressed—IPC 2—or Crisis conditions in May, according to FEWS NET. COVID-19-related restrictions on movement and economic activity in urban areas, recent flooding, local market closures, and elevated food prices due to COVID-19-related supply chain disruptions were among the factors that have undermined food security and livelihoods across the country in recent months, as locust-related damage to crops and rangeland in central and northwestern Kenya—where hopper bands and mature swarms are present—remains localized. Although insecurity is limiting control efforts in some areas along the Kenya–Somalia border, FEWS NET anticipates that ongoing aerial and ground interventions will continue to mitigate widespread damage in locust-affected areas.

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## **SURVEILLANCE AND PEST CONTROL**

- Although swarm formation is imminent in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, surveillance capacity continues to require strengthening in all three countries, particularly in southern parts of Somalia, where insecurity is restricting efforts to collect data to determine if breeding is ongoing. Additionally, locusts continue to hatch and multiply in parts of Ethiopia and Somalia at a faster rate than initially expected due to above-average rainfall in recent weeks, with some locusts emerging in areas where control operations are not yet underway. To increase ground surveillance capacity and support timely and efficient locust control operations in locust-affected areas, USAID/BHA staff continue to engage with implementing partners, other donors, and host country governments to promote the use of eLocust3M, a mobile application that collects and transmits data on locust swarm locations and stages in real-time via satellite from the field to national locust centers. The application had more than 100 registered users from national and international non-

governmental organizations in Kenya as of early June; FAO is also supporting trainings to increase usage across Ethiopia and Somalia.

- FAO has underscored that successful control measures in Somalia are critical to prevent swarms from central, northern, and southern areas of the country from crossing into the Arabian Peninsula and eventually invading India and Pakistan in the coming months. While supplies of spraying equipment and biopesticides are sufficient to support control operations in Somalia through December, the UN agency has expressed concern about local capacity to support the rapid scale-up of operations across a wider territory. As of mid-May, USAID/BHA had supported the import of 22 vehicle-mounted sprayers, 18 knapsack sprayers, six vehicles, and 4,000 kilograms of biopesticides, among other critical supplies and equipment, to augment response efforts in Somalia.
- Separately, FAO is scaling up control operations in northwestern Kenya’s Turkana County—currently the epicenter of the country’s desert locust outbreak. The UN agency has deployed six surveillance vehicles, three pickup trucks mounted with sprayers, one helicopter, two airplanes outfitted for spraying, and one fixed wing aircraft to conduct surveillance operations along the Kenya–Uganda border. Approximately 200 members of Kenya’s National Youth Service are also traveling to Turkana to assist with the response. As of June 8, control teams had treated approximately 195,000 acres of nearly 274,000 acres of locust-infested land in Kenya.
- In addition, control efforts are ongoing in Uganda, with aerial spraying scheduled to begin in South Sudan following the conclusion of operations in Uganda. To bolster response capacity in Uganda, the USAID Mission in Kampala recently provided nearly \$134,900 in FY 2020 funding to support University of Greenwich-led trainings on locust monitoring, detection, and control—including the safe handling and use of pesticides—for Ugandan response personnel.
- USAID’s Bureau for Resilience and Food Security (USAID/RFS) also continues to support FAO and other stakeholders to strengthen locust monitoring and forecasting systems to enable a more effective response. Through the USAID/RFS-supported SERVIR project, response actors are utilizing data from the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to inform control operations, address survey collection gaps, and improve surveillance capacity. In addition, the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Air Resources Laboratory has developed a locust forecasting web application at the request of FAO; the application generates a graphic simulation of future swarm movements, based on weather and wind forecasts, which FAO uses to provide regular situation updates to the public.
- COVID-19-related movement and shipping restrictions continue to impact the desert locust response in several countries, FAO reports. For example, COVID-19-related restrictions have delayed planned operations in Sudan, with the Government of Sudan’s Plant Protection Department (PPD) unable to dispatch supplies and equipment as rapidly as planned; the PPD is typically granted special permissions to transport supplies and deploy expert scouting teams across state lines. COVID-19-related shipping restrictions have also delayed the delivery of approximately 30,000 liters of pesticides in Kenya. In South Sudan, cross-border and inter-state movement restrictions imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic delayed supply shipments and hampered some locust monitoring activities in May. However, agriculture and food security actors in South Sudan have continued to conduct surveillance of locust populations in recent weeks and began assessing the impact of the pests on crop production in early June.

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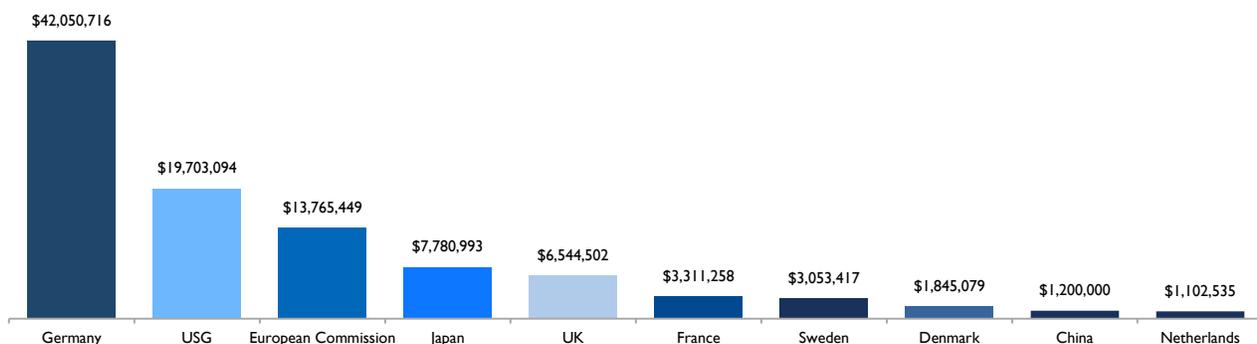
## **INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE**

- On May 21, FAO released a revised regional desert locust response plan, requesting a total of \$231.6 million to sustain surveillance, control, and livelihood interventions through December in 10 countries, including Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and Yemen. The appeal—which was revised due to increased breeding in affected countries, as well as in anticipation of additional invasions into East Africa from Yemen—represents a \$78.4 million, or 51 percent, increase from the initial appeal of \$153.2 million. The requested funds will support FAO to purchase additional pesticides, as well as extend contracts for aircraft and flight crews conducting surveillance and control operations, among other activities. Without additional funding, FAO will be unable to extend contracts for dual-purpose surveillance and control helicopters in Somalia beyond July. Similarly,

FAO expects resources for surveillance and control interventions will be depleted by mid-August and mid-September in Kenya and Ethiopia, respectively.

- Since locust infestations have spread farther than anticipated, additional funding is also required to effectively safeguard livelihoods in newly affected areas. Under the new appeal, FAO increased the number of people expected to require livelihood support due to the impact of locust infestations from 500,000 people to more than 1 million people. However, the UN notes that recent and projected flooding in many countries in East Africa, coupled with the effects of COVID-19-related restrictions, will further undermine livelihoods and food security, likely exacerbating needs among populations in the region in the coming months.
- To alleviate the impact of locust-related damage in affected countries, the World Bank approved a \$500 million Emergency Locust Response Plan (ELRP) on May 21. Through the ELRP, the World Bank will provide loans to support the scale-up of control interventions, including targeted spraying and training on the safe handling and use of pesticides for additional response personnel, among other activities. The financial investments will also support countries to strengthen surveillance and early warning systems, as well as provide livelihoods assistance—such as agricultural tools, fodder, and seeds—to rapidly restore crop and livestock production in locust-affected communities. The World Bank recently pledged an initial \$160 million to the governments of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda, and is negotiating loans with additional countries.

## 2020 HUMANITARIAN FUNDING\* PER DONOR



\*Funding figures are as June 15, 2020. All international figures are according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Financial Tracking Service and based on international commitments during 2020, while USG figures are according to the USG and reflect USG funding in FY 2020, which began on October 1, 2019.

## CONTEXT

- The desert locust is one of the most destructive migratory pests in the world, rapidly consuming most vegetation in its path, including crops and pastureland critical to maintaining the food security and livelihoods of populations in East Africa. Locust swarms are highly mobile and carried on the wind; swarms can travel up to 100 miles per day, and even a relatively small, 0.4 square mile-sized swarm can consume an amount of food sufficient for approximately 35,000 people in one day.
- Swarms of desert locusts crossed the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea from Yemen and entered Ethiopia and Somalia in June 2019. While desert locust infestations occur seasonally in parts of East Africa, above-average rainfall in the region from September to December 2019, as well as additional rains brought by Tropical Cyclone Pawan to eastern Somalia in early December, extended wet conditions conducive for breeding and generated abundant vegetation for the locusts to consume. Several successive generations of the pest formed multiple hopper bands and swarms of adult locusts, enabling several outbreaks to grow and develop into a regional upsurge, the second of three FAO levels classifying the scale of locust infestations, in late 2019.
- Between October and December 2019, locust swarms multiplied and traveled further west and south within Ethiopia and Somalia, arriving in Djibouti, Eritrea, and Kenya in December. New hopper bands formed along coastal plains in Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, and Yemen during the same period, with swarms beginning to threaten agricultural production and food security in rural areas of Sudan in January. Desert locusts also reached Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in February.
- Populations across East Africa continue to experience severe levels of acute food insecurity, sustained and exacerbated by recurrent drought, seasonal flooding, conflict, and displacement. As such, locust-related damage to crops and pasture could have devastating effects on the food security and livelihoods of households in the region.
- On November 18, 2019, U.S. Ambassador Michael A. Raynor declared a disaster due to the impact of desert locust infestations in Ethiopia. On February 19, 2020, U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Brian Neubert declared a disaster for desert locust-affected areas of Somalia, and on February 25, U.S. Ambassador Kyle McCarter issued a disaster declaration in Kenya due to the impacts of the pest across the country. U.S. Chargé d’Affaires Brian Shukan also declared a disaster due to the projected impact of uncontrolled infestations across Sudan on April 13.

### USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE EAST AFRICA DESERT LOCUST RESPONSE IN FY 2020<sup>1</sup>

IMPLEMENTING PARTNER	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	AMOUNT
<b>USAID/BHA</b>			
<b>ETHIOPIA</b>			
FAO	Agriculture and Food Security	Countrywide	\$7,800,000
<b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE ETHIOPIA RESPONSE IN FY 2020</b>			<b>\$7,800,000</b>
<b>KENYA</b>			
FAO	Agriculture and Food Security	Countrywide	\$4,000,000
<b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE KENYA RESPONSE IN FY 2020</b>			<b>\$4,000,000</b>
<b>SOMALIA</b>			
Implementing Partner	Agriculture and Food Security	Countrywide	\$7,000,000
<b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE SOMALIA RESPONSE IN FY 2020</b>			<b>\$7,000,000</b>
<b>SUDAN</b>			
FAO	Agriculture and Food Security	Countrywide	\$500,000
<b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE SUDAN RESPONSE IN FY 2020</b>			<b>\$500,000</b>

REGIONAL			
	Program Support	Regional	\$268,232
<b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE REGIONAL RESPONSE IN FY 2020</b>			<b>\$268,232</b>
<b>TOTAL USAID/BHA FUNDING FOR THE EAST AFRICA DESERT LOCUST RESPONSE IN FY 2020</b>			<b>\$19,568,232</b>
USAID/UGANDA			
UGANDA			
University of Greenwich – Natural Resources Institute	Agriculture and Food Security	Countrywide	\$134,862
<b>TOTAL USAID/UGANDA FUNDING FOR THE RESPONSE IN FY 2020</b>			<b>\$134,862</b>
<b>TOTAL USAID/UGANDA FUNDING FOR THE EAST AFRICA DESERT LOCUST RESPONSE IN FY 2020</b>			<b>\$134,862</b>
<b>TOTAL USG HUMANITARIAN FUNDING FOR THE EAST AFRICA DESERT LOCUST RESPONSE IN FY 2020</b>			<b>\$19,703,094</b>

<sup>1</sup> Year of funding indicates the date of commitment or obligation, not appropriation, of funds. Funding figures reflect publicly announced funding as of June 15, 2020.

## PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [www.interaction.org](http://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
  - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [www.cidi.org](http://www.cidi.org).
  - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at <http://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/working-crises-and-conflict/responding-times-crisis/where-we-work>