



REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE ANIMAL INDUSTRY & FISHERIES

MEDIA BRIEFING ON THE STATUS OF THE DESERT LOCUST INVASION IN UGANDA

AT UGANDA MEDIA CENTRE

BY:

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Colleagues from the Ministry of Agriculture, Office of the Prime Minister, Development Partners present

Members of the Media Fraternity present

Fellow Ugandans.

Good morning to you.

Background:

You may by now have heard from us and different media about the Desert Locust Invasion in Uganda; I would like to take this opportunity to shed some light on the background to this problem and where we are today as a country in terms of preparedness on this important subject.

Following changes in our climate across the globe, there have been cyclonic wind movements across the Indian Ocean resulting in heavy rains and as a result creating a conducive environment for massive breeding of the Desert Locust in their traditional breeding grounds – the Sahara Desert.

Consequently, large swarms of locusts from Yemen crossed into Africa through Somalia and Ethiopia and went into Kenya covering close to 30% of Kenya's vegetation cover. These are the worst affected areas on the Continent. Eritrea and Djibouti have large infestations as well now. Over the last week; swarms have been spotted crossing into Uganda and Tanzania.

State of Locust Invasion in Uganda:

1. Swarms of Locusts entered Uganda On February 9th, 2020 through Amudat and have now been sighted in 17 districts; Abim, Kaabong, Nakapiripirit, Amudat, Agago, Katakwi, Nabilatuk, Moroto, Napak, Kotido, Kole, Kitgum, Karenga, Kumi, Ngora, Soroti, Amuria and there are reports of sightings in Lango, Acholi and West Nile sub-regions. The existing

swarms have now been classified as mature adult locusts that may not have much longer to live after laying eggs

2. The swarms of locusts in Uganda continue to spread to other districts in the region and laying of eggs is expected to continue while other locust swarms are still invading Uganda from neighboring Kenya. It is worth noting that a female locust lays at least 300 eggs in one sitting and will lay eggs three times in its lifecycle. The nymphs and the immature adult Desert Locusts (mainly pink in colour) that will emerge after the first hatching are the most dangerous since they have a high need for food.
3. The existing swarms have not caused significant damage to our vegetation cover, however, there is an eminent threat to food security following a possible outbreak.
4. Locusts are herbivorous and feed on green vegetation. This means that whereas human beings and animals may be safe, the crops and grasslands on the other hand are at risk and so is everything depending on them for their livelihoods. This is largely because a locust swarm feeds on 100-160 tons of vegetation per day
5. Uganda has two major cropping seasons – March-June (Season A) and Sep-Dec (Season B) and this particular invasion is just after the last harvest and before the first cropping season. In the affected areas, vegetation, crops, grasslands and grain are vulnerable. The crops in the region most threatened include; sorghum, cassava, sweet potato, maize and millet.
6. The locust swarms have been laying eggs and should these eggs hatch, Uganda may be faced with an Outbreak. As a mitigation measure, Government of Uganda through the Ministry of Agriculture has adopted the following measures:
 - *Coordination of relevant stakeholders* from the respective Ministries, Departments and Agencies, Development Partners and all other stakeholders.

- *Enhanced Surveillance:*
 - Surveillance teams working hand in hand with the support of the UPDF in the region are assessing the travelling patterns of the first swarm to construct maps of sites where the eggs have been laid
 - This will enable the technical staff to survey and monitor the hotspots for any locust invasion.
 - While the spraying of the mature adult Desert Locusts is being carried out, these surveillance maps will be used to provide coordinates for the aircraft that will be used in the aerial spraying of the nymphs and immature locusts that will be hatched into the region in less than 2 weeks.
- *Procurement of appropriate equipment:* Leasing of aerial spraying aircrafts has been finalized, Pesticides, Protective gear, motorized pumps and knapsacks sprays have been procured and dispatched to the affected areas for ground control operations
- *Resource mobilization:* Government has mobilized resources from its treasury and various Development Partners to facilitate its Desert Locust Control Plan and this is how it has been spent so far:
 - Total Received: Ugx 22 Bn
 - Allocation:
 - 11.1 BN – Desert Locust Control Organization;
 - 3.6BN for Aircrafts leasing,
 - 0.3BN for UPDF Operations
 - 7BN – Chemicals, Logistics, Protective Gear, Pumps, Surveillance
- *Sensitization and Awareness* creation across different audiences: Through various community sensitization

- exercises, media interactions, policy maker engagements, public awareness on Desert Locusts has been heightened
- *Strengthening partnerships* with development partners within the region: Uganda now has three Desert Locust Experts to backstop the Desert Locust Control activities
 - *Capacity Building:*
 - Capacity Building of Trainers of Trainers of 50 Technical staff who have in turn conducted; continuous training of extension officers on identification, reporting and response when locusts are sighted
 - 1000 UPDF Officers have been trained on ground spraying and the exercise is still ongoing
 - The supporting experts from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Desert Locust Control Organization and National Agricultural Research Organization are still in the region undertaking refresher training of extension workers and surveillance teams from the Ministry of Agriculture and Districts in the region
7. While some of the teams in the area may have been seen burning bushes and chasing the adult Desert Locusts, awareness creation teams from the District and Ministry of Agriculture have been expanded and are now reaching more people with the following sets of information:
- a) the burning of bushes is hazardous to the environment in the area
 - b) chasing the adult Desert Locusts can make it more difficult for the Control Teams to fight them in massive swarms since they can easily separate into more swarms. This makes all means, including aerial spraying more difficult.

8. The two aircrafts for aerial spraying will be in the country before the first hatching and will be loaded with the pesticide needed in the aerial control of the Desert Locusts.

The Ministry of Agriculture Animal Industry and Fisheries pledges to keep the nation updated on the developments and progress made in the effort to avert a food crisis in the Country.

For GOD and my Country