

Rural Education & Economic Development Society (REEDS) Pakistan

Introduction: Chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority Lt Gen Mohammad Afzal, while briefing the diplomatic corps at the National Locust Control Centre (NLCC), said the locust problem is likely to peak in the next three to four weeks. "Next eight weeks between July 15 and Sept 15 would be critical because of monsoon and the government's ongoing commitment with anti-Covid-19 measures." Pakistan is on the locust migratory route and has both summer and spring breeding areas. Therefore, it is particularly prone to locust attacks and has over the years suffered several outbreaks.



Ministry of Food Security and Research Secretary Omar Hamid Khan said the swarms coming from the Horn of Africa could be 400 times more than those that came last year. Director General at the UN Division of the Foreign Office Farrukh Iqbal also warned that the situation was likely to worsen. "If steps are not taken, the situation would be a cause of concern not only for Pakistan but also for the region's food security," he said echoing FAO, which too has warned of growing threats to food security in South-West Asia. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1568081>

FARMER AWARENESS RAISING

Rickshaw and Mosque Announcement: Rickshaws and Mosque announcements were made for locust awareness benefitting a sum of 4500 audiences from all of the three target districts in local as well as national language. The people were made aware for first aid activities and were guided to report the information cell in case of locust attack. The awareness slogans used for announcement were designed by collaborating of Agriculture Extension Department.



A Raksha In the field announcing awareness slogans

Radio Awareness Program: Another awareness program was aired through Radio FM-105 from Sadiqabad for the people of Ghotki. Mr. Shahnawaz Shiekh (AED, Ghotki), Dr. Muhammad Yousaf Ali (Project Manager, Locusts Control Project, REEDS) and Dr. SanaUllah (Director, CRS, Ghotki) shared their expert opinions during this session. More than 5000 audiences in all 4 Radio programs were made aware of locust management in local as well as national language.



FM-105 awareness Program being aired

Awareness Walks: Awareness walks were conducted with support of Agriculture Extension Department and District Administration. More than 50 members from REEDS Agriculture Department, Pest Warning and District Government participated the walk holding banners and play cards with slogans to aware people how combat locusts attack. Females of all ages participated the awareness walk. Participant were holding play cards for control of locust.



Women participating in awareness walk

TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building of Farmers (Male & Female): Farmers were made aware of first aid practices in case of locusts attack by organizing group meetings (observing SOPs to control the spread of COVID-19), face to face personal meetings and conveying the messages about locust control & preventive measures through social media. To overcome the challenges being faced due to lock down as a precautionary measure of COVID-19 REEDS has taken a bold step of online meetings with its beneficiaries. Experts built the capacity of farmers about locust management by using online software like "go to meeting" on Android Cell phones. The cost for these online training was paid by REEDS for the benefit of farmer. This initiative was highly appreciated by various stakeholders and forums. REEDS is taking care of equal participation of female farmers in these capacity building programs for locust awareness. A sum of 4700 male & female beneficiaries were trained in above mention program.



Male & female farmers being aware by REEDS Team

PROGRESS SHARING MEETINGS

District Administration: Dr. Muhammad Yousaf Ali, Project Manager on behalf of REEDS is regularly participating progress and update sharing meeting about locust chaired by DC's of respective districts. Each stakeholder gives updates about available resources to combat locust.

Agriculture Department: Dr Muzafar Saeed, Program Manager, Networking & Co-ordination & Dr. Muhammad Yousaf Ali, Project Manager, REEDS conducted meetings with AEDs of Ghotki, RYK & Vehari for planning the management of locusts attack. Dr. Muhammad Yousaf Ali conducted surveillance surveys for locust attack in target districts with collaboration of Syed Burhan Uddin Shah, Additional Director, Pest Warning, RYK, Iqar Hussain Deputy Director AED RYK, Shahnawaz Sheikh Deputy Director AED Ghotki & Muhammad Sajid AED Vehari.



Dr. M. Yousaf Ali Project Manager REEDS during locust update meeting being chaired by DC, RYK

COORDINATION AND STRENGTHENING STAKEHOLDERS

Mock Exercise: REEDS conducted Mock exercise with the support of AED and district governments in Vehari and Rahim Yar Khan. These exercises will help to practice the use of machinery and train teams to combat attacks of locusts.

Inauguration of information cells: Already functional information cells which are being supported by REEDS at Vehari and Rahim Yar Khan were inaugurated by officials of district governments and AED in this month. These cells were receiving calls from farmers and other people for getting technical advice and support. During current period 7 calls in Vehari, 18 in RYK, 26 in Ghotki and 21 in REEDS information cells were received and concerned department have entertained their urgent needs.

Handing Over of machines & tools: REEDS handed over Engine operated spray machines, plunger machines, pesticide and protection kits & double filter spray man masks to district governments and agriculture extension departments of target districts.



Mock exercise being conducted



AC, HR, RYK during inauguration of locust information cell at DC Office RYK

RESEARCH TRIALS & KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Trial of Sound Producing Machine: REEDS has successfully conducted trials of sound producing machines to repel locust which revealed very promising results. No locust settled on the acre where the sound producing machine was running. Rohi Channel broadcasted the operation of sound machine and interview of Dr. Yousaf, REEDS and Syed Burhan Uddin, AD, PW, RYK working and efficiency of solar operated sound producing machine designed by REEDS in their daily NEWS Channel Rohi dated June 29, 2020.



Field trial of sound producing machine

NATIONAL INITIATIVES:

PM Imran Khan visits National Locust Control Center in Islamabad: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday has paid a visit to National Locust Control Center (NLCC) in Islamabad. According to details, Federal Ministers Syed Fakhar Imam, Mr. Asad Umar, Senator Shibli Faraz, Makhdoom Khusró Bakhtiar, Finance Advisor Dr. Abdul Hafeez Sheikh, Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, SAPM for Information & Broadcasting Lt. Gen. (R) Asim Saleem Bajwa, SAPM Dr. Shahbaz Gill, Chairman NDMA and senior officers attended the briefing. During the visit, the PM was informed that National Action Plan for Locust Control Phase-I has been completed. Engineer-in-Chief Pakistan Army / National Coordinator NLCC Lt Gen Moazzam Ijaz gave a detailed briefing on locust control measures in affected areas of the country.

SITUATION UPDATE

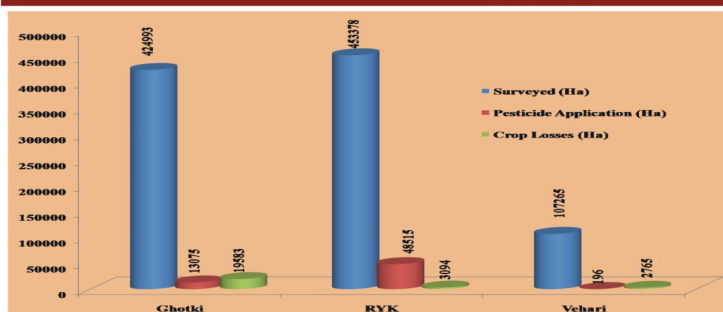


Figure: Total area surveyed, Total area sprayed and Total crop losses of target districts. Maximum area surveyed and Treated is for district RYK where as maximum crop losses were recorded in district Ghotki. The data is taken from NDMA and Agriculture department of these districts.

	Ghotki	RYK	Vehari
Surveyed (Ha)	424993	453378	107265
Pesticide Application (Ha)	13075	48515	196
Crop Losses (Ha)	19583	3094	2765

It has been reported by AED and NDMA that 424993 ha of Ghotki, 453378 ha of Rahim Yar Khan and 107265 ha of Vehari was surveyed. While 13075 ha of Ghotki, 48515 ha of RYK and only 196 ha of Vehari was sprayed against locusts by aerial method, ULV machines, plunger pump machines and engine operated machines. Locust in different attacks has damaged 19583 ha of Ghotki, 3094 ha of RYK and 2765 ha of Vehari till June 2020.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Farmer are the front liner locust damage: Muhammad Akram works every year to cultivate the land with cotton and expects better than the previous year because last year at the time of picking/harvest heavy rain fall destroyed its 60-70% cotton crop. However, Muhammad Akram and his two brothers weep over the current situation of the farmlands and the farmers who tend to it. While talking, he stated that 90 to 100 percent of their crops were either eaten or destroyed by the locust attacks. The stressed farmer explained that the locusts had attacked their fields not just once, but more than twice. Asked about the loss in terms of money Akram explained That there is no gain expected from this year as there were no crops left to sell. Akram also said that most of the farmers in district Rahim Yar Khan are only farmers and not the owners of the cultivated lands. Therefore, the situation is worry some, especially for the farmers who used to earn money only at this time in the whole year. I am thank ful to REEDS for a compulsion package (seed & fertilizer) against damage of 3 acrs of cotton crop and half achar of fodder.



Effective coordination is key to Success: Presiding over a weekly progress and updates sharing meeting about locust in June participants review the strategy for controlling locusts, the Deputy Commissioner Ghotki- Ltd (R) M. Khalid Saleem shared that the locust once again has begun attacking standing crops in Ghotki, raising alarm that if not addressed immediately, the problem would pose a threat to food security. He continued that he is seeking, the provision of aircraft, engine operated sprayers, and pesticides (lambda cyhalothrin) emulsified concentrate in sufficient quantities, besides human resources in the form of field teams, but still waiting and delay in provision of resources. However, we are grateful to REEDS-Pakistan for initiating "**Locust Control and Management project**" for the strengthening of District Administration and Agriculture Extension Department. No-doubt very happy for being supported by provision of Pesticides, Engine Operated Spray Machines, PPEs, Establishment & Maintenance of Locust Information Cell, Awareness raising of farmers and conduction of field activities like surveillance and combat operation along with conduction of research trials. He further added, nice to got report that successful combat operations over area of about 6100 ha and saving crops by limiting damage up-to 0-25% in treated area as well as REEDS support to affected farmers for compensation of damage crop although a very small number of farmers facilitated. Lastly, he concluded that District Administration is thankful to REEDS and Kerk in Actie (KIA) for their contribution in this difficult time and expecting the same in future as well for the betterment of the small farmers.





TODAY'S PAPER | JUNE 28, 2020

Efforts to combat locust attack

A Correspondent | June 28, 2020

RAHIM YAR KHAN: Damage of 3,344 acres of cotton, 2,117 acres of wheat, 2,004 acres of oilseed, 170 acres of orchards and 10 acres of fodder has been reported during recurrent locust attacks.

This has been reported by the Agriculture Extension Department RYK.

In response to national emergency declared by the prime minister, the Rural Education and Economic Development Society (REEDS) Pakistan has started a project for a nine months starting on April 1 in three districts of Punjab and Sindh to combat recurrent attacks of locusts, said REEDS head Shahid Salim on Saturday.

The project is launched with four main objectives including support to district government, awareness of farmers, research for locust control and compensation packages for affected.

To start the implementation of project, REEDS designed a tri-party MOU with district administration, agriculture extension department.

REEDS has established "Locust Information Cell" at Deputy Commissioner Office RYK to facilitate information collection. District Focal Person for Locust -- Assistant Commissioner HR and Coordination Riasat Ali, Deputy Director Agriculture Extension Iqbal Hussain, head research and education development program REEDS Dr Yousaf Ali and assistant director pest warning Syed Burhan Uddin Shah inaugurated the information cell.

PDMA team and REEDS officials handed over 163 shoulder mounted engine operated spray machines, 300 PPE face masks for spray man and an LED for information cell to district administration.

Riasat Ali and Iqbal Hussain told at this occasion that these machines will be very helpful to control locusts. In context to awareness raising of our stakeholders REEDS is conducting capacity building sessions of agriculture extension department and its own staff. They said that radio awareness programs, mosque announcements, van and rickshaw announcements and online training sessions will continue in the target districts.

REEDS has planned with collaboration of agriculture extension department and research department to conduct different trials like use of different colored lights at different intensities, use of sound producing machine, use of locusts in feed for poultry and fish, use of neem oil and identify different predator birds of locusts and evaluate the efficiency of these trials against locust.

Published in Dawn, June 28th, 2020

For more Information

Dr. Muhammad Yousaf Ali, Project Manager,
Project in Support of Preventive Desert Locust Control & Management in Sindh & Punjab,
REEDS Pakistan House No 1, Street No 1 Canal Park Rahim Yar Khan Pakistan
<https://www.facebook.com/reedsryk> E-Mail: redpm@reedpk.org,
Contact: +92-300-0963530