Situation update

- The current situation remains alarming in East Africa as swarms and hopper bands increase due to hatching of eggs laid earlier in Northern and Central Kenya and Southern Ethiopia. These new hoppers are forming swarms that could continue moving to Uganda and South Sudan in April and May. This represents an unprecedented threat to food security and as it coincides with the beginning of the main planting season.

- From 8 to 15 April 2020, swarms of Desert Locusts invaded Magwi, Torit, Ikotos, Budi, Lafon/Lopa counties in Eastern Equatoria. The swarm came from Uganda, and the movement aided by westerly winds. The locusts (mature and immature) were seen feeding on a range of vegetation, and caused serious damages to recently planted crops especially maize, sorghum and vegetables.

- Following report of Desert Locust invasion in Eastern Equatoria, on Friday 10 April the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) called for urgent meeting to discuss actions and response to the invasion.

Response

FAO and the MAFS continue to lead response to the Desert Locust outbreak by:

- **Surveillance and monitoring:** Since the first invasion in February, FAO and the MAFS put in place a monitoring and surveillance mechanism by training field monitors, including County Agriculture Department, County Crop Monitoring Committee Assistance to Affected Populations (AAP) and Food Security and Livelihood Cluster members to provide regular updates from affected areas. FAO is providing 15 motorcycles to support surveillance and monitoring at county level.

- **Impact Assessment:** The current invasion in Eastern Equatoria damaged an estimated 2000 ha of crops at vegetative state. At field level, the damage is estimated at 7-10 percent of leaf defoliation. If the invasion continues uncontrolled the area will experience significant reduction in production and subsequent increase in food insecurity.

- **Awareness creation:** FAO is sensitizing the population by airing awareness and educational messages on Radio Miraya and Eye Radio in English and Arabic. Messages in local languages are aired by local radio stations across the country.

- **Control:** FAO and MAFS secured and provided control equipment and chemicals, including 4 pickups, 500 knapsack sprayers, 200 personal protection equipment (PPE) in Eastern Equatoria, and 6,100 liters of ULV pesticide and of 1000 PPE in Juba. ULV sprayers are expected to arrive between 20 and 24 April.

A DLCO plane is ready for aerial spraying. AV-gas is under procurement and once delivered, the MAFS will take the matter to the High-Level Taskforce on COVID-19 for clearance.

Current situation (click to zoom)

Impact of COVID-19 on operations

There is need for the High-level Task Force to approve movement across borders and between states; give some flexibility on need for pilots to stay under mandatory quarantine of 14 days; and to provide quick clearance for AV-gas being procured from Kenya in order to support aerial operations in South Sudan.

Funding appeal

Desert Locust rapid response and anticipatory action stands at USD 10 million. So far, USD 6 million have been raised thanks to USAID, the European Union, France, Germany and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.