

Madagascar needs \$41mln to fight plague of locusts

March 26 2013



Children hunt for grasshoppers to eat using sticks, Ankilimalangy near the city of Betioky, Madagascar, March 14, 2013. Madagascar needs over \$41 million (32 million euros) to battle a locust plague as swarms of insects blot out the sky in the south of the island nation, the Food and Agricultural Organization said Tuesday.

Madagascar needs over \$41 million (32 million euros) to battle a locust plague as swarms of insects blot out the sky in the south of the island nation, the Food and Agricultural Organization said Tuesday.

The Rome-based organisation said in a statement that \$22 million of the emergency funds were needed by June as the crop-destroying insects threatened the [food security](#) of over half of the country's population.

"Currently, about half the country is infested by hoppers and flying swarms - each swarm made up of billions of plant-devouring insects," the UN organisation said.

The FAO warned the plague—declared a national disaster by the agriculture ministry in November last year—would affect about two-thirds of the country by September 2013 if no action was taken.

The Indian Ocean nation is already facing high rates of hunger and [malnutrition](#) in the poorest southern regions where the plague began, and their situation could significantly worsen as a result.

The FAO said 60 percent of the country's [rice production](#) was at risk and the [swarms](#) could also consume most green vegetation that might normally serve as pasture for livestock.

"Rice is the main staple in Madagascar, where 80 percent of the population lives on less than a dollar per day," read the statement.

The emergency funds needed by June would allow the FAO and agriculture ministry to launch a full-scale spraying campaign for the first year. The additional \$19 million was needed for a three-year strategy to combat the [locusts](#).

This would include large-scale aerial operations and the spraying of 1.5 million hectares in the first year, 500,000 in the second year and 150,000 in the third.

"Campaigns in past years were underfunded, and unfortunately it means

that not all locust infestations were controlled," said Monard Annie Monard, coordinator of the FAO locust response.

Dominique Burgeon, Director of the FAO Emergency and Rehabilitation Division, warned that failure to respond to the crisis would lead to "massive food aid requirements later on."

The national Locust Control Centre has treated only 30,000 hectares of farmland since the rainy season began last October, leaving some 100,000 hectares untreated due to limited capacity.

The situation was made worse by Cyclone Haruna in late February which damaged homes and crops and provided optimal conditions for one more generation of locusts to breed.

(c) 2013 AFP

Citation: Madagascar needs \$41mln to fight plague of locusts (2013, March 26) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-03-madagascar-41mln-plague-locusts.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
