

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, COOPERATION AND FARMERS WELFARE

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1491**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 20<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER, 2020

**INVASION OF DESERT LOCUSTS**

1491. SHRI P.C. GADDIGOUDAR:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण मंत्री be pleased to state;

- (a): whether the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the UN has issued a warning about the likelihood twin invasion of desert locusts in the country during the year;
- (b): if so, the details thereof;
- (c): whether the invasion of locusts would result in extensive damage of standing crops;
- (d): if so, the details thereof; and
- (e): the steps taken by the Government to assist the State Governments and the farming community to meet the upcoming challenges and if not, the reasons therefor?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS WELFARE

कृषि एवं किसान कल्याण मंत्री (SHRI NARENDRA SINGH TOMAR)

(a) & (b): Food and Agriculture Organization's Desert Locust Bulletin No. 499 (General situation during April 2020 and forecast until mid-June 2020) issued on 04<sup>th</sup> May, 2020, mentioned that "*a few swarms likely to reach Indo-Pakistan border area in early May followed by several waves of swarms later in May and June*". This year, however, the incursions of locust hoppers have been reported from 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 and thereafter from 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 swarms of pink immature adults made incursions and control operations were immediately started from 11<sup>th</sup> April, 2020 itself. It is pertinent to note that the FAO forecasting methods are largely based on the reports of national locust teams, satellite imagery and meteorological data.

(c) & (d): State Governments of Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Punjab and Bihar have reported no crop losses in their States. However, State Governments of Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand have reported crop damage of less than 33% in 6520 ha, 4400 ha, 806 ha, 488 ha and 267 ha respectively due to locust attack this year.

Initially during May-June, 2020, Government of Rajasthan reported crop damage of 33% and more due to locust attack in 2235 hectare area in Bikaner, 140 hectare in Hanumangarh and 1027 hectare area in Sri Ganganagar; but now, as per revised report, it has been stated that earlier submitted data was related to initial stage of crop sown in Kharif season and this area of crop loss has been re-sown by farmers.

Contd....2/-

(e): Government of India is working on the strengthening of ground & aerial spray capabilities, Human Resources, strengthening to States and farming community to meet the upcoming challenges. The major steps are-

- To strengthen locust control capabilities, additional 60 equipments were procured and presently 104 control teams with spray equipment mounted vehicles were utilized for ground control.
- More than 200 Central Government personnel were deployed in locust control operations.
- Drones were used for locust control for the first time in the world after finalizing protocols and one Bell 206-B3 helicopter was also used for locust control by aerial spraying.
- The Indian Air Force, Mi17 helicopter with customized aerial spray equipment was used for aerial spray.
- Government of India has issued a supply order of 5 CDA atomizer kits for aerial spray capabilities from a UK Based Company M/s Micron. These kits are to be delivered in October 2020 and will be fitted in Indian Air Force helicopters (as agreed by them) and will be used for aerial operations for control of desert locusts.
- Review meetings and VCs were organized with State Governments and locust control preparedness was strategized, capacity building and awareness campaigns were organized in districts, blocks and villages, advisories were issued, training programs and mock drills were conducted. When Covid-19 struck, awareness literature & videos were shared through virtual medium to orient both functionaries and farmers. Control rooms were established in Locust offices and District Headquarters. and WhatsApp groups were created in all affected States for real time exchange of information and coordination.
- Ministry of Home Affairs has included admissibility of hiring of vehicles, tractors with spray equipments for spraying of plant protection chemicals for pest control; hiring of water tankers; and purchase of plant protection chemicals for locust control under new norms of assistance under State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF). This has also facilitated the State in their locust control operations.
- Under Sub-mission on Agriculture Mechanization assistance of Rs. 2.86 crores for 800 tractors mounted spray equipments was sanctioned to Rajasthan. Under RKVY sanction of Rs. 14 crores for hiring of vehicles, tractors and for purchase of pesticides has also been issued.
- Gujarat States has been sanctioned Rs. 1.80 crores under RKVY for capacity enhancement for locust control.
- Under Sub-mission on Agriculture Mechanization assistance of 2.20 crore has been sanctioned for purchase of tractors and spray equipments for Uttar Pradesh.