

UN Warns Desert Locusts Spreading in East Africa

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"There is an unprecedented threat to food security and livelihoods in the region," the U.N. said.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) warned on Feb. 10 that desert locusts are spreading in East Africa, with new swarms likely to form in the coming months.

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"Breeding continues in the Horn of Africa, which will cause locusts to increase further in Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya with new swarms forming in March and April. Consequently, there is an unprecedented threat to food security and livelihoods in the region," the U.N. agency said in its latest update on the desert locust situation.

"Widespread hatching and band formation will occur in the coming weeks in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia. There remains a risk of a few small swarms appearing in northeast Uganda, southeast South Sudan and perhaps northern Tanzania."

Meanwhile, the U.N. agency's Director-General QU Dongyu said Wednesday that greater and faster action was needed to prevent a humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa, a region that is already extremely vulnerable.

Addressing donors and representatives from the affected countries in New York with the U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Mark Lowcock, Qu said that FAO has so far received around US\$22 million of the US\$76 million requested to assist the five countries initially impacted.

He expects needs to increase amid concern that the outbreak will continue to spread to other countries.

"It is clear that already vulnerable populations could easily be pushed into a major humanitarian crisis unless we act fast to protect their livelihoods," Qu said.

Desert locusts are considered the most destructive migratory pest in the world and a small swarm covering one square kilometer can swallow the same amount of food in one day as 35,000 people.