



Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare

## Union Agriculture Minister reviews Locust Control Operations at a high-level meeting

15 sprayers from UK to be procured within fortnight, followed by another 45

Drones to be deployed soon for spraying pesticides on tall trees and inaccessible places, helicopters to conduct aerial spray

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The Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar held a meeting here today with both the Ministers of State for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare, Shri Parshottam Rupala and Shri Kailash Choudhary and Secretary (DAC&FW) Shri Sanjay Agarwal to review the Locust Control Operations. Shri Tomar said the Government is concerned about the issue and is dealing urgently with the situation. The Centre is in close touch with the affected States and an Advisory has been issued. 15 sprayers will start arriving from Britain in the next 15 days. Besides, 45 more sprayers will be procured in a month or one-and-a-half months. Drones will be used to spray pesticides on tall trees and inaccessible places for effective control of locusts, while plans are afoot to deploy helicopters for aerial spray.



Shri Tomar said 11 Regional Control Rooms have been established and special contingents have been deployed along with additional manpower to check the spread of locusts. He assured the affected States will be allocated additional resources and financial aid if required.

The Secretary informed the Ministers that currently 21 micronair and 26 Ulvamast (47 spray equipment) in Locust Control Offices (LCOs) are being used for locust control and 200 officials are deployed. Beyond scheduled desert areas, temporary control camps have also been set up at Jaipur, Chittorgarh, Dausa in Rajasthan; Sheopur, Neemuch, Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh and Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh for locust control. Locust has been controlled in an area of about 50,468 hectares in 334 locations in Rajasthan, Punjab, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.

Ministry of Civil Aviation has approved “Conditional exemption to Government entity (DPPQS) for use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft System for anti-locust operations” on 21<sup>st</sup> May, 2020 and in accordance with this order, two firms have been finalized through tender for use of the drones for spray of pesticides for Locust control. Meanwhile, supply order for procurement of additional 55 vehicles has been placed to strengthen the control potential. Adequate stock of Pesticide is being maintained (53,000 litres Malathion) with Locust Control Organizations. Under Sub-mission on Agriculture Mechanization, assistance for 800 tractors mounted spray equipments has been sanctioned for Rajasthan costing Rs. 2.86 crores. Also, under RKVY sanction for hiring of vehicles, tractors and for purchase of pesticides has been issued for Rajasthan worth Rs. 14 crores. Under RKVY sanction for purchase of vehicles, spray equipments, safety uniform, android application and training has also been issued for Gujrat at a cost of

Rs. 1.80 crores.

The control work is in full swing in close coordination with State Agriculture Departments, Local Administration and BSF. Today, there is no information regarding entry of any new locust swarm from the Indo-Pak border areas, whereas, on 26.05.2020, a locust swarm entered from Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan and control operation is going on against these swarms. As on date, there are some active swarms of immature locusts in Barmer, Jodhpur, Nagaur, Bikaner, Suratgarh, Dausa districts of Rajasthan, Jhansi district of Uttar Pradesh and Rewa, Morena, Betul, Khandwa districts of Madhya Pradesh and Nagpur and Amravati districts of Maharashtra for which the control operations are in progress.

Locust control operations have been undertaken everyday in the morning hours with the help of control spray vehicles, tractor mounted sprayers and fire brigade vehicles under the supervision of concerned district authorities and officials of State Agriculture Department. The Rajasthan government has deployed 778 tractors and 50 fire brigade vehicles, Madhya Pradesh - 72 tractors and 38 fire brigade vehicles, Uttar Pradesh deployed 6 tractors and Punjab deployed 50 tractors and 6 fire brigade vehicles for locust control. Presently, pink swarms of immature adults are being reported in India which is very active and mobile and it is difficult to control them in one place; however, it takes require atleast 4 to 5 days of control at different locations for completely elimination of the locust population in one flock. Enough stock of pesticides is available with the locust control organization.

A committee under the chairmanship of the Additional Secretary of the Department has been constituted to procure services & goods for spraying insecticides through drones and airplanes.



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