

International Red Locust Control Organisation for Central and Southern Africa

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MIGRATORY PEST SITUATION DURING FEBRUARY 2026 AND FORECAST FOR MARCH TO MAY 2026

1. OVERVIEW

a. Red Locust (*Nomadacris septemfasciata* Serville)

Current Situation

The Red Locust (*Nomadacris septemfasciata*, Serville) situation in the International Red Locust for Central and Southern Africa (IRLCO-CSA) region remained relatively calm during the month. Hopper bands formation was expected in:

- **Malawi:** Lake Chiuta plains, Lake Chirwa plains, Mpatsanjoka Dambo
- **Tanzania:** Ikuu-Katavi plains, Malagarasi Basin, Rukwa Valley, Bahi Valley
- **Mozambique:** Buzi Gorongosa plains, Dimba plains
- **Zambia:** Western Province, Simalaha plains, Kafue Flats, Lukanga Swamps

- **Forecast:** Fledged locusts are expected to start coalescing and form concentrations eventually swarms, posing serious crop damage risks.
- **Critical Note:** Without timely surveillance and control, hoppers may fledge into swarms, threatening food security across the region.

b. African Migratory Locust (*Locusta migratoria migratoriodes* R & F.)

Current Situation

Significant populations of African Migratory Locust (*Locusta migratoria migratoriodes*) persisted in Simalaha Plains, Southern Province and some areas in Western Province, Zambia. Zimbabwe reported some populations in Matabeleland North and Mashonaland Central Provinces

Forecast: Continued risk of swarming if control measures are delayed.

d. African Armyworm (*Spodoptera exempta* Walker)

Current Situation: Outbreaks were reported Mozambique.

Forecast: Monitoring should continue, but risk remains low.

e. Fall Armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda* J.E. Smith)

Current Situation

Malawi: Fall Armyworm infestations affecting maize continued to be reported in all 8 Agriculture development Divisions. An estimated total area of 456,787 ha was reported to be infested by the pest during January 2026. Control was carried out on 66 % of the affected area using chemical pesticides and botanical extracts.

Tanzania: Fall armyworm infestations in Tanzania were reported in Dodoma, Manyara, Tanga Singida and Morogoro regions. A total area infested and sprayed was estimated at 17.815 ha.

Zimbabwe: Fall Armyworm infestations were reported in Masvingo Province. Control was carried by the affected farmers with technical support from the presidential scheme.

Mozambique: Fall Armyworm infestations were reported in Sofara Province. Control was carried by the affected farmers with technical support from the Ministry of Agriculture

Kenya: No infestations were reported

Forecast: Monitoring vigilance required, especially in maize-growing regions.

f. Quelea Birds (*Quelea quelea* L.)

Tanzania: Continued to be reported in Kilimanjaro, Manyara regions, attacking irrigated rice.

- **Control Measures:** DLCO spray aircraft and motorized sprayers deployed.

Zimbabwe: Reported attacking pearl millet and sorghum in Masvingo, Manicaland, Mashonaland Central and Matabeleland North

- **Control measures:** A total of 194,000 birds were controlled.

Kenya: Quelea birds outbreaks were reported in Bura and Hola Irrigation Schemes in Tana River County and West Kano Irrigation Scheme.

- **Forecast:** Localized outbreaks may persist in Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe; aerial and ground control should remain active.

Strategic Recommendations

1. **Resource Mobilization:** Immediate support to IRLCO-CSA and national ministries for surveillance and locust hopper control.
2. **Cross-Border Coordination:** Strengthen regional collaboration to prevent swarms escaping outbreak areas.
3. **Farmer Support:** Expand technical assistance for Fall Armyworm control in all Member States.
4. **Monitoring:** Maintain surveillance for Armyworms and *Quelea* bird outbreaks.

2. WEATHER

Most of the Red Locust outbreak areas received normal to above rainfall during the February 2026 signifies locusts breeding. (Table 1.).

Table 1. Rainfall (mm) Recorded during February 2026 at locations near Red Locust Outbreak Areas

LOCATION	COUNTRY	FEBRUARY 2026
Mafambisse (Buzi plain)	Mozambique	58.0
Gorongosa (Gorongosa plain)	Mozambique	55.0
Caia (Dimba plains)	Mozambique	36.0
Buzi	Mozambique	42.0
Dimba	Mozambique	40.0
Masenge (Wembere Plain)	Tanzania	2030.3
Kaliua (Malgarasi Plain)	Tanzania	407.6
Muze (Rukwa Valley)	Tanzania	208.6
Mpanda	Tanzania	N/A
Lifuwu (MpatsaNjoka Dambo)	Malawi	362.8
Ngokwe (Lake Chiuta plains)	Malawi	188.6
Khanda (Lake Chilwa plains)	Malawi	432.6
Namwala (Kafue Flats)	Zambia	66.4

N/A Not Available

3. RED LOCUST (*Nomadacris septemfasciata* Serville)

Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique

Red Locust hopper bands of various densities were likely to be present in Lake Chiuta plains, Mpatsanjoka Dambo in Malawi; Kafue Flats, Simalaha plains, Western Province, Lukanga swamps in Zambia; Iku-Katavi plains, Wembere plain, Bahi Valley, Malagarasi Basin, Rukwa Valley in Tanzania; Buzi Gorongosa, Dimba plains in Mozambique. With favourable weather conditions, hoppers will coalesce into big hopper bands, which may move to adjacent crop farms and cause substantial damage. Red Locust breeding in Lake Chirwa, Mpatsanjoka, Buzi, Malagarasi and

Wembere plains may have been negatively affected by flood water. It is critical to monitor all these outbreak areas to enable timely control and prevent crop damage.

4. AFRICAN MIGRATORY LOCUST (*Locusta migratoria migratoriodes*)

Zambia

All development stages of African Migratory Locust infestations were likely to be present in Western and Southern provinces during February 2026. Solitary AML were reported in Siavonga district. Ministry of Agriculture is still monitoring the situation. Low infestation of large grasshopper (*Cataloipus* spp.) was reported in Chavuma district of North western Province. Control was underway in the time of writing this report. The Ministry of Agriculture have intensified monitoring.

Zimbabwe

In February 2026, African Migratory locust infestations were reported by the farmers in Hwange District, Matabeleland North and Mt Darwin District, Mashonaland Central (Table 2.), attacking crops, and leading to significant losses in Zimbabwe. Ground control was carried out using cabaryl 85wp.

Table 2. Locusts' reports received In February

Province	district	site
Matabeleland North	Hwange	
Mashonaland Central	Muzarabani	Chiwenga and Hoya

6. TREE LOCUST (*Anacridium* spp.)

Tanzania and Kenya

There were no reports of Tree Locusts in Kenya and Tanzania during the month under review

7. FALL ARMYWORM (*Spodoptera frugiperda* J. E. Smith)

Malawi

Fall Armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda* J. E. Smith) infestations on rain-fed maize continued to be a problem in all eighty (8) Agriculture Development Divisions of Malawi (Lilongwe, Kasungu, Machinga, Mzuzu, Blantyre, Shire Valley Salima and Karonga ADD's). An estimated total area of 92,434 hectares across all ADD's were reported to be infested by the pest during February 2026. Control was carried out on 56,813 hectares which is 61 % of the affected area using chemical pesticides and botanical extracts

Zambia

Various infestation levels of Fall Armyworm on maize persisted in all 10 Provinces (Western, Central, Southern, North Western, Northern, Eastern, Copperbelt, Luapula, Lusaka and Muchinga Provinces) in Zambia. Control was carried out by the affected farmers with technical support from the Ministry of Agriculture, Zambia.

Tanzania

Fall armyworm infestations in Tanzania were reported in Manyara, Morogoro Simiyu and Lindi regions. A total area infested and sprayed was estimated at 14.500ha (Table 3). Control was carried out by the affected farmers with technical support from the Tanzania Plant Health and Pesticide Authority, Tanzania.

Table 3. Fall Armyworm Infestation in Tanzania

DATE	PLACE REPORTED		INFESTATION		CROP INFESTED	CONTROL METHOD	AMOUNT OF PESTICIDE USED	REMARKS
	REGION	DISTRICT	TOTAL AREA INFESTED (HA)	TOTAL AREA SPRAYED (HA)			LT	
28.02.2026	Manyara	Babati	1500	1500	Maize	Ground	1500	Control operation ongoing
28.02.2026	Manyara	Mbulu	2000	2000	Maize	Ground	2000	Control operation ongoing
28.02.2026	Morogoro	Gairo	2000	2000	Maize	Ground	2000	Control operation ongoing
28.02.2026	Morogoro	Ifakara	2000	2000	Maize	Ground	2000	Control operation ongoing
28.02.2026	Simiyu	Bariadi TC	1000	1000	Maize	Ground	1000	Control operation ongoing
28.02.2026	Lindi	Kilwa	1000	1000	Maize	Ground	1000	Control operation ongoing
28.02.2026	Lindi	Ruangwa	1000	1000	Maize	Ground	1000	Control operation ongoing
28.02.2026	Lindi	Lindi MC	1000	1000	Maize	Ground	1000	Control operation ongoing
28.02.2026	Lindi	Nachingwea	1000	1000	Maize	Ground	1000	Control operation ongoing
28.02.2026	Lindi	Mtama /Lindi rural	1000	1000	Maize	Ground	1000	Control operation ongoing
28.02.2026	Lindi	Liwale	1000	1000	Maize	Ground	1000	Control operation ongoing
TOTAL			14,500	14,500			14,500	

Zimbabwe

Fall Armyworm infestations were reported in Masvingo Province. Control was carried by the affected farmers with technical support from the presidential scheme.

Mozambique

Low infestation levels attacking maize were reported in Caia, Nhamatanda and Dondo districts. Control was carried by the affected farmers with technical support from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Kenya

There were no reports on Fall Armyworm infestations in Kenya. However, the pest may have been infested crops and pastures.

8. AFRICAN ARMYWORM (*Spodoptera exempta*, Walker)

Mozambique

Low infestations of African Armyworm on maize were reported and controlled in Buzi, Gorongosa and Caia districts in the Sofara Province, Mozambique.

There were no reports of African Armyworm attacking cereal crops from other Member State.

9. QUELEA BIRDS (*Quelea quelea* L)

Tanzania

During February 2026, Quelea birds were reported attacking rice in Same district of Kilimanjaro region and Simanjiro district in Manyara region. An estimated of 4.7 million birds on 4 roost sites covering an estimated total area of 40 ha were controlled using 85 L of Quelea Tox in Same district. In Manyara region, an estimated 2.5 million birds on 1 roost site covering a total area of 5 ha were controlled using 12 L of Quelea Tox. Controls were carried out using a DLCO spray aircraft and motorized sprayers.

Zimbabwe

Quelea bird were reported attacking pearl millet and sorghum in Masvingo, Manicaland, Mashonaland Central and Matabeleland North during February 2026 (Table 4). An estimated total of 194,000 birds were controlled.

Table 4. Quelea birds reports received In February 2026

PROVINCE	SITE	NUMBER OF BIRDS CONTROLLED	CROPS AFFECTED
Masvingo	Msaie and Sango Ranches (Save Valley Conservancy) Chiredzi ward 22 (Malipati) Chiredzi ward 15 Chiredzi ward 12 Chiredzi ward 20	147 000	Small grains
Manicaland	Chipinge	23900	
Mashonaland Central	Chiwenga (Muzarabani)	24 000	Small grains
Matabeleland north	Shangano (Hwange)	To be attended	Small grains

Kenya

Quelea birds outbreaks were reported in Mwea Irrigation Schemes in Karinyaga County during the month. The Directorate of Plant Protection and Food Safety in collaboration with affected County government carried out control operation. An estimated 8.5 million birds were sprayed with Quelea Tox.

10. FORECAST FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MARCH 2026**Red Locust**

- Hoppers are likely to have started fledging. Fledglings are expected to start coalescing and form swarms in all outbreak areas.
- IRLCO-CSA and Ministries of Agriculture need to carryout ground and aerial surveys
- Control operations need to be planned in areas with high locust densities.

African Migratory Locust

- All developmental stages of the African Migratory Locust are likely to be present in Western, Southern Provinces in Zambia; Matabeleland North and Mashonaland Central in Zimbabwe during the outlook period.
- Vigilant monitoring and control measures will be critical to avoid crop devastation

Preparedness: Ensure aerial and ground spraying capacity is ready for rapid deployment.

Appeal: Member States urged to provide financial support for timely surveys and control

Fall Armyworm & African Armyworm

- Outbreaks expected to persist in declining rate across most Member States
- Early warning systems must remain fully operational for rapid detection and response.

Quelea Birds

- Populations likely to increase.
- Threat to maturing small grains in Tanzania, Kenya, and Zimbabwe.
- Vigilant monitoring and prompt control interventions required.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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