

International Red Locust Control Organisation for Central and Southern Africa

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MIGRATORY PEST SITUATION DURING JANUARY 2026 AND FORECAST FOR FEBRUARY TO APRIL 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. Formation of hopper bands was expected in:

- **Malawi:** Lake Chiuta 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: Hopper bands expected to form, posing localized 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 and some areas in Western Province of 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: No outbreaks reported from any Member State.

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 and Kenya: No infestations were reported

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

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

Tanzania: Reported in Kilimanjaro, Manyara regions, attacking irrigated rice and wheat.

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

Zimbabwe: Reported in Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South and Masvingo.

- **Control measures were underway**

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 below-to-normal rainfall during the January 2026 signifies locusts breeding except Southern Province in Zambia where rains were above normal (Table 1.).

Table 1. Rainfall (mm) Recorded during December 2025 at locations near Red Locust Outbreak Areas

LOCATION	COUNTRY	JANUARY 2026
Mafambisse (Buzi plain)	Mozambique	92.0
Gorongosa (Gorongosa plain)	Mozambique	97.0
Caia (Dimba plains)	Mozambique	80.0
Buzi	Mozambique	111.0
Dimba	Mozambique	78.0
Masenge (Wembere Plain)	Tanzania	209.03
Kaliua (Malgarasi Plain)	Tanzania	41.78
Muze (Rukwa Valley)	Tanzania	23.24
Mpanda	Tanzania	N/A
Lifuwu (MpatsaNjoka Dambo)	Malawi	127.3
Ngokwe (Lake Chiuta plains)	Malawi	202.7
Khanda (Lake Chilwa plains)	Malawi	175.7
Namwala (Kafue Flats)	Zambia	N/A

N/A Not Available

3. RED LOCUST (*Nomadacris septemfasciata* Serville)

Zambia

Various densities of Red Locust hopper bands and African Migratory Locust were reported in Simalaha plains, Kafue flats, Kazungula district and western Province.

Kafue Flats.

i. Itezhi – tezhi District

An area estimated 14 hopper bands of Red Locust mixed with AML covering 42 ha were encountered in 117 ha ground surveyed. Approximately 5.25 ha of maize and 54 households were affected. Control was carried out with 200 lts of Chlorpyrifos using motorized sprayers.

ii. Namwala district

An estimated 64 ha was ground surveyed in Namwala district. A total of 54 households were affected by Red Locust mixed with AML hopper bands. Control was carried out with 140 L of Chlorpyrifos using motorized sprayers

Kazungula district

An estimated area of 100 ha was covered during the ground survey carried out in Kazungula district. Household Affected by the pests were counted to 55. Control was undertaken with 220 L of Chlorpyrifos using motorized sprayers.

It is likely for large - scale hopper bands formation during February 2026 in Simalaha plains, Kafue Flats. Kazungula, Limulunga, Lukulu, Mitete and Kalabo Districts where significant Red Locust and AML parent stock populations persisted in November 2025.

Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique

The Red Locust hatching and formation of hopper bands was expected to have taken place in Lake Chilwa/ Lake Chiuta plains, Mpatsanjoka Dambo in Malawi; Iku-Katavi plains, Bahi Valley, Malagarasi Basin, Rukwa Valley in Tanzania; Buzi Gorongosa, Dimba plains in Mozambique. It is critical to monitor all these outbreak areas to enable timely control and prevent crop damage.

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

Zambia

African Migratory locust infestations continued to be reported in the Western and Southern provinces during December 2025, with all developmental stages being present. Infestations were reported in Mongu, Nalolo, Sioma and Sesheke districts in the Western Province and Simalaha plains and Kazungula district in the Southern Province. The Ministry of Agriculture in Kazungula and Mongu districts carried out surveys and controls using motorized sprayers.

Zimbabwe

Low populations of AML hoppers were reported attacking sorghum and maize in Matabeleland South and Mashonaland Central Provinces (Table 2.). Ground control of the pest using cabaryl was underway at the time of writing this report.

Table 2. Locusts' reports received in January

Province	district	site
Matabeleland north	Hwange	
Mashonaland central	Mbire	Chidodo
Mashonaland central	Muzarabani	



Locust hopper bands in the grasslands in Chidodo (Mbire district) in Mashonaland Central Province

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 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

Zambia

All 10 Provinces (Western, Central, Southern, North western, Northern, Eastern, Copperbelt, Luapula, Lusaka and Muchinga Provinces) in Zambia had reported various levels of Fall Armyworm infestation during the month of January. A total area of 266,276.2 ha of maize in 2,404 camps across 111 districts was reported infested with the pest, affecting over 458,556 households. 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 Dodoma, Manyara, Tanga Singida and Morogoro regions. A total area infested and sprayed was estimated at 17.815 ha (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

PLACE REPORTED		INFESTATION		CROP INFESTED	CONTROL METHOD	AMOUNT OF PESTICIDE USED	REMARKS
REGION	DISTRICT	TOTAL AREA INFESTED	TOTAL AREA SPRAYED				
Manyara	Mbulu TC	2000	2000	Maize	Ground	2000	successful control
Dodoma	Bahi	1900	1900	Maize	Ground	2000	successful control
Dodoma	Kongwa	2100	2100	Maize	Ground	2000	successful control
Dodoma	Chamwino	1950	1950	Maize	Ground	2000	successful control
Tanga	Kilindi	2100	2100	Maize	Ground	2000	successful control
Singida	Iramba	1870	1870	Maize	Ground	2000	successful control
Morogoro	Kilosa	2010	2010	Maize	Ground	2000	successful control
Morogoro	Morogoro DC	1995	1995	Maize	Ground	2000	successful control
Morogoro	Morogoro MC	1890	1890	Maize	Ground	2000	successful control
		17,815	17,815			18,000	

Zimbabwe

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

Kenya and Mozambique

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

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

There were no reports of African Armyworm attacking cereal crops from any Member State. Servicing of pheromone traps in readiness for monitoring and forecasting outbreaks was underway in most countries.

9. QUELEA BIRDS (*Quelea quelea* L)

Tanzania

During January 2026, Quelea birds were reported attacking rice and wheat in Hai, Moshi, Siha districts of Kilimanjaro region and Simanjiro district in Manyara region. An estimated of 13 million birds on 6 roost sites covering an estimated total area of 119 ha were controlled using 432 L of Quelea Tox in Moshi district, an estimated 5 million birds covering an estimated area of 44 ha were controlled using 50 L of Quelea Tox in Hai district. In Siha district an estimated 0.5 million birds covering 20 ha attacking wheat were sprayed with 16 L of quelea Tox. In Manyara region, an estimated 8 million birds on 4 roost sites covering a total area of 40 ha were controlled using 140 L of Quelea Tox. Controls were carried out using a DLCO spray aircraft and motorized sprayers in Hai district.

Zimbabwe

Quelea bird outbreaks were received in Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South and Masvingo during January 2026 (Table 4). Controls were underway at the time of writing this report.

Table 4. Quelea birds reports

Province	site
Matabeleland north	Mangwe
Matabeleland south	Patse
Matabeleland south	Madzive
Masvingo	Mwenezi
Masvingo	Chiredzi

Kenya

Quelea birds outbreaks were reported in Bura and Hola Irrigation Schemes in Tana River County and West Kano Irrigation Scheme during the month. Controls were carried out by the directorate of Plant Protection and Food Safety in collaboration with DLCO-EA, private drone service providers and the affected county governments. Approximately 36.5 million birds (28 million in Hola and Bura Irrigation Schemes, and 8.5 million in West Kano Irrigation Scheme) were controlled.

10. FORECAST FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY TO MARCH 2026

Red Locust

- Hopper bands are likely to increase in Kafue Flats, Simalaha Plains, Kazungula district and Western Province.
- Fledging into immature adults expected in March 2026.
- IRLCO-CSA and Ministries of Agriculture need to carry out 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 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

The Report has been compiled from information gathered by staff of IRLCO-CSA and contributions by staff of plant protection units in Member States are gratefully acknowledged.