

International Red Locust Control Organisation for Central and Southern Africa

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MIGRATORY PEST SITUATION DURING MARCH 2026 AND FORECAST FOR APRIL TO JUNE 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. Various population densities of immature adult (Fledglings) groups/concentrations were 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 continue coalescing and form dense concentrations eventually swarms, posing serious crop damage risks.
- **Critical Note:** Without timely surveillance and control, swarms may escape from breeding areas and threaten food security across the region.

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

Current Situation

Low African Migratory Locust (*Locusta migratoria migratoriodes*) persisted in Simalaha Plains, Southern Province and some areas in Western Province, Zambia. Zimbabwe reported insignificant population in Mashonaland Central Provinces

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

d. African Armyworm (*Spodoptera exempta* Walker)

Current Situation: Outbreaks were reported in 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 49,067 ha was reported to be infested by the pest during March 2026. Control was carried out on 63 % of the affected area using chemical pesticides and botanical extracts.

Zambia: Low infestation levels of Fall Armyworm on maize persisted in all 10 in Zambia. Control was carried out by the affected farmers with technical support from the Ministry of Agriculture, Zambia

Mozambique: Fall Armyworm infestations were reported in Dimba, Gorongosa, Dondo, Mafambise and Buzi districts. Control was carried by the affected farmers with technical support from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe: No infestations were reported

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

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

Tanzania: Quelea bird outbreaks were reported in Dodoma region attacking rice, sorghum and millet.

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

Zimbabwe: Reported attacking pearl millet and sorghum in Mashonaland Central.

- **Control measures:** A total of 114,000 birds were controlled.
- **Forecast:** Localized outbreaks may persist in Tanzania and Zimbabwe; aerial and ground control should remain active.

Strategic Recommendations

Resource Mobilization: Immediate support to IRLCO-CSA and national ministries for surveillance and control.

1. **Cross-Border Coordination:** Strengthen regional collaboration to prevent swarms escaping outbreak areas.
2. **Farmer Support:** Expand technical assistance for Fall Armyworm control in all Member States.
3. **Monitoring:** Maintain surveillance for Armyworms and Quelea bird outbreaks.

2. WEATHER

Most of the Red Locust outbreak areas received normal to above rainfall during March 2026, which affected locust development in some of the breeding areas in Zambia (Barotse floodplain – Western province), Tanzania (Wembere, Bahi plains and part of Malagarasi basin), Mozambique (Buzi plains) and Malawi (Mpasanjoka Dambo and Lake Chirwa plains) where rains were above normal (Table 1).

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

LOCATION	COUNTRY	FEBRUARY 2026
Mafambisse (Buzi plain)	Mozambique	91.0
Gorongosa (Gorongosa plain)	Mozambique	83.0
Caia (Dimba plains)	Mozambique	78.0
Buzi	Mozambique	100.0
Dimba	Mozambique	72.0
Masenge (Wembere Plain)	Tanzania	2907.1
Kaliua (Malgarasi Plain)	Tanzania	254.1
Muze (Rukwa Valley)	Tanzania	208.6
Mpanda	Tanzania	N/A
Lifuwu (MpatsaNjoka Dambo)	Malawi	504.0
Ngokwe (Lake Chiuta plains)	Malawi	239.0
Khanda (Lake Chilwa plains)	Malawi	451.3
Namwala (Kafue Flats)	Zambia	501.0

N/A Not Available

3. RED LOCUST (*Nomadacris septemfasciata* Serville)

Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique

Immature adult (Fledglings) Red Locust groups or concentrations of various densities were likely to be present in Lake Chiuta plains, in Malawi; Kafue Flats, Simalaha plains, Western Province, Lukanga swamps in Zambia; Iku-Katavi plains, Malagarasi Basin, Rukwa Valley in Tanzania; Buzi Gorongosa, Dimba plains in Mozambique. With favourable weather conditions improvement, Red Locust (Fledglings) groups/concentrations will coalesce into swarms, which may escape from breeding areas and cause substantial damage crops. Red Locust development in Lake Chirwa, Mpatsanjoka, Buzi, Bahi and Wembere plains may have been negatively affected by flood water (Fig. 1). It is critical to monitor all these outbreak areas to enable timely control and prevent crop damage.



Fig. 1. Mpatsanjoka Dambo in Malawi

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

Zambia

Low African Migratory Locust infestations were likely to have persisted in Western and Southern provinces during March 2026. The population may have been affected by floodwater, especially in the Western Province (Fig. 2). Low infestation of AML (confirmed by Zambia Agricultural research Institute - ZARI) were reported in Mumbwa district attacking maize. Control was carried out with fipronil on estimated 5.2 ha of maize using motorized sprayers. Ministry of Agriculture is still monitoring the situation.



Fig.2. Sefula area, Mongu district in the western Province, Zambia.

Zimbabwe

In March 2026, low African Migratory locust infestations persisted in Muzarabani - Mashonaland. The population did not warrant control.

6. TREE LOCUST (*Anacridium* spp.)

Tanzania and Kenya

The Tree Locust situation remained calm in Kenya and Tanzania during the month under review

Elegant Grasshopper (*Zonocerus elegans*) has been reported damaging maize, cassava and pumpkins in Mozambique. Farmers carried out control with technical support from the Ministry of Agriculture.

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

Malawi

Mild Fall Armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda* J. E. Smith) infestations on rain-fed maize were reported 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 49,067 hectares across all ADDs was reported to be infested by the pest during March 2026. Control was carried out on 56,813 hectares which is 63 % of the affected area, using chemical pesticides and botanical extracts

Zambia

Low 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.

Mozambique

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

Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe

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

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

Mozambique

Low infestations of African Armyworm on maize were reported in Chibabava, Machanga, Maringue and Caia districts in Mozambique. Control was carried by the affected farmers with technical support from the Ministry of Agriculture.

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

9. QUELEA BIRDS (*Quelea quelea* L)

Tanzania

During March 2026, Quelea birds were reported attacking rice, sorghum and millet in Mpwapwa, Bahi and Chamwino districts of Dodoma region. An estimated 20.2 million birds on 6 roost sites covering an estimated total area of 282 ha were controlled with 150 L of Quelea Tox in Chamwino district, an estimated 7.9 million birds on 2 roost site covering a total area of 186 ha were controlled with 275 L of Quelea Tox in Mpwapwa district and an estimated 7.9 million birds covering an estimated area of 116 were controlled with 275 L of Quelea Tox in Bahi district. Controls were carried out using a DLCO spray aircraft and motorized sprayers.

Zimbabwe

Quelea bird were reported attacking pearl millet and sorghum in Mashonaland Central (Muzarani and Mucherengi). An estimated total of 114,000 birds were controlled using chemical and nets.

Kenya

There were no Quelea birds outbreaks reported in Kenya.

10. FORECAST FOR THE PERIOD APRIL TO JUNE 2026

Red Locust

- Immature Adult Red Locust groups are expected to continue coalescing and form swarms in some of the outbreak areas.
- IRLCO-CSA and Ministries of Agriculture need to carryout ground and aerial surveys and control operations where necessary.

African Migratory Locust

- African Migratory Locust are likely to persist in Western, Southern Provinces in Zambia; 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 are expected to continue declining across 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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