International Red Locust Control Organisation for Central and Southern Africa

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MIGRATORY PEST SITUATION DURING SEPTEMBER 2026 AND FORECAST FOR OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2026

1. OVERVIEW

1a. Red Locust (*Nomadacris septemfasciata* Serville)

(i) Current Situation

The Locusts situation in the International Red Locust Control Organisation for Central and Southern Africa (IRLCO-CSA) region continued to be relatively calm during the month of September. Immature Adult Red Locust (*Nomadacris septemfasciata* Serville) populations of various densities were expected to be present in all outbreak areas as indicated below:

- **Malawi**: low densities of isolated locusts continued to be present in Lake Chiuta plains, Lake Chilwa plains, Mpatsa Njoka Dambo
- **Tanzania:** Isolated Red Locusts are likely to be present in the Malagarasi Basin, Ikuu-Katavi plains, Rukwa Valley, Bahi Valley and Wembere plain during the month under review.
- **Mozambique**: In September, isolated locusts were reported in Buzi - Gorongosa plains, Dimba plains
- **Zambia**: Various populations of low densities of Red Locust persisted in Simalaha Plains, Kafue Flats, and Lukanga Swamps. There were no Red Locust reports in the Western Province in September 2026.

(ii) Forecast

With shortage of feed due to vegetation drying and grass burning, immature adult Red Locust are likely to concentrate further in localised areas with green vegetation and form localised swarms during October -November 2026 and start mating at the onset of rains.

(iii) Critical Note

Strengthening pre–breeding surveillance, observations, monitoring, and hotspot identification will enhance regional capacity to respond promptly to swarms and avert food security challenges across the region.

1b. African Migratory Locust (*Locusta migratoria migratoriodes* R & F.)

(i) Current Situation

Low population densities of African Migratory Locust (*Locusta migratoria migratoriodes*) are likely to be present in Zimbabwe outbreak areas, Simalaha Plains and some areas in Western Province, Zambia.

(ii) Forecast

With dry conditions prevailing, AML may continue to coalesce, form concentrations, and eventually swarm. Vigilant surveys are critical to monitor the population increase and hot spots for timely control measures.

1c. African Armyworm (*Spodoptera exempta* Walker)

(i) Current Situation

There were no African Armyworm (AAW) outbreak reports from Member States.

(ii) Forecast

African Armyworm (AAW) outbreaks are likely to start building up with the start of the rainy season. Servicing pheromone traps and monitoring should be given priority.

1d. Fall Armyworm (*Spodoptera frugiperda* J.E. Smith)

(i) Current Situation

Malawi: In September 2026, Fall Armyworm (FAW) infestations in maize continued to be reported across all Agricultural Development Divisions. The pest affected an estimated 62,129 ha, with 80% of the infested area controlled using synthetic pesticides and botanical extracts.

Kenya: Low Fall Armyworm infestations on maize were received in the South Rift, North Rift counties, and some Counties in the Western part of Kenya where maize is

still in the field. Affected farmers conducted control with technical support from the Ministry of Agriculture through extension officers.

Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, and **Zimbabwe**: No infestations were reported.

(ii) Forecast:

As the rainy season starts, vigilant monitoring is required, especially in maize-growing regions.

1e. Quelea Birds (*Quelea quelea* L.)

(i) Current Situation

Kenya: Quelea birds were reported attacking rice and Wheat in Tana River and Narok counties, respectively. A total of an estimated 8.575 million birds were controlled.

Zimbabwe: Quelea birds attacking wheat were reported in Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central, Midlands, and Masvingo Provinces. The Migratory Pest Control Department, in collaboration with affected communities, carried out controls using drone technology and nets.

Tanzania, Mozambique, and Malawi: There were no reported quelea bird outbreaks in these Member States.

(ii) Forecasts

Member States should continue to be vigilant in monitoring the birds to note the threshold for control. This is especially in Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

1f. Strategic Recommendations

(i) Resource Mobilisation:
Support IRLCO-CSA and national ministries to undertake limited surveillance and control measures between October and November 2026 to prevent swarms from escaping from breeding areas and before the start of the rainy season.

(ii) Cross-Border Coordination:
Strengthen regional collaboration to prevent swarms from escaping outbreak areas.

Encourage non-member countries where Locusts breed and quelea birds roost to become members of the Organisation.

(iii) Farmer Support:
Expand technical assistance to farmers for Fall Armyworm control in all Member States.

(iv) Monitoring:
Maintain surveillance for Armyworms and Quelea bird outbreaks.

2. WEATHER

Weather conditions in most of the Red Locust outbreak areas in the region remained dry except for Buzi–Gorongosa Plain, where rain showers were recorded as indicated in Table 1 below. With dry vegetation, land clearing and burnt grass areas, locusts will continue to coalesce in localised areas with intact grass.

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

LOCATION	COUNTRY	September 2026
Mafambisse (Buzi plain)	Mozambique	00.0
Gorongosa (Gorongosa plain)	Mozambique	4.0
Caia (Dimba plains)	Mozambique	00.0
Buzi	Mozambique	00.0
Dimba	Mozambique	00.0
Masenge (Wembere Plain)	Tanzania	00.0
Kaliua (Malgarasi Plain)	Tanzania	00.0
Muze (Rukwa Valley)	Tanzania	00.0
Mpanda	Tanzania	N/A
Lifuwu (MpatsaNjoka Dambo)	Malawi	00.0
Ngokwe (Lake Chiuta plains)	Malawi	00.0
Khanda (Lake Chilwa plains)	Malawi	00.0
Namwala (Kafue Flats)	Zambia	00.0

N/A Not Available

3. RED LOCUST (*Nomadacris septemfasciata* Serville)

Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia
Various densities of Red Locust populations are likely to have persisted in most outbreak areas. With dry vegetation, land clearing and burnt areas, locusts are expected to have coalesced and formed various population densities in Lake Chilwa/ Lake Chiuta plains in Malawi; Iku-Katavi plains, Lake Rukwa Valley and Malagarasi

Basin in Tanzania; Kafue Flats in Zambia; Buzi Gorongosa, Dimba plains in Mozambique. With a shortage of food and rain, locusts will continue to coalesce further in localised areas with intact grass and form swarms. Swarms, if not controlled on time, are likely to escape from these outbreak areas and invade crop farms. Member States are being requested to avail more resources to IRLCO – CSA and line Ministries of Agriculture to enable them to undertake surveys in all outbreak areas and, where necessary, control operations to avert crop damage.

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

Zambia
The African Migratory Locust (AML) situation in Western and Southern provinces continued to remain calm during September 2026. Low AML populations persisted in the Simalaha plains during the month under review. The Ministry of Agriculture, Zambia, through Provincial officers, is vigilantly monitoring the situation.

Zimbabwe
There were no reports of African Migratory locust outbreaks in Zimbabwe.

5. TREE LOCUST (*Anacridium* spp.)

Tanzania and Kenya
The Tree Locust situation continued to remain calm in Kenya and Tanzania during the month under review. Surveys are underway.

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

Malawi
Low-level Fall Armyworm infestations in maize continued across all eight Agricultural Development Divisions of Malawi: Lilongwe, Kasungu, Machinga, Mzuzu, Blantyre, Shire Valley, Salima and Karonga. In September 2026, the pest affected an estimated 62,129 hectares. Farmers carried out control on 49,741 hectares—equivalent to 80% of the infested area—using synthetic pesticides and botanical extracts, including sisal, neem and pepper.

Kenya
Few reports of low Fall Armyworm infestations on maize were received in the South Rift, North Rift counties, and some Counties in the Western part of Kenya where maize is still in the field. Affected farmers carried out control with technical support from the Ministry of Agriculture through extension officers.

Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

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

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

There were no reports of African Armyworm outbreaks in the Member States during the month under review.

8. QUELEA BIRDS (*Quelea quelea* L)

Kenya
Quelea birds were reported attacking rice and Wheat in Tana River and Narok counties, respectively. The Plant Protection and Food Safety Directorate conducted control operations, during which a total of an estimated 8.575 million birds were controlled.

Zimbabwe.
During September, 14 reports of quelea birds attacking wheat in Zimbabwe were received from Mashonaland East, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland Central, Midlands and Masvingo Provinces. The Migratory Pest Control Department, in collaboration with affected communities, conducted assessments and coordinated controls using drone technology and nets. The table below summarises control activities in Zimbabwe.

Table2. Quelea bird control activities in Zimbabwe during September,2026

Province	Control method	Chemical used: (Fenthion 640ULV)	Birds killed
Mashonaland West	Chemical	-L	35,750
Midlands	Chemical	50L	2,500
Mashonaland East	Chemical	40L	2,500
Mashonaland Central	Chemical	220L	11,600
Masvingo	Nets	-	22,283

Tanzania, Malawi, and Mozambique
There were no reports of Quelea bird outbreaks in these Member States.

9. FORECAST FOR THE PERIOD OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2026

(i) 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 carry out ground and aerial surveys and control operations where necessary.
- Ground teams should be fully alert in regions bordering outbreak areas.

(ii) African Migratory Locust

- African migratory locusts are likely to persist in the Western and Southern Provinces in Zambia during the outlook period.

- Vigilant monitoring and control measures will be critical to prevent crop devastation.

(iii) Fall Armyworm & African Armyworm

- Outbreaks are expected to start building up across Member States
- Early warning systems must remain fully operational for rapid detection and response.

(iv) Quelea Birds

- Populations likely to persist.
- Threat to maturing small-grain cereal crops in Tanzania, Kenya and Zimbabwe.
- Vigilant monitoring and prompt control interventions are required.

(v) Preparedness:

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

(vi) Appeal:

Member States are urged to provide financial support to the organisation and line Ministries for timely surveys and control.

10. GENERAL REGIONAL ADVISORY FOR EL NIÑO PREPAREDNESS

In anticipation of the 2026/2027 El Niño phenomenon, which is projected to be among the strongest on record, the region is expected to experience marked climatic extremes. Forecasts indicate that equatorial East Africa will receive **above-normal rainfall during the October–December 2026 short rains**, whilst much of Southern Africa is likely to endure **below-normal rainfall and prolonged dry conditions throughout the October–April 2027 season**.
It is therefore advised, through the auspices of IRLCO-CSA, that Member States strengthen collective preparedness by integrating climate intelligence with migratory pest surveillance, early warning systems, risk assessment, and coordinated response mechanisms.

The regional strategy shall encompass:

- Enhanced utilisation of climate-driven data scenarios for surveillance and early

detection.
- Systematic follow-up and sustained cross-border engagement to ensure rapid response at short notice.
- Reinforcement of equipment readiness and reporting mechanisms, including country-to-country advisories.
- Intensified collaboration with Member States' Meteorological Departments and donor agencies to support preparedness initiatives.

Member States are encouraged to:

- Review contingency plans and maintain operational readiness.
- Strengthen mechanisms for the rapid exchange of pest information and alerts.
- Pay particular attention to areas where **excess rainfall and vegetation growth create favourable breeding conditions**, whilst also monitoring the effects of **prolonged drought on pest concentration and movement**.

Through a coordinated regional approach, IRLCO-CSA shall enhance anticipatory action, optimise the efficiency of surveillance resources, and strengthen Member States' capacity to detect and respond to migratory pest threats before they escalate into widespread outbreaks.

11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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