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Appoint professionals to Covid task force, experts urge CM

DHNS, Bengaluru, May 22 2020, 23:15 ist updated: May 22 2020, 23:48 ist

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The farmers in Bidar, Kalaburagi and Vijayapura stare at massive crop losses as swarms of locusts are expected to arrive in the state from Maharashtra in the next three to four days. The state government has instructed Bidar district administration to take precautionary measures to mitigate damages.

Swarms of locusts (a few lakhs in numbers) from Pakistan have wreaked havoc on crops in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The short-horned grasshoppers, which can travel up to 150 km a day, have now entered Maharashtra in swarms.

Dr Sunilkumar N M, chief, Krishi Vignana Kendra, told DH, "Locusts breed rapidly after a few spells of thundershowers in summer. With Bidar, Kalaburagi and Vijayapura districts experiencing temperatures of 40 degrees Celsius and sporadic spells of thundershowers, the weather is just tailor-made for locust breeding."

The size of locust swarms has increased during their sojourn in Maharashtra's Vidharba districts. This will lead to more damage in border districts in Karnataka, agriculture experts fear.

According to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), a locust swarm of a size of up to 1 sq km, containing millions of insects, can consume the food of over 35,000 people in a day. Locusts can eat crops weighing their own weight. They can wipe out crops on thousands of acres in no time thereby wreaking havoc on the lives of the hundreds of farmers.

LWO directions

The locust warning organisation (LWO), set up by the Centre, has initiated measures on war-footing to control the locust infestation and mitigate the damage.

The LWO has directed the Agriculture officers to take up aerial spraying of Malathion 96, an organophosphate insecticide and a potentially toxic chemical, in uninhabited areas, and chlorpyrifos solution in cropped areas.

Following the direction by Agriculture department commissioner to take necessary measures to combat the pest attack, Bidar Deputy Commissioner H R Mahadev on Wednesday held a meeting with the officials of Agriculture, Horticulture, Forest, Revenue departments and Krishi Vignana Kendra.