

Locust Swarm:Foot Print of Environment Degradation

To the uncontrolled spread of corona virus infection, super cyclonic devastation and heat waves in the country, the locusts added another woe to the peasantry which together pushed many parts of South Asian region to the brink disrupting food supplies and slashing earnings for millions of peasants.

The locust swarm entered Rajasthan in April from Pakistan and then spread to areas across the western states, helped by the strong winds. The worst desert locust outbreak in three decades damaged crops in five states - Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. The locust started arriving in Rajasthan around first fortnight of April, much ahead of the normal July-October season.

The spraying pesticides in the farming lands with crops had no much effect on the locust swarm. Farmers of many districts spent overnight in their agricultural lands for making noises and generating smokes by lighting fires, but locusts settled down.

Among countries in the Southeast Asia, Pakistan is the worst affected country due to attack by the locusts that poses a bigger threat to the economy of the country. The locust devoured cotton, wheat and maize, among other crops. Pakistan has made plans to convert huge quantity of locust's swarm into the bio-fertilizer. The Ministry of National Food Security and Research would be the pioneer in converting the locusts crisis into an opportunity by developing its bio-compost through community mobilisation. The locust-based fertiliser will have an extra advantage for plenty of nitrogen and phosphorus when standard bio-compost would be made from a mix of locusts and other bio-wastes materials. The expected outcome from the project would be to enhance productivity of crops by 10-15%, reduction in use of chemical fertilisers up to 25%, that improve soil quality by changing soil organic matter, soil fertility and ultimately the soil health - The Express Tribune reported.

The need of the hour is to take urgent measures to restore the environment and employ immediate methods, as adopted by Pakistan, suitable to the local conditions.

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