



Eritrea Constructs a Central Facility to Monitor and Control Desert Locusts

Imagine a silent army marching across vast landscapes, decimating crops and threatening livelihoods. That's the reality of the desert locust — a creature infamous for its devastating swarms and unpredictable migratory patterns. These tiny insects, capable of consuming their weight in foliage each day, can turn fertile land into barren wastelands overnight. This newsletter explores the intricate battle between these migratory pests and agriculture, revealing not only the destructive power they wield but also the tireless efforts being made to combat this ancient threat.

According to Mr. Tedros Sium, Head of the Migratory Pest Control Unit at the Ministry of Agriculture

(MoA), Eritrea is on the frontline of desert locust breeding and infestation. More than half of its land — approximately 7 million hectares — is favorable for Desert Locust (DL) breeding. In addition to native breeding, migrated swarms also pose recurring challenges. Therefore, the Eritrean government's commitment to scientific advancements and innovative solutions must continuously evolve to effectively address the persistent threat posed by these pests.

A Strategic Base in Gadim Halib

Amidst the hot plains of the Eritrean Northern Red Sea Region, a new chapter is being written in the country's plant protection

endeavors. A state-of-the-art desert locust control center now stands tall in Gadim Halib — a testament to the ingenuity and dedication of Eritrean officials working tirelessly against a formidable foe. The facility marks not only a technological breakthrough in locust management but also a bold statement of commitment from the Ministry of Agriculture, whose vision and efforts laid the foundation for this crucial project.

Constructed in just seven months, the center exemplifies the speed and efficiency with which the Eritrean government has responded to a growing threat to national agriculture. Strategically positioned 60 kilometers east of Afabet Town in the Northern Red



Newly Constructed Desert Locust Control Base in Gadim Halib



Mr. Tedros Sium

Sea Region, Gadim Halib Desert Locust Control Center, overlooks key locust breeding grounds, making it an ideal location for monitoring and intervention.

“We chose this location due to extensive research highlighting the eastern lowlands of Eritrea as critical breeding grounds for locusts,” explained Mr. Efreem Kiflu, Head of Administration and Finance at the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mr. Tedros spoke passionately about the Ministry’s enduring efforts to safeguard Eritrea’s agricultural future: “For years, our strategy for locust control has been prevention—intervening before the locust hoppers take flight. Thanks to this proactive approach, we have saved our croplands and

rangelands. Thus, this center will serve as a crucial resource in our efforts, ensuring that farmers can continue their vital work with confidence”

From Vision to Execution

The project was driven by the Ministry of Agriculture in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Desert Locust Control Commission in the Central Region (CRC/FAO). It is to be noted that the Eritrean Defence Forces, Segen Construction Company, Adi Halo Project took part in the construction processess.

“Our focus was always on speed, effectiveness, and, above all, protecting our people,” shared Mr. Efreem Kiflu during an interview, his voice tinged with both pride and hope.

But the vision for this initiative extended far beyond construction. Mr. Efreem spearheaded a comprehensive strategy for locust control, incorporating early detection systems, advanced surveillance technologies, and proactive mitigation measures.

“We’re not just reacting to outbreaks anymore,” he noted.



Mr. Efreem Kiflu

“This center is about preparedness — anticipating and addressing the threat before it takes root.”

Previously, desert locust control efforts meant workers battled in makeshift shelters, exposed to harsh chemicals and unpredictable conditions. Mr. Efreem Kiflu emphasized that, even amid those difficult circumstances, a stronger foundation for change was built — culminating in the new center that now stands as a beacon of hope against an ancient enemy.

Regional and Global Impact

Both Mr. Tedros and Mr. Efreem emphasize that, the impact of the new facility will extend far beyond its immediate surroundings. The base will serve as a hub for research, training, and collaboration with regional and international partners. It will share expertise and intelligence to build an effective network for locust control not only in Eritrea but across the Horn of Africa.

“This is not just about protecting our agricultural output,” stated Mr. Mohammed Ali Salah, Local Administrator of Afabet Subzone.

“It’s about securing the livelihoods of thousands who depend on agriculture for survival. This



During Construction

facility gives farmers a new level of assurance, allowing them to invest in their work with confidence.”

What the Facility Offers

The new desert locust control base includes: administrative offices; dormitories and bathrooms; a conference hall, cafeteria, a garage and maintenance facilities, storage areas, water tankers etc.

Its location within the eastern lowlands provides a unique advantage for monitoring locust activity and executing rapid, preventive interventions.

A Beacon of Hope

The Gadim Halib Locust Control Center is more than just physical infrastructure — it symbolizes the

resilience of the Eritrean people, their commitment to protecting their land and livelihoods, and their determination to ensure safe and nutritious food for generations to come. This bold initiative stands as a fortress against locusts, a beacon of innovation, and a model for sustainable plant protection in the region.



Consensus-Building Workshop on the Revision of the National List of Veterinary Medicines and Biologics

The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) convened a Consensus-Building Workshop on the revision of the National List of Veterinary Medicines and Biologics (NLVMB) on August 29, 2025, at the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers Conference Hall in Asmara.

The workshop aimed to endorse final revisions to the NLVMB and identify key strategic directions for its effective implementation. The event brought together 77 participants representing the MoA Headquarters and Zonal Offices, Hamelmalo Agricultural College, the Ministry of Health (MoH), the Ministry of Land, Water and Environment, the Eritrean Crop and Livestock Corporation, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Eritrea, and Orotta College of Medicine and Health Sciences.

The workshop was officially opened by Mr. Tekleab Mesghena,

Director General of the Regulatory Services Department (RSD), who welcomed participants and underlined the critical role of the NLVMB as a regulatory and policy tool to safeguard animal health, improve food safety, and enhance livestock productivity.

Mr. Tekleab recalled that the NLVMB, first established in 2007, had been the MoA's primary reference for veterinary medicines. However, the emergence of new animal health challenges, the need to eliminate banned substances, and the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) necessitated a full review.

In 2024, the RSD established a Technical Committee (TC) composed of senior national experts from the Ministries of Agriculture and Health, as well as the National Higher Institution for Education and Research.



Mr. Tekleab Mesghena

The committee conducted nine meetings, carried out data collection exercises across the Zobas, and performed an intensive technical evaluation of submitted applications. Their work ensured that the revised list reflects both national priorities and international best practices.

Mr. Tekleab commended the TC for their dedication and acknowledged the support of the Government of the State of Eritrea and the Integrated Agricultural



Development Program (IADP) in making the revision process a success.

Technical Presentations

Dr. Mulugeta Russom, from the National Medicines and Food Administration of the Ministry of Health presented on the concept,



Dr. Mulugeta Russom

principles, and importance of an Essential Veterinary Medicines List, emphasizing a National Veterinary Medicines List is an official, evidence-based selection of essential veterinary medicines that guides procurement, distribution, and rational use to meet national animal health needs. Built on principles of relevance, safety, efficacy, affordability, equity, and public health protection, it supports livestock productivity,

food security, and the fight against AMR. While the list sets a national standard, a waiver provision allows for the exceptional approval of non-listed medicines in cases such as outbreaks, shortages, or scientific justification—ensuring flexibility without undermining regulatory control.

The second presenter was Mr. Awet Ruesom from RSD. He outlined the methodological approach used in revising the previous national list of veterinary drugs. Which included the use of standard operating procedures for evaluating applications, broad stakeholder participation, incorporation of the Ministry of Health's experience, comprehensive literature review, and alignment with international guidelines. He also described the structured decision-making



Mr. Awet Ruesom

process, including stakeholder engagement for application submission, technical review, validation, consultation, and final endorsement.

Deliberations and Plenary Discussion

Participants, drawn from diverse organizations and disciplines, engaged in group discussions and plenary sessions. The workshop concluded with broad consensus on the revised NLVMB. A few technical issues were identified for further review and investigation by the TC before final endorsement.

Key Recommendations

Finally, under the chairmanship of Mr. Afewerki Mihreteab (Senior Expert in Veterinary Science, Agricultural Extension Department, MoA), the following critical recommendations for the successful implementation of the revised NLVMB were presented and agreed upon:

- Establish a formal registration system for market authorization of veterinary products to strengthen regulatory oversight, ensure



only quality medicines enter the market, and enhance accountability.

- Raise awareness among stakeholders through nationwide campaigns, so that farmers, veterinarians, and distributors understand and adhere to the revised list.
- Develop and enforce standard treatment protocols to guide veterinary practice, improve consistency in care, and reduce misuse of medicines.
- Form a National Veterinary Medicines and Therapeutics Committee to provide technical guidance, monitor implementation, and update the list regularly.
- Implement a veterinary pharmacovigilance system to allow timely reporting and analysis of adverse reactions and product complaints, thereby protecting animal and public health.
- Create a joint MoA–MoH task force on AMR, using harmonized protocols and data sharing to proactively address the growing threat of resistance.
- Ensure enforcement of Proclamation 36/1993 to reinforce the legal basis for



veterinary medicine regulation.

- Disseminate the revised NLVMB widely through print, digital platforms, and mobile applications to reach both professionals and grassroots stakeholders.
- Strengthen food safety measures by ensuring withdrawal periods are clearly displayed, the national formulary is promptly updated,

inspections and residue monitoring are reinforced, and enforcement mechanisms are applied.

Closing Session

The workshop was officially closed by Mr. Amanuel Haile, Director of the Animal Resources Regulatory Division at the Regulatory Services Department. In his closing remarks, he thanked all participants for their active engagement and significant contributions toward the final revision of the NLVMB and called for active participation of all concerned bodies.



Mr. Amanuel Haile

Conclusion

The workshop successfully achieved its objectives of validating the revised NLVMB, fostering constructive dialogue, and building consensus among stakeholders. Once endorsed, the revised list will serve as a cornerstone of rational veterinary medicine use in Eritrea—supporting animal health, improving food safety, and mitigating the risks of antimicrobial resistance.

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