

Somalia and Somaliland to benefit from new UK support to tackle locusts

Somalia is set to benefit from new UK funding to tackle this year's unprecedented locust outbreaks across Africa and Asia.

The UK's International Development Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan today announced a further £18 million in response to the crisis. She made the announcement during a visit to British company Micron Group, which supplies pesticide sprayers to the United Nation's Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Locust swarms have grown 20 times larger since March 2020. In Somalia, new swarms of the desert locusts from current breeding have coincided with the start of the Gu rains. The FAO predict a 15-25% decrease in the upcoming Gu harvest.

The UK International Development Secretary, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, said:

Vulnerable communities are on the brink of starvation because of the biggest locust outbreak in decades, made worse by the coronavirus pandemic. But unless other countries also step up and act now, this crisis will spread and cause even more devastation.

Of the new funding announced today, £17 million will go to the FAO's emergency appeal to help to control the increase of locusts across East Africa including Somalia, Yemen and South West Asia, as well as reduce the risk of swarms spreading into the Sahel.

£1million will go towards improving early warning and forecasting systems for desert locusts, so that countries can prepare for their arrival.

The British Ambassador to Somalia, Ben Fender, said:

The outbreaks of desert locusts in Somalia and Somaliland are affecting some of the most vulnerable communities in the country, who are already having a very difficult year as a result of floods and COVID. We are working with FAO and Somali government to scale up surveillance and control operations to combat the locusts and protect the harvests.

The new funding follows £8 million provided by the UK earlier this year to the FAO locust appeal, supporting Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Tanzania and Pakistan. A supercomputer funded by UK aid is also helping countries in East Africa to track locust movements around the continent.

Since January this year, the FAO has successfully controlled over 600,000 hectares of land, saved 1.2m tons crops with a value of \$372 million, and eradicated over 400 million locusts in 10 countries in East Africa.

[UK Government Ministers support Wales' rural economy in virtual Royal Welsh Show discussion](#)

Press release

Representatives from the agriculture and farming industries took part in a Q&A session to discuss the opportunities and challenges faced by the sector in Wales



UK Government Minister David TC Davies and Department for Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Minister Victoria Prentis co-hosted a Q&A with representatives from the farming and agricultural sector in Wales earlier today as part of the last day of the virtual Royal Welsh Show this year.

Rebecca Williams, National Trust Wales' Assistant Director, Conservation facilitated the discussion about the opportunities and challenges faced by the rural economy in Wales.

Conversation also focussed on how the UK Government can work with the industry to combat the negative impact of the coronavirus and work towards economic recovery, while delivering a Brexit that works for Welsh farmers and consumers.

The virtual event comes as the UK's transformative Agriculture Bill moves through the House of Lords Committee stage in its journey to becoming law. The Bill will ensure a smooth and gradual transition away from the EU's Common Agriculture Policy.

The UK Government has also recently launched its 'bounce back' plan of measures to support agriculture, food and drink industries to recover from the coronavirus. The package includes a programme of physical and virtual events which have been tailored to help a variety of businesses to get back into international markets and start growing market share once again.

UK Government Minister in Wales David TC Davies said:

While the Royal Welsh Show has moved to an online platform this year, it is more important than ever to listen to the voices of those from the agricultural and farming sectors as we seek to rebuild our economy following the coronavirus and maximise the potential of leaving the EU.

The UK Government recognises the importance of the rural economy to Wales' prosperity and I look forward to working closely together with representatives from the sector to ensure the thoughts and opinions discussed today are reflected in our decision-making and future direction.

Victoria Prentis, DEFRA Farming Minister said:

I am delighted to have been able to hear from representatives of Welsh agriculture and farming industries at this year's virtual Royal Welsh Show, which is truly a testament to the adaptability of these sectors in the current challenging times.

We will always back farmers across all four corners of the UK and we will make sure they can seize the opportunities outside of the EU. This includes taking advantage of the growing global demand for our great British produce, such as for our world-famous Welsh lamb.

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[UKAEA welcomes new funding for Tokamak Energy](#)

News story

Selection in UK Government's Advanced Modular Reactor projects is positive news for fusion



Tokamak Energy's ST40 device

Tokamak Energy, a private company working to develop compact fusion power based in Milton Park, Didcot, [has recently been awarded £10 million from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy](#), as part of the UK Government's Advanced Modular Reactor (AMR) project.

The funds will contribute to core development work on key fusion technologies, such as high temperature superconducting magnets and plasma exhaust (or 'divertor') technologies, both of which are key challenges that need to be overcome for fusion to become a commercially viable future electricity source.

Tokamak Energy was the only fusion company to be awarded AMR funding; the other two companies who were chosen are developing advanced fission technologies. This support from UK Government re-affirms their strong and practical support for fusion energy, coming as it does on the back of investment into UKAEA – notably for the conceptual design of the [Spherical Tokamak for Electricity Production \(STEP\)](#) programme and to redevelop the Culham campus.

UKAEA's Chief Technology Officer Tim Bestwick welcomed the announcement: "This is really good news – not just for Tokamak Energy, but also for the wider fusion community," he said. "This £10 million Advanced Modular Reactor award recognizes the potential importance of fusion in future low-carbon energy generation, and illustrates the depth of talent in this field in the UK."

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Situation of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Federation: UK statement

The United Kingdom remains deeply concerned about the situation of Jehovah's Witnesses in the Russian Federation. As we said on 12 March, the ruling of the Russian Supreme Court in July 2017, which rejected the appeal against the decision to categorise Jehovah's Witnesses as "extremists", criminalised the peaceful worship of 175,000 Russian citizens and contravened the right to religious freedom that is enshrined in the Russian Constitution, and in multiple OSCE commitments.

It is with deep regret that we learned that on 13 July, 110 homes of Jehovah's Witnesses were simultaneously searched by Russian authorities in the cities of Voronezh and Stary Oskol. Thirteen Jehovah's Witnesses were detained at the time and two individuals were reportedly beaten during a home search.

The total number of homes of Jehovah's Witnesses that have been searched by Russian law enforcement authorities now stands at over 1,000. As we noted in March, home raids are often conducted in the early hours of the morning by large numbers of masked and armed police.

We repeat our concern that the increasing number of searches, as well as use of simultaneous large-scale home raids, creates the impression of an organised campaign of persecution against Jehovah's Witnesses.

So-called "evidence" used against those investigated and prosecuted includes regular aspects of communal religious life. We again remind the Russian Federation of our extensive commitments on freedom of religion or belief, including from Vienna 1989, as well as Kyiv 2013, where States committed to:

Fully implement their commitments to ensure the right of all individuals to profess and practice religion or belief, either alone or in community with others, and in public or private, and to manifest their religion or belief through teaching, practice, worship and observance, including through transparent and non-discriminatory laws, regulations, practices and policies;

For three years now, the delegation of the Russian Federation has assured the Permanent Council that individual Jehovah's Witnesses are able to practice their religion at home, as no permission is required to pray in Russia. However, we have witnessed time and again that any manifestation of their faith by Jehovah's Witnesses can result in the search of their homes, lengthy detention, criminal prosecution and imprisonment.

We again call on the Russian Federation to end the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses, and to uphold the commitments on the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief for all individuals across the Russian Federation.

Environmental sustainability and resilience for a clean and green recovery

Thank you.

Koh-joe Oh-woosoo Afri-yea, known in Ghana as Sir John, died last week.

He would have been joining us to reflect on our longstanding partnership and on Ghana's approach to combatting illegal logging, and promoting trade and sustainable forest land use. I send my condolences to his family.

It is an honour to be speaking to you today. I hope you are all safe and well.

The COVID-19 crisis has had an unprecedented impact on the world.

It has exposed our vulnerabilities – and is, I hope, a wake-up call to the consequences of our abusive relationship with the natural world.

But terrible though this experience has been for so many families around the world – the brutal truth is that it will be dwarfed by the effects of climate change and environmental degradation – unless we act very quickly – and decisively.

Politicians everywhere are designing their economic recovery packages. So far, governments around the world have committed \$9 trillion to COVID recovery.

And how they choose to spend those funds will have ramifications for decades.

We can stick with the status quo; bailing out high-carbon, environmentally damaging industries and locking in decades of emissions.

Or we can choose to make environmental sustainability and resilience the lens through which we map out our recovery.

You won't be surprised to hear that I favour the latter course.

And I am delighted that our Prime Minister has committed to build back better and build back greener.

As COP26 Presidents, we'll be making the case at every opportunity for a clean and green recovery – and we are asking countries to introduce greater ambition in their Nationally Determined Contributions.

Our focus of course will be on clean energy, zero-emissions vehicles,

finance, adaptation and resilience.

And at its core, we will be a major emphasis on nature.

The reason, simply, is that we cannot tackle climate change without also tackling environmental destruction, and vice versa.

For example in addition to providing livelihoods for over a billion people and a home to some 80% of the world's terrestrial biodiversity, deforestation is the second biggest source of emissions.

We are destroying them at a rate of around thirty football pitches every minute.

We are told that nature-based solutions could provide a third of the cost-effective climate change mitigation we need over the next decade, while helping communities adapt to become more resilient. In truth it is probably far higher than 30%.

But despite that, they attract just 3% of global climate funding. That makes zero sense.

At the end of last year, the British PM announced that we are doubling our International Climate Finance to £11.6bn (approx. \$14bn).

And even more importantly, we have said that we will be spending much of that uplift on nature.

As co-hosts of the next climate COP, we will be asking other countries to do the same. We need protection and restoration of nature to be a core priority globally.

But we know it's not all about public money. We need international collaboration, and structural change.

That means, among other things, looking at the incentives – public and market.

From the Amazon rainforest to the peat swamps of the Cuvette Centrale, we all rely on forests. Yet their value barely registers – worth more dead than alive.

Financial incentives that destroy forests outstrip those in favour of their protection by over 40:1.

In the UK, we are leading by example in switching our agricultural subsidies away from rewarding destruction towards a system of public money in return for public goods – like environmental stewardship.

Consider that agriculture causes around 80% of deforestation, yet the top fifty food-producing countries spend over \$700bn a year in support for often destructive land use.

Imagine the impact if global support shifted in favour of sustainability – that’s more than five times the budget of all the world’s aid agencies combined.

We have seen some successes in recent years with illegal timber. Much of that has been the consequence of many years of cooperation and partnership between countries – coming together to tackle the illegal trade, promote the responsible and sustainable alternative, and to protect forests.

Building on that work, we want to bring consumer and producer countries together at COP26 to address the market drivers of deforestation.

We know in the UK that even while we are getting our own house in order, our environmental footprint extends vastly beyond our shores. The commodities we import alone come with devastating levels of deforestation.

So we are determined to clean up our own supply chains, and to work directly with other countries – both consumer and producer countries – to deliver change internationally. I commend China for taking steps towards excluding illegal forest products from its own gigantic supply chains.

If we get it right, we can protect forests and livelihoods in consumer and producer countries around the world.

And the government to government dialogue that we plan for COP26 will draw heavily on the work that many of you at this Forum have been involved in. Indeed lessons drawn out at this meeting can help shape our preparations for action at COP26.

I invite all countries to join this collaborative effort – and especially so many here today.

We’re committed to working closely with all of you, and with China as hosts of the all important CBD COP – and I hope that what we learn today will enrich a government to government dialogue at COP26.

As countries respond to COVID-19, the decisions we take in coming months will have impacts for decades to come.

We have all the tools we need for a green, resilient recovery, so it’s time to get to work– together.

Thank you