'New Disaster: BFSA Declares Calamity Due to Moroccan Locusts, Agricultural Lands in Southeastern Bulgaria Already Affected'

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The Bulgarian Food Safety Agency (BFSA) is taking urgent measures to control the Moroccan locust (Dociostaurus maroccanus) in the Blagoevgrad region. Following a proposal by the Executive Director of the BFSA, the Minister of Agriculture and Food issued an order on 22.05.2026 declaring a calamity. Although initial data indicated that mainly meadows, pastures, and fallow lands in the municipalities of Petrich and Sandanski were affected, the situation changed at the end of the month, and the locust has now also infested agricultural lands.

A partial state of emergency was declared in the municipality of Petrich by order of Mayor Dimitar Brichkov. The reason for this measure is precisely the invasion of Moroccan locusts, which have seriously affected agricultural areas.

Affected Areas and Upcoming Measures

A total of 1500 decares are the affected terrains, located in the lands of two villages. The pest infestation is mainly concentrated in the land of the village of General Todorov, where 1200 decares are affected. In the land of the village of Marikostinovo, the area is smaller – 300 decares.

The Regional Food Safety Directorate (RFSD) – Blagoevgrad is assisting the municipal and regional authorities in implementing plant protection measures. The period for applying control measures against the Moroccan locust will continue until June 30, 2026.

The municipality of Petrich has already organized the treatment of the terrains, and the necessary preparation for treatment is expected to be delivered. Under favorable weather conditions, spraying will begin at the start of next week. Only authorized plant protection products will be applied. Following the treatment, a 7-day quarantine period will be imposed. Additional

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information on the exact start of the treatment process will be published immediately upon receipt of the preparation.

Warning to Farmers

The treatment of the affected areas will be carried out in strict compliance with all necessary measures to protect the health of humans, animals, bees, and aquatic organisms.

The authorities notify livestock owners and persons keeping bee colonies to take the necessary precautionary measures:

- During the 7-day quarantine period, animals must not be released outside the farms to avoid risks to their health.
- The BFSA urges bee colony owners to maintain constant contact with the mayors of the localities to receive timely information about upcoming treatments and to protect their bees.

Why Is the Moroccan Locust So Dangerous?


moroccan

The Moroccan locust (Dociostaurus maroccanus) is a species from the family Acrididae, which has a cosmopolitan distribution and is found everywhere in our country.

- **Appearance and Origin:** It is significantly smaller than the desert locust. Its characteristic feature is the dark X-shaped pattern on its back. The species is found mainly in North Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Southern Europe, including the Balkans. It is not an invasive species for Europe but is historically present, with Bulgaria being at the periphery of its range (with historically documented invasions in Southern and Central Bulgaria).
- **Development:** The insect finds favorable conditions for laying its eggs and developing on virgin, fallow lands, and pastures.
- **Swarming Behavior:** Under certain conditions, it can transition from a solitary to a gregarious phase, forming swarms. These move in flocks that can reach several kilometers in length and width.
- **Damage:** It attacks almost all cultivated plants, preferring grassy vegetation – cereals, legumes, vegetables, fruit crops, and vineyards. At high density, it is capable of destroying vegetation over large areas. Swarms can travel hundreds of kilometers, destroying crops along their path, sometimes flying up to 50 km per day.