**Strengthening national capacity for locust control in Tajikistan**

***4 February 2025, Dushanbe*** – In an effort to strengthen national response to the locust threat, Tajikistan has completed a series of specialized trainings for enhancing the country's preparedness and response capabilities. The sessions, held in December 2024 and January 2025, focused on key aspects such as locust surveillance and information management, locust spraying and pesticide risk reduction, as well as use of biopesticides in locust control. They took place in Sughd and Khatlon regions, as well as in the Districts of the Republican Subordination (DRS) - regions known for their vulnerability to locust infestations, which threaten both agriculture and food security.

The training sessions were organized with the support of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations as part of its “Programme to improve national and regional locust management in Caucasus and Central Asia (CCA)” and, in this framework, thanks to the regional project "Improvement of Locust Management (Phase 2)" funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to the benefit of Central Asia. They were conducted by the project's counterpart, the State Entity "Locust Control Expedition" (SE-LCE) of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Tajikistan.

A total of three four-day sessions were delivered by Master Trainers of SE-LCE for local locust specialists. Overall, 57 participants, from the central office of SE-LCE, its branches in Khatlon and Sughd regions, as well as in DRS, participated. The sessions aimed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of locust management strategies while promoting sustainable agricultural practices throughout the country. Emphasis was placed on safer locust control, including proper pesticide and their empty container management, and biopesticides use against locusts.

"The partnership between the Government of Tajikistan, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reflects our shared commitment to strengthening national capacities and ensuring a robust response to locust outbreaks. By investing in these training sessions, we are equipping locust specialists with the critical knowledge and tools needed to protect livelihoods and secure food resources," said Aghasi Harutyunyan, FAO Representative a.i. in Tajikistan.

The Ministry of Agriculture of Tajikistan, through the SE-LCE played a key role in facilitating the delivery of the training and ensuring that it was tailored to the specific needs of the regions involved.

Such training effort is essential, as the country faces the ongoing challenge of protecting its agriculture from locust threats. Strengthening local capacity and implementing innovative tools like the Automated System for Data Collection (ASDC) for locust monitoring and biopesticides use are critical to ensuring the future resilience of Tajikistan’s agricultural sector and securing food resources for population.