

# MASSIVE LOCUST INVASION THREATENS GUJARAT FARMERS

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The insects fly in during the day and settle on the farms at night making it difficult to ward off the swarms. The farmers under seige are hiring workers and using age old techniques like beating drums and vessels to scare the locusts away without much success.

“It’s a massive issue in Banaskantha, Patan, Kutch and parts of Sabarkantha and Mehsana. We are trying to help farmers in containing damage to their crops,” Gujarat’s Agriculture Minister R.C. Faldu said, adding the “government also explored the possibility of sprinkling pesticides and chemicals through choppers in affected areas.”

## Pesticides sprayed

Rather late in the day, the authorities have stepped in to combat the voracious invasion. The State administration along with the central teams has launched huge pesticide-spraying operation to kill the insects.

“A massive swarm of locusts spread in approximately 10 square kilo metre area has arrived in Tharad, the last taluka before the India-Pakistan border,” Banaskantha District Collector Sandeep Sangle told *The Hindu* . “We have started spraying pesticides to tackle the menace.”

According to the Agriculture Ministry’s Locust Warning Organisation (LWO), locusts are flying in from Pakistan’s Sindh province and spreading in villages in Rajasthan and Gujarat where south western monsoon was prolonged this year. Originally, the locusts emerged in February this year from Sudan and Eritrea on Africa’s Red Sea Coast and travelled through Saudi Arabia and Iran to enter Pakistan, where they invaded the Sindh province and from there they moved into Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The government has now assured farmers that the administration will carry out a survey to assess the damages and will accordingly compensate farmers. However, farmers feel that the government’s efforts are too little, too late.

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