

PREFACE

The 1930s and 1940s were characterised by a major red locust plague which started from the grassland plains of the Rukwa Valley in Tanzania and the marshes of Mweru wa Ntipa in Zambia. It engulfed all the countries in Africa south of the equator and caused devastation, untold hunger and misery. The need to prevent the recurrence of similar plagues led to the signing of an international convention in 1949 that brought into being the International Red Locust Control Service (IRLCS), later renamed the International Red Locust Control Organisation for Central and Southern Africa (IRLCO-CSA).

A tremendous amount of research has been done by IRLCS/IRLCO-CSA—first in identifying possible sources of plagues, and later in elucidating the biology and behaviour of the red locust and the ecology of its breeding habitats—culminating in the development of a preventive control strategy. There is no doubt, as the literature shows, that the work of IRLCS/IRLCO-CSA in applying this strategy has contributed significantly towards averting further locust plagues in the region. The success of the strategy has been achieved at great expense in respect of maintaining the institutional setup and operational costs. However, it is clear that potentially heavy crop losses were avoided, whose cost would have far outstripped that of the 'insurance'.

The publication of this special issue of *Insect Science and Its Application* has been made possible by the enthusiasm of the scientific community with wide interest in acridology agreeing to join IRLCO-CSA in commemorating 50 years of red locust plague prevention in eastern, central and southern Africa. I wish to thank the contributing authors for finding time to celebrate with us this milestone and achievements. I would also like to pay tribute to the pioneer scientists who were at the forefront in developing the preventive control strategy, as well as their successors who, over the last fifty years, have ensured its effective implementation. As we celebrate IRLCO-CSA's golden jubilee, the valuable contribution of the member states, who have underpinned the importance of the Organisation to the region's food security needs, and that of the international donor community, for investing confidence and critical resources, cannot pass unmentioned.

To the reader, I commend to you this publication as a valuable contribution to the literature in acridology and pest control, and therefore, a must for your personal library.



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