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National Strategy for the Eradication of Red Palm Weevil (*Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*) in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania

The Tidjikja Case Study – Mauritania- FAO (TCP/MAU/3505)

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Hammamet, 10 November 2026

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Historical background: How it all started?

A localized detection that triggered a national response

2012–2014 — FAO regional TCP initiative
Red Palm Weevil in the Maghreb, technical capacity

December 2015 — First detection of RPW in Tidjikja
Red Palm Weevil (RPW)

November 2016 — Visit of the President of the Republic
RPW control programme in Tidjikja

January 2017 — FAO technical mission
Supporting and strengthening the intervention

April 2017 — Two additional infested palms detected
Were these the last infested palms?

June 2017 — FAO technical roadmap developed
Guiding the final phase towards eradication

Preparation | Intervention | New infestations | Towards eradication



Key message: Being prepared made it possible to respond rapidly before the infestation could spread further

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Pest detection and reporting: The first critical step

Why does early reporting matter?

- Recognition of suspicious symptoms on date palms
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- Identification of the initial infestation
- ↓
- Mobilization of the competent phytosanitary authorities
- ↓
- Technical assessment and field intervention
- ↓
- Continued reporting and monitoring of subsequent detections

The link with international pest reporting

For NPPOs, the experience illustrates the importance of:

- Timely communication of new pest occurrences
- Verification of the pest's identity
- Assessment and documentation of pest distribution
- Updating the pest status based on surveillance results

Rapid response: acting before the infestation spreads

First detection: December 2015

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Rapid mobilization of national phytosanitary services

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Immediate organization of field interventions

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FAO technical support and missions
to strengthen the national response

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Creation of local farmers committee
for palm date protection

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Continuous monitoring of the affected area

The lesson: Time is critical.

A rapid and coordinated response can prevent a localized infestation from becoming a regional crisis.







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Building a competent and operational field team

FAO TCP regional initiative on RPW in the Maghreb (2012–2014)

An important foundation

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Key elements

- Practical training on RPW identification and control
- Hands-on training in the use of tools and equipment
- Preparation of technicians before field deployment
- Development of operational skills for inspection, pruning, trapping and treatment
- Transfer of technical knowledge to local teams

Key message: The intervention did not start from zero.

It built on previous regional capacity development and practical experience.





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High-level commitment translated into field-level action

High-level commitment translated into field-level action

President of the Republic

Visited the RPW control programme in Tidjikja in November 2016, with a further visit planned for July 2017

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Senior Ministry officials

Received FAO missions: Secretary-General, advisers, Directors-General and members of the National RPW Monitoring Committee

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Regional level: the Wali

Personally followed the activities and received field missions

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Active role of local farmers committee

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Field-level action



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Farmers' engagement: Making eradication a collective effort

A participatory approach at every level

Rather than imposing a control protocol, the programme involved farmers in its development and implementation.

The IPM protocol was negotiated with the Ministry of Agriculture

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The proposed protocol was discussed and presented to farmers through awareness-raising activities

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The protocol was jointly developed and validated with farmers

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Theoretical training was provided to technicians and farmers

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Practical training and field follow-up ensured effective implementation

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The result

Trust, ownership and strong commitment from farmers and their associations





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Mauritania: First country to use the Attract & Kill approach, according to the project experience.

1. Use of Attract & Kill (A&K)
2. Development and use of simple, practical tools
3. Easier and more effective pruning of palm offshoots
4. Improved maintenance of date palms
5. Practical demonstrations for farmers and technicians

Key message

Effective pest management requires technically sound approaches that farmers can easily adopt.





From pest reporting to eradication: The operational chain

1. Detection
Identification of suspicious symptoms and pest occurrence.

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2. Reporting
Communication of the occurrence to the competent phytosanitary authorities.

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3. Verification and assessment
Confirmation, delimitation and assessment of the infestation.

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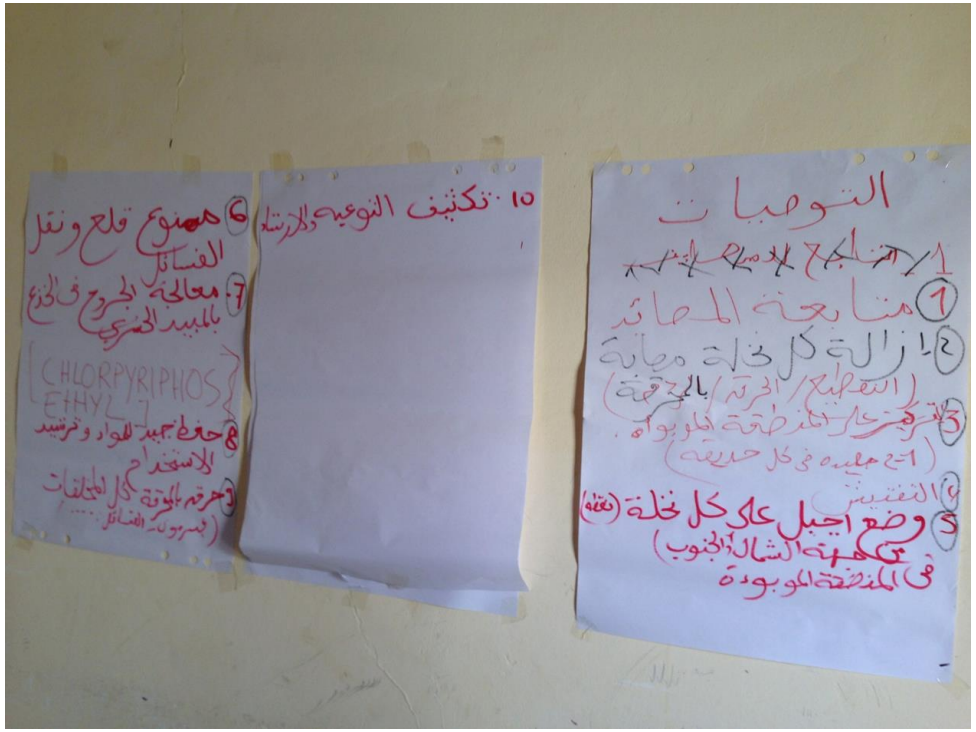
4. Eradication
Implementation of integrated control and eradication measures.
Constructive collaboration of palm date owners for the destruction of infested palm.

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5. Surveillance and pest status review
Follow-up to verify the effectiveness of measures and reassess pest status.

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Key message
Reporting is not the end of the process – it is the beginning of an effective phytosanitary response.



The 2017 eradication roadmap – Three complementary technical pillars

Pillar 1 Intensive surveillance	• Monthly inspection of all 8,000 palms in the potentially infested area. • Clear responsibility assigned to each inspector. • Quality control of inspections. • Additional pruning after the Guetna season to facilitate thorough inspection.
Pillar 2 Strategic trapping	• Trapping to complement visual inspections. • Regular maintenance and monitoring of traps. • Installation around previously infested zéribas, particularly in El Wasta and Zira, in consultation with farmers.
Pillar 3 Preventive treatments	• Attract & Kill paste applied at two points on each of the 8,000 palms. • Renewal every four months (three times per year). • Complementary injections for palms in zéribas surrounding previously infested areas.

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Pest status determination: Verifying the absence of RPW

December 2015 — First detection of Red Palm Weevil (Rhynchophorus ferrugineus) in Tidjikja Oasis

March 2016 — Approximately 70 infestation sites identified

March 2016 — Emergency assistance project launched and coordinated response initiated

2016 — 104 infested palm trees removed through sanitation measures

2016 — 88 adult weevils captured through trapping activities

Project closure – June 2017 — No further captures reported since 2016, according to the project closure assessment

Detection Response Project closure

MAURITANIA: Eradication Success at local level, national statuts and international reporting

Rhynchophorus ferrugineus (RHYCFE)

MENU

- Overview
- Distribution
- Host plants
- Host commodities
- Categorization
- Reporting
- Photos
- Documents
- Datasheet

Distribution details in Mauritania

Situation

Current pest situation evaluated by EPPO on the basis of information dated 2019: Present, few occurrences

First recorded in: 2015

Comments

First found in December 2015 in the Tidjikja oasis in Tagant Wilaya. Eradication measures were taken. In April 2017, only 2 infestations and 1 beetle caught in a trap were recorded in Tidjikja. Eradication continues.

References

* Faleiro JR, Ferry M, Yaseen T, Al-Dobai S (2019) Overview of the gaps, challenges and prospects of red palm weevil management. Arab Journal of Plant Protection 37(2), 170-177.

MAURITANIA: Eradication Success at local level, national statuts and international reporting

1. EPPO official status Present, few occurrences	According to the EPPO Global Database, Rhynchophorus ferrugineus is still reported as present in Mauritania, with few occurrences. This highlights the importance of distinguishing between the successful eradication of a localized outbreak and the phytosanitary status of the country as a whole.
2. International recognition	The EPPO datasheet states: "Recent country reports on the successful containment and eradication of R. ferrugineus come from Mauritania on date palm and the Canary Islands (FAO, 2019)."
3. Tidjikja: A successful local containment experience	According to FAO, the outbreak was contained at its original site in less than one year, with no further spread reported. Tidjikja was subsequently declared a potentially Red Palm Weevil-free area.

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Preventing reintroduction: Protecting the achievements

The FAO roadmap specifically warned that introducing a single new offshoot could undermine the efforts of farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO.

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Proposed preventive priorities

- Strict enforcement of the prohibition on importing palm offshoots
- Control of the movement and circulation of offshoots
- Intensified communication and awareness-raising
- Field controls to prevent unauthorized movement
- Continued surveillance around previously infested areas

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Key message

Eradication must be protected through prevention, traceability and continuous vigilance.

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Sustainability and exit strategy

From FAO-supported intervention to nationally sustained pest freedom

Phase 1 Intensive eradication	Implement integrated control measures and eliminate all detected infestation foci.
Phase 2 Consolidation and verification	Maintain systematic surveillance and document the absence of new infestations.
Phase 3 National ownership and transition	Transfer operational responsibilities, technical knowledge and surveillance activities to national and local services.
Phase 4 Long-term prevention	Maintain movement controls, farmer awareness, monitoring and rapid-response capacity.

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Why did Mauritania succeed? Lessons learned for NPPOs

Five lessons for countries facing invasive pest threats

Success factor	Lesson for NPPOs
Early detection	Establish effective surveillance and reporting mechanisms
Preparedness	Train and equip national response teams before outbreaks occur
Governance	Ensure strong institutional and political commitment
Participation	Involve farmers in protocol development and implementation
Sustainability	Combine eradication with long-term prevention of reintroduction

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Eradication is not a single intervention: It is a collective commitment.

From pest reporting to sustainable pest freedom

The Tidjikja experience offers valuable lessons for the international phytosanitary community.

- Early detection
- Timely reporting
- Rapid response
- Collective commitment


Thank you