

Coronavirus boosts likelihood of food shortage in Kenya as farmers battle crop-destroying locust swarms

Several counties are battling new desert locust invasions despite the ongoing spraying of hatchlings Farmers have urged the government to spray the locusts and compensate those who have incurred huge losses.

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Seed growers, including Kenya Seed Company, have halted work amid the coronavirus onslaught.

“Due to the (Covid-19) outbreak ... we are temporarily closing our doors as instructed by the government to promote self-quarantine,” a notice by the Simlaw Seeds subsidiary of Kenya Seed Company stated at its outlets in Eldoret.

Simlaw advised all its customers “to purchase products by March 21 so as to assure food security in the country throughout the year.”

The notice has sparked a rush by farmers to beat the deadline.

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Swarms of locusts have invaded parts of Trans Nzoia, Bungoma, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Baringo, West Pokot and Turkana counties. Farmers fear that the pests will feed on germinating crops, causing heavy losses.

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“This will reverse the gains [we have] made in terms of timely planting to increase productivity and profitability of farming and enable the country to attain food security,” [said Mr Mathew Kosgey, a farmer from Lower Moiben in Uasin Gishu County].

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