

East Africa battles locust swarms by turning them into animal feed and organic fertilizer

Scientists say warmer seas are creating more rain, waking dormant eggs, and cyclones that disperse the swarms are getting stronger and more frequent.

The Bug Picture is working with communities around the area of Laikipia, Isiolo and Samburu in central Kenya to harvest the insects and mill them, turning them into protein-rich animal feed and organic fertilizer for farms.

“We are trying to create hope in a hopeless situation, and help these communities alter their perspective to see these insects as a seasonal crop that can be harvested and sold for money,” said Laura Stanford, founder of The Bug Picture.

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“They destroy all the crops when they get into the farms. Sometimes they are so many, you cannot tell them apart, which are crops and which are locusts,” said farmer Joseph Mejia.

The Bug Picture pays Mejia and his neighbours 50 Kenyan shillings (\$0.4566) per kilogram of the insects. Between Feb. 1-18, the project oversaw the harvest of 1.3 tons of locusts, according to Stanford, who said she was inspired by a project in Pakistan, overseen by the state-run Pakistan Agricultural Research Council.

The locusts are collected at night by torchlight when they are resting on shrubs and trees.

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