

## More Transformation Expected at the Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI)

*As Stakeholders Validate Strategic Plan*

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Farmers Transplanting Rice from Nursery to Larger Fields at the Central Agricultural Research Institute, CARI

Liberia's agriculture stakeholders have validated the 10 year strategic plan of the Central Agriculture Research Institute, (CARI) in Suakoko, Bong County. The plan, which aims to make the institute more "commercially-oriented" is focused on "technology transfer and innovation to improve the country's food security. It also hopes to restore the research institute to prewar status, and incorporate contemporary methods of carrying our farming and research activities, and is being funded by the World Bank and the Governments of Japan and Liberia through the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program, (WAAPP).

Stakeholders including the Ministry of Agriculture, USAID Food and Enterprise Development (FED) Program, the World Food Program, Farmer Union Network, the Cooperative Development Agency, International FUND for Agricultural Development (IFAD), CARI and others, gathered on Tuesday July 8 2014 in Monrovia and reviewed the

research institute strategic plan that has been developed by two consultants; Professors Martin Shem of Tanzania and Walter Wiles of Liberia.



**Dr. Florence A. Chenoweth**  
Agriculture Minister

Speaking earlier at the ceremony, Liberia's Agriculture Minister Dr. Florence Chenoweth, said that there is need to build the capacity of CARI as one of those research institutes that will compete with other countries. "We know that we need a strong research institute to drive the process toward agricultural activities," she said.

Minister Chenoweth explained that though there are some efforts being made to restore CARI to its prewar status, the process of transformation was still needed. She used the occasion to thank the World Bank, the government and people of Japan, USAID and government of Liberia for the contributions made in revamping the country's only agricultural research center after been devastated by the 14 years civil unrest. CARI, the Country's lone research institute for agriculture was destroyed along with several key institutions during the conflict in Liberia. History shows that agriculture in Liberia was far ahead of many West African countries before the war. But today, CARI lacks a well-structured research management to make its works reach the local farmers.



**Professors Martin N. Shem (L) and Walter Wiles (R)**  
Consultants Hired to Develop the Strategic Plan

Professor Martin N. Shem, a consultant on the drift strategic plan who made a presentation at the meeting said that it is important that

the new mission for CARI seeks for more information that will transform the lives of local farmers. He said that the key challenge for African agriculture is to transform the subsistence farmers into commercial farmers. According to him, this can be achieved if only more attention is place on agriculture research.

“You cannot achieve the goals at improving the lives of subsistence small holder farmers without having a good research center,” he said.

For her part, Montserrado County Representative and chairman of the Houses’ Committee on Agriculture at the National Legislature, Hon. Josephine Francis said that CARI will need more funding to enable it become a vibrant research institution. She disclosed the African countries like Tanzania and others have become renowned for their research because their government included money every year in their national budget to make it more functional.



**Hon. Josephine Francis**  
Chairperson, Agriculture Committee  
House of Representatives, Liberia

Madam Francis who is also the head of the Farmers Union Network (FUN) called for an inclusion of research activities at CARI with the private sector. She noted that there are private investors in the tree crops sector, mainly oil palm and rubber that research should be targeted as well.

The strategic plan is expected to transform the Central Agricultural Research Institute, (CARI) into an efficient and effective national agriculture research center to improve agricultural production in Liberia. It focuses on improving extension services to meet the research needs of the many small holder farmers across the country as well as the establishment of market linkages.

The increased focus on agriculture research is also part of the Government of Liberia’s Agriculture Sector Investment Program and Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (LASIP/CAADP).