



Republic of Liberia Ministry of Agriculture

CATERPILLAR INFESTATION RESPONSE SITUATION REPORT #1

Name of Pest: ACHAEA CATOCALOIDES		Location - Counties: Bomi, Bong, Gbarpolu, Lofa, Margibi, Nimba and Rivercess	
Date of Report: June 17, 2023		Reporting Period: June 5 – 17, 2023	
Prepared by:		Risk Communication Team, Incident Management Coordination Unit (IMCU)	

HIGHLIGHTS

- Currently, seven (Margibi, Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Bomi, Gbarpolu and Rivercess) out of fifteen counties in Liberia have reported infestations of the **Achaea catocaloides Guenee**.
- 54 communities in these counties combined have recorded infestations
- Given the nature of the caterpillars to eat any kind of green leaves, the potential for crop losses is very high, especially during the ongoing planting season.
- There are reports of damage to forest trees; and some creeks and waterways are confirmed to be polluted
 - in affected communities.
- In Kayatta in Bong County, it is confirmed that some people abandoned their houses and moved towards towns and villages

- The Ministry of Agriculture and the Central Agricultural Research Institute have been joined by the One Health team that includes the Ministry of Health to actively intervene. Several teams have been deployed across the affected counties.

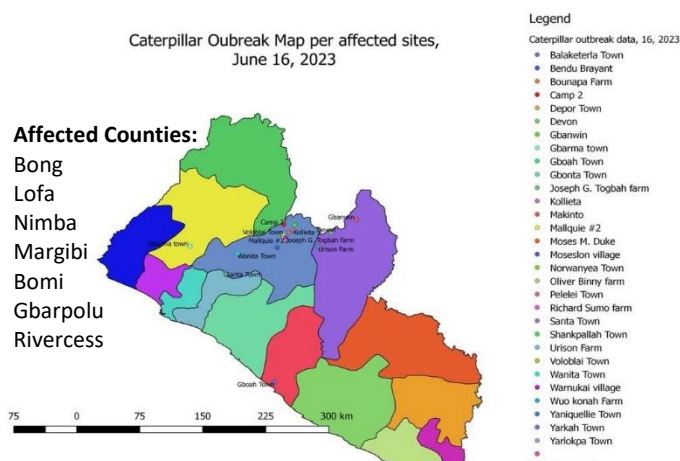


SITUATION OVERVIEW

12 out of 15 counties have experienced periodic caterpillar invasion since 1990. Caterpillar invasion has become endemic to Liberia. The **Achaea Catocaloides Caterpillar** - first showed up in Bong, Lofa, Nimba, and Margibi Counties in 1990. The second invasion of this caterpillar happened in 2009 affecting Bong, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Bassa, Rivercess, Sinoe, Maryland and River-Gee Counties. In June of 2020, the invasion of **Achaea Catocaloides Caterpillar** was reported for the third time in Gbarpolu and Maryland counties.

The spread of the pest was curbed and contained by spraying exercises and by deploying best cultural practices. The caterpillar can contaminate water sources by its feces and thereby depriving rural dwellers from accessing safe drinking water from creeks, rivers, pond, streams, etc. The caterpillar damages forest trees particularly Dahoma species. It is aggressive, phytophagous and its feeding destroys plants by killing off the leaves. The damaging stage of the pest is the larva which continues its attack on plants and young vegetable fruits for 21 to 22 days.

The current infestation was first confirmed on June 1, 2023 in Bong county and has spread in 7 counties (Margibi, Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Bomi, Gbarpolu and Rivercess) to a combined total of 58 communities.



The Ministry of Agriculture has constituted an Incident Management Coordination Unit (IMCU) with the overall objective to address the current caterpillar infestation in the country.



COORDINATION

Since the confirmation of the caterpillar invasion, the Minister of Agriculture has commissioned and conducted several technical and stakeholder level meetings intended to mobilize resources, gathered required materials and logistics, prepare and deployed technicians to effectively contain the spread of the pest.

To date, 17 of the 58 affected communities have been restored by the technicians in the field while the remaining 41 communities are been attended to. A total of 32 mobile teams are being mobilized to spray infested areas, to collect samples and other data, and eventually to assess livelihood losses due to the outbreak.

Scientists across Africa have confirmed simultaneous outbreaks in about eight countries, with all four members of the Mano River Union currently experiencing the outbreaks. The Ministry of Agriculture has been coordinating with research institutes and officials of the neighboring countries to tackle the caterpillar immediately and to plan and prepare against future outbreaks.

FUNDING

Initial funding and support to curb the current invasion are being provided by the Ministry of Agriculture and its PIU projects as FAO and other development partners are defining their contributions to the interventions. CARI and Africa Rice, as well as agricultural companies are providing support to the response, research and data collection and analysis.

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