

Roadmap for Enhancing the Efficiency of the Food Security and Nutrition Division within the Ministry of Agriculture in Liberia

1. Introduction

Liberia faces challenges in ensuring consistent availability of diverse food products for its population due to low agricultural productivity as a result of insufficient infrastructure support, limited access to modern technology, poor farming practices, and the negative impacts of shocks. The COVID-19 pandemic and Ebola outbreak between 2014-2016 significantly disrupted agricultural production activities and markets across Liberia, leading to long-term instability in food security and nutrition outcomes for vulnerable populations in Liberia.

The 2022 Rapid Food Security Livelihood Nutrition and Market Assessment (RFSLNMA) report estimates that 47% of households in Liberia are food insecure. This issue is particularly prominent in rural areas where poverty rates are higher than those in urban areas, according to WFP. Low agriculture productivity, lacked of improved technology high dependency on imported staples, continuous subsistence farming, and inadequate crop and food diversification are key drivers of food insecurity. Limited employment opportunities outside agriculture contribute to low income levels among rural populations, further restricting access to adequate food supplies. According to FAO, high transportation costs often result in high market prices for food products that are beyond the reach of many low-income households.

According to the Global Nutrition Report of 2022, approximately 29.8% children under five years old suffer from chronic malnutrition, which can lead to developmental delays affecting cognitive abilities later on in life. About 3.4% of children under five years old suffer from acute malnutrition that can lead to severe health complications including death if left untreated. Around 42.6% of all women aged between 15-49 years old are anemic; iron deficiency anemia can negatively impact cognitive abilities leading to decreased productivity among adults, thus affecting the development of a country

In view of these challenges, Liberia needs to develop a sustainable and resilient food system that meets the food and nutritional needs of its people. To contribute to the Ministry of Agriculture's objectives to guarantee that every Liberian has access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, the Division of Food Security and Nutrition has embarked on steps, including a roadmap to enhance its efficiency within the ministry.

2. Justification

The roadmap will enable the division to support programming processes, including setting clear objectives, establishing targets and timelines, and allocating resources appropriately to tackle food insecurity and malnutrition issues. It will include a robust monitoring and evaluation framework, allowing the division to track progress of interventions, identify challenges, suggest

strategies for necessary adjustment, and ensure accountability of programs, as well as effective and efficient use of resources.

The roadmap will facilitate coordination among various stakeholders and partners, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and donors. This will help prevent duplication of efforts, ensure efficient use of resources, and create a cohesive strategy to improve food security and nutrition. It will encourage multi-sectoral collaboration, engaging various sectors such as health, education, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), to help address the root causes of food insecurity and malnutrition more comprehensively, leading to better outcomes.

The roadmap will enable the division to integrate disaster risk management including climate change actions, thereby helping to safeguard and increase the resilience of the agricultural sector and food system in Liberia.

3. Step in the Roadmap

I. Situation Analysis

The first step is to conduct a comprehensive situation analysis. This will involve:

- Assessing the current state of food security and nutrition in Liberia, including identifying key challenges and gaps.
- Examining the existing institutional framework and capacities for addressing food security and nutrition issues within the Ministry of Agriculture.
- Reviewing relevant policies, strategies, and programs at the national, regional, and international levels.
- Identifying stakeholders and partners involved in food security and nutrition efforts in Liberia.

II. Strategy Development/Revision

- Defining clear objectives and indicators for measuring progress towards improving food security and nutrition in Liberia.
- Identifying priority interventions and actions to achieve these objectives, including policy reforms, capacity building measures, and investment initiatives.
- Establishing partnerships and collaboration mechanisms with relevant stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector entities, and international development partners.
- Developing a monitoring and evaluation framework to track progress and ensure accountability.

III. Institutional Arrangements

- Designating a clear mandate and structure for the FSN division within the Ministry of Agriculture, including defining roles and responsibilities of staff members (ongoing).

- Providing adequate resources, including human, financial, and technical resources, to support the functioning of the FSN division.
- Decentralizing the FSN division at the county level for effective monitoring and reporting of food security and nutrition situation affecting the rural population
- Establishing linkages and coordination mechanisms with other relevant divisions or departments within the Ministry of Agriculture, and external stakeholders.
- Developing standard operating procedures and guidelines for the FSN division's activities.

IV. Capacity Building

- Providing training and skills development opportunities for staff members of the FSN division, including on topics such as food security analysis, policy development, program planning and management, monitoring and evaluation, and communication and advocacy.
- Strengthening data collection and analysis capacities within the FSN division to support evidence-based decision making.
- Fostering South-South cooperation and learning exchange with other countries that have successful experiences in addressing food security and nutrition challenges.
- Engaging with academic institutions, research organizations, and think tanks to leverage their expertise and knowledge in supporting the work of the FSN division.

V. Implementation Plan

- A timeline for implementing priority interventions and actions identified in the strategy development / revision phase.
- A budget outlining estimated costs for each activity or intervention.
- A risk management plan identifying potential challenges or obstacles that may arise during implementation, as well as mitigation strategies to address them.
- A communication plan outlining how information about FSN strategy revision/development process will be disseminated to various stakeholders.

VI. Monitoring & Evaluation

- Clear indicators aligned with objectives defined in the revised/new FSN strategy
- Regular data collection & analysis using reliable sources
- Periodic reporting on progress towards achieving objectives
- Identification of areas requiring improvement or adjustment based on M&E findings.

By implementing this roadmap, the Food Security and Nutrition Division intends to accelerate efforts to ensure food security and nutrition for all Liberia.