



# Republic of Liberia Ministry of Agriculture

## COVID-19 FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE SITUATION REPORT # 3

Reporting Period:  
April 27- May 7, 2020

Release Date:  
May 7, 2020

### Highlights

- His Excellency, President George Weah, on April 27, issued Executive Order No.101 which operationalized the National Food Assistance Agency (NFAA) - founded in 1970 -to handle food assistance programs with partners during this emergency and other future emergencies. This is the fifth of such Executive Order, directly linked to improving food security and agriculture, among ten such orders issued since his ascendency to the Presidency in January 2018. The Minister of Agriculture was also named as Chairperson of NFAA's Board.
- Liberia's COVID-19 confirmed cases have jumped from 133 on April 28 to 189 on May 6. During the reporting period, the number of recovered persons increased from 26 to 79.
- Another county -Gbarpolu - located in the diamond-rich and heavily forested northwestern region noted for rice and cassava farming, now has a confirmed case thus summing up to eight of the country's 15 counties that are now affected by the virus.
- As a way of properly organizing movements of farmers, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) has instituted, with endorsement of the National COVID-19 Response Committee, a mobile phone enabled pass granting system to facilitate cross-county passages of farmers, food producers and movements of basic agriculture produce and implements; and ensure food availability during the ongoing lock down. Details of the process are on *page 4 and 5*.

### Situation Overview

- Reports from Ministry of Agriculture's County Coordinators point to increase in the price of an imported 25kg rice bag in several parts of rural Liberia due to scarcity which is triggered by cross-county travel restrictions of food sellers and food producers.
- In some parts of rural Liberia, farmers' foodstuffs are perishing due to lack of markets thus causing decline in their income and turnover capital to prepare for this year's planting season that has already started, the MoA's rural liaisons revealed.
- The County Coordinators have been persuading local authorities at their respective areas of assignment to allow farmers do farming and cross-county movements of food crops.
- As a result of those challenges, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, upon request from the MoA, on April 30 instructed County Superintendents to convey to all security actors deployed in the leeward to allow farmers to carry on their farming activities and transporting crops to markets without hindrances during this lockdown.

- Accordingly, the Liberia National Police, through its Inspector General on May 1, relayed the instruction to its personnel at various checkpoints around the country to grant unhindered passage for farmers and food producers.



## FOOD SECURITY

### *Meat (Cattle, Sheep and Goats)*

- Liberia heavily depends on its northern neighbor, the Republic of Guinea and West African regional state of Mali, for cattle and sheep stocks.
- But with the spread of COVID-19 cases in those two countries, the MoA's Quarantine Division, which monitors and regulates the movements of plants and animal husbandry imports into the country, reports no imports of cattle and sheep from the two Republics.
- Fewer goats are bred in northern Liberia's Nimba county, but the lockdown is causing a decline in the transport of goats to the Liberian capital, Monrovia where the highest consumer market is located.

### *Poultry*

- Local poultry farmers through their umbrella group complains of unavailability of poultry feeds on the local market which is a major hindrance to their production. Feeds are imported from neighboring Guinea which has closed its borders with its southern neighbor, Liberia, to contain the COVID-19 spread.
- The group seeks Government of Liberia's intervention to persuade its Guinean counterpart to allow Liberian poultry producers purchase feeds from that country.

### *Rice*

- The nation's staple food, rice, prices have increased in Bomi, Bong, Cape Mount, Gbarpolu Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Margibi, Maryland, Montserrado, River Gee and Sinoe Counties where the virus has affected, as the MoA's County Coordinators report.

25kg Rice Price Index (LD\$)		
County	Before Lockdown	Current Price
Bomi	2,150	3,000
Bong	2,800	3,500
Cape Mount	2,250	3,000
Gbarpolu	2,900	3,200
Grand Gedeh	3,150	3,500
Grand Kru	3,500	4,000
Lofa	3,200	3,400
Margibi	2,800	3,000
Maryland	3,200	3,500
River Gee	3,400	3,800
Sinoe	3,300	3,900

- Gbarpolu, Grand Kru, Maryland, River Gee and Sinoe Counties have one confirmed case of COVID-19 in each, while Bomi, Bong, Cape Mount and Grand Gedeh have none. Montserrado has the highest number of cases.
- Rice farmers in Bong and Rivercess Counties are impaired to continue farming because there are lots of seed rice with no buyers and access to markets because of the lockdown, while farmers in Maryland are craving for seed rice and farming implements for this planting season.
- Gbarpolu, River Gee and Sinoe Counties report of uninterrupted rice planting this season in spite of the lockdown.

- Nimba County reports of stable prices of all varieties of locally grown food and imported ones

#### Vegetables

- Even though vegetable farming is taking place, but at a lower scale as MoA's County Coordinator report fertilizers shortage in Bomi, Bong, Cape Mount, Maryland and Montserrado Counties. Fertilizers are needed to increase vegetable production.

#### Cassava

- Bomi and Cape Mount Counties noted for huge cassava outputs are not affected by the lockdown as cassava farming is taking place undisturbed.
- But according to one of MoA's partners for food price monitoring, EULAP-PARTNERS, that includes Welthungerhilfe, Concern Worldwide, ZOA and SPARK, processed cassava prices have increased.
- "The cost of raw cassava and other inputs such as milk powder have increased, forcing the agro processors to increase the price of some of their goods. A range of cassava-based goods sold in 500g bags have increased in price between 10LD-25LD depending on the specific ingredients in the product", it said.

#### Other Food Items Prices as Monitored by (EULAP-PARTNERS)

County	Market category	Crispy Gari	Wet Fufu	Rice	Cube	Beans	Boni
<b>All Prices in LD\$</b>							
<b>Bomi</b>	Country market	300	1200	60	10	100	100
	Village shop	128	10	60	17	58	100
<b>Grand Cape Mount</b>	Country market	35	10	60	25	70	100
	Sinje	50	10	50	30	80	100
	Village shop	35	10	60	30		100
<b>Margibi</b>	Country market	32	13	76	31	113	205
	Kakata	33	16	65	25	118	200
	Village shop	32	13	71	35	69	154
<b>Montserrado</b>	Redlight/ Doula	37	23	60	22	83	107
<b>Sinoe</b>	Greenville	30	20		30	180	200
<b>Grand Bassa</b>	Country market	35	13	57	37	92	166
	Buchanan	48	10	56	26	74	100

#### Response:

The MoA is accelerating its procurement plans for farming inputs, equipment, seeds and support to Liberian farmers to expand cultivation through the Government of Liberia and donor partners endorsed COVID-19 FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE PLAN.

According the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), it distributed 20 metric tons of assorted farming inputs through its emergency response intervention to 19 smallholders low land rice farmers in Voinjama and Zorzor Districts in Lofa County which directly benefit 899 farmers.

FAO says it is supporting maize production to enhance animal feed production through the distribution of 10,750 kg of seed to farmers in Bong, Bomi, Nimba and other adjacent Counties with 1,250 beneficiaries predominantly women farmers from 11 districts across 24 communities.



## LIVELIHOOD

- Cocoa farming continues in Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties. For Lofa County, Cocoa and Coffee farmers report lack of inputs and improved seeds to plant. Because produce owners are no longer present in the market due to the lockdown, Lofa tree crops farmers complain buyers are not giving them fair share of their produce current market values.

### **INFORMATION & STEPS ON HOW TO USE MoA's MOVEMENT CONTROL SERVICE FOR PASSES**

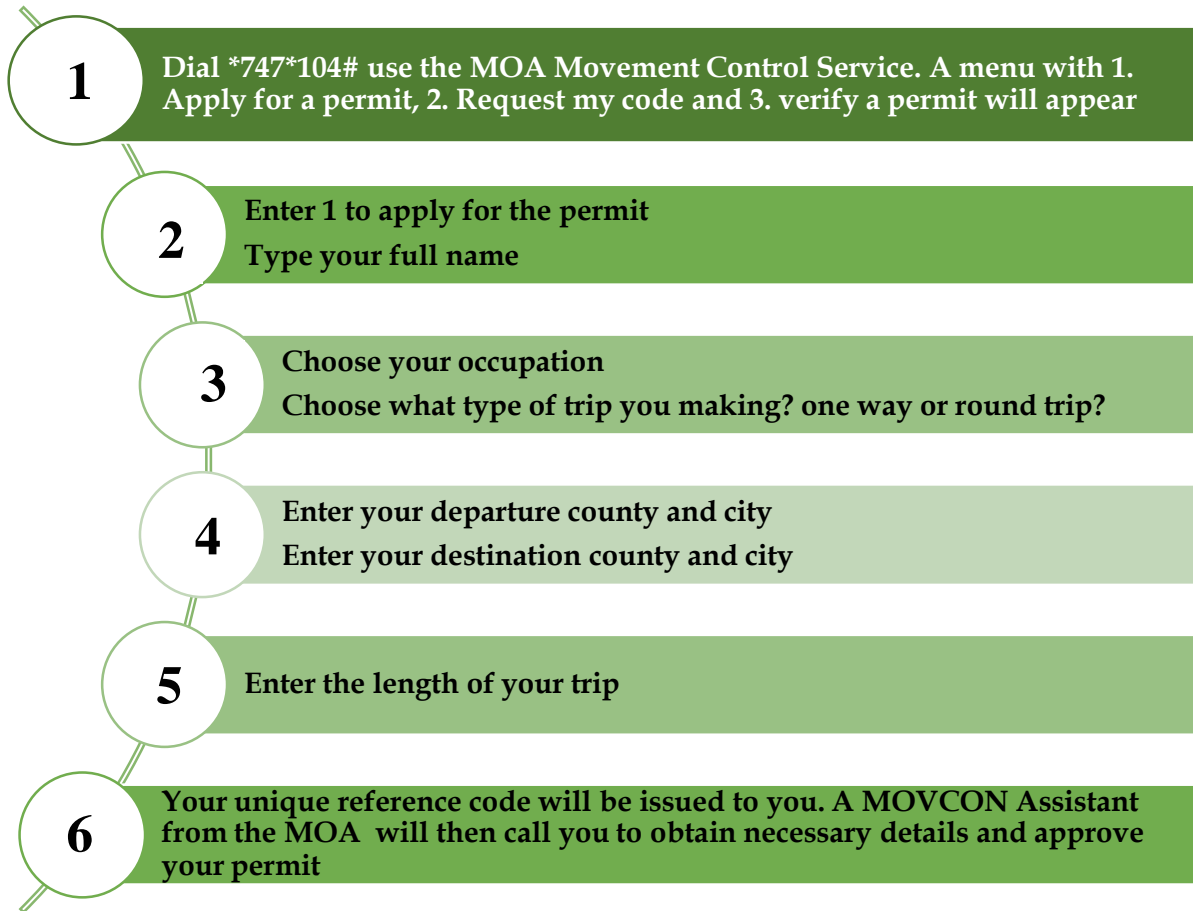
The Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and the Executive Committee on COVID-19 (ECOC) announce the launch of Liberia's first Agriculture Transport Permit System. The tool enables agriculture authorities to grant temporary permission to agriculture actors to move between approved counties amidst the lockdown.

It also allows law enforcement and other state security actors to easily verify if agriculture actors are approved to move between counties.

The MOA requests agriculture actors including farmers, traders and processors who wish to transport agriculture goods between counties to apply for a transport permit by dialing \*747\*104# on the Lonestar Cell MTN network only. The permit system is provided free of charge to the public; no phone credit will be deducted from anyone who uses the service.

The permit system is a component of the Liberia Agriculture Information Monitoring System (Liberia AIMS) a platform designed to collect real-time agriculture information nationwide.

The software platform was built by Cookshop Food Services, Inc. (Cookshop.biz), a Liberian agro-tech company that has developed advanced software solutions for the local market since 2014.



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