



Republic of Liberia Ministry of Agriculture

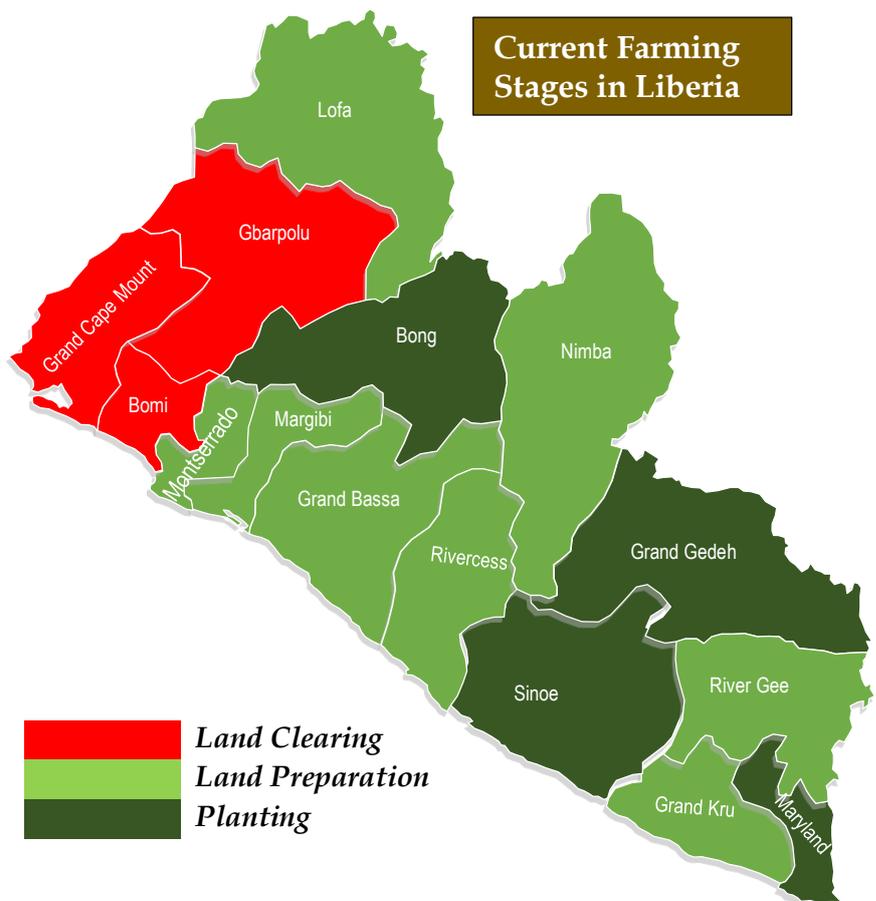
COVID-19 FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE SITUATION REPORT # 4

Reporting Period:
May 7- May 14, 2020

Release Date:
May 14, 2020

Highlights

- On May 8, His Excellency, President George Manneh Weah, Sr. –for the second time –extended Liberia’s relaxed lockdown for additional 14 days with some flexibilities to allow religious worship places to reopen starting May 17, but with minimal congregations.
- On May 8, the National Response Coordinator for the Executive Committee on Coronavirus (ECOC), Mary Broh, launched the Ministry of Agriculture’s (MoA) newly introduced Movement and Control Service. The system, abbreviated as MOCO, allows farmers, food producers, processors and sellers to use a mobile phone-enabled platform by dialing *747*104# on MTN’s network to obtain cross-county passes to transport their food products during this lockdown.
- The country is still battling to contain the spread of the COVID-19 cases which have jumped from 199 confirmed cases as of May 7 to 215 on May 13, while the number of persons recovered from the virus went up from 79 to 105 during this reporting period.
- MoA’s Counties Coordinators report easing of lockdown restrictions on farmers as they begin the farming season at different stages. Most counties are doing land clearing and preparation while some have started planting.



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Situation Overview

- Confirmed COVID 19 cases have increased in the rubber belt of Margibi bounded east of the Liberian Capital, Monrovia from five to 13 cases, while the cassava zone of Gbarpolu, in northwestern Liberia, has a rapid jump from one to six cases as of May 7.
- Largely peri urban Montserrado where Monrovia is located, is still the hotspot of COVID 19 cases accounting for the highest thus far - 186 -of the total 215 cases reported since March 16.
- Agriculture coordinators continue to monitor the prices of the country's staple food. They now report on mixed price indexes of a 25kg imported rice in eight COVID 19 affected counties.

Counties with Confirmed COVID 19 Cases

County	Cases	Before lockdown	Price Analyses During Reporting Periods			
			April 28-May 7	May 7-14	Comments	
1	Montserrado	186	2,800	2,800	2,800	Stable
2	Margibi	13	2,800	3,000	3,100	Up
3	Nimba	6	2,900	2,900	2,900	Stable
4	Gbarpolu	6	2,900	3,200	3,300	Up
5	Sinoe	1	3,300	3,900	4,000	Up
6	Grand Kru	1	3,500	4,000	4,000	Stable
7	River Gee	1	3,400	3,800	3,500	Reduced
8	Maryland	1	3,200	3,500	3,500	Stable

Cases sources: National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL) as at May 13.

- MoA's partners for food price monitoring, EULAP-PARTNERS, that includes Welthungerhilfe, Concern Worldwide, ZOA and SPARK, continue their regular retail price monitoring of basic locally grown and processed food in selected counties.

County	Markets	Crispy Gari	Wet Fufu	Rice	Cubes	Beans	Boney
All Prices in LD\$							
BOMI	Tubmanburg	33	10	50	10	75	100
	Village shop	25		60	30	75	100
GRAND CAPE MOUNT	Country market	25	10	60	25	50	100
	Sinje	35	10	50	30	70	100
	Village shop	30	10	64	28	62	113
MARGIBI	Country market	31	19	74	39	100	225
	Kakata	33	18	63	26	115	188
	Village shop	30	10	64	33	63	149
MONTSERRADO	Monrovia	40	20	50	20	90	100
SINOE	Greenville	30	10	60	30	160	200
GRAND BASSA	Buchanan	40	8	50	23	75	200
RIVERCESS	Country market	20	10	60	10	100	100

- In the next Situation Report, MoA’s Coordinators will diversify their food price monitoring to cover all locally grown and widely eaten food items such as Pepper, Okra, Bitter Balls, Roots and Tuber Crops [Cassava, Potatoes, Eddoes] by piles as they are sold in rural markets.
- In spite of the COVID 19 cases in those counties, farmers are going ahead with farming to ensure food crops supplies. Agriculture Coordinators narrate farmers now remain on their respective farms from dawn to sunset in all parts of Liberia as County Superintendents and Security forces are not subjecting them to the lockdown restrictions on movements.
- MoA’s Coordinators and local authorities continue to relay COVID -19 awareness and prevention messages to farmers using inter-personal and community FM stations communication channels.
- Not losing track of a basic development planning tool –Gender Mainstreaming –in the agriculture sector during this COVID 19 Pandemic, Liberia’s former Agriculture Minister, Moses Zinnah (PhD), as Lead, releases a report which highlighted *“Gender assessment of the policy environment in relation to the cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber value chains in Liberia”*.
- The report sponsored by PROFOREST says: “Liberia has made significant progress in enacting many policies and strategies, including the National Gender Policy, that are attempting to address gender inequality issues, especially women’s rights and inclusion in all sectors of the economy, including the cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber value chains...However, the many policies, regulations and strategies that have been developed are not properly synchronised and consolidated”. It assesses: “The objectives of mainstreaming and promoting gender equality and women’s rights in these value chains are not being achieved”



Food Security

- There is no reported food shortage in Monrovia and its surrounding suburbs as the Government of Liberia continues to ensure regular supplies. The supermarket shelves are not emptied and food market stalls are filled with varieties of locally grown crops and varieties of vegetables.
- Local food crops, oil palm, vegetable and poultry farms in the hinterland are transporting their products to Monrovia and doing home deliveries through online booking and usage of mobile phone applications mainly WhatsApp and Short Messaging System (SMS).
- These farms, from northern to central Liberia, include: **SANKOFA FARMS, SUMO FARMS, PASSION FARMS and FEED ORGANICS.**

Lockdown Home Gardens

- A group of young Liberians under the banner, Agro Tech Liberia, has launched an emergency food security strategy aimed at bridging the food supply gap by training and Liberians in innovative home gardening during this lock down and stay home measures.



RESPONSE:

In its Emergency Food Security Response, the MOA has highlighted the need for the expansion of cultivable areas to boost agricultural production of food crops. One facet of this expansion is the introduction of urban and rural gardens named, Triumph Gardens with the theme: “Feed Ourselves”. This campaign is aimed at lessening Liberia’s

dependence on imported food products, rebranding agriculture in the eyes of our youth, reorienting our agricultural sector into organic and sustainable models and ensuring overall food and nutritional security.

Farmers Constraints

- Farmers Union Network of Liberia, an umbrella organization of Liberian farmers which was founded in February 2008 and now has membership 54,000 farmers, seven Federations and 114 Cooperatives throughout the country, reports three main issues affecting farmers:
 - 1) *Limited access to planting materials and inputs due to high prices. Most of these inputs were obtained from neighboring countries but the borders are now closed due to COVID-19.*
 - 2) *Too many checkpoints along the highway unduly delay food commodities coming to markets.*
 - 3) *Rice farmers with paddy rice seeds do not have market access to sell their rice in order to earn income for livelihood.*
- **GROW**, an agri-business and investment advisory program, recommends in its report released this week: “Open a Preference Lane for Food and Goods” at various security checkpoints in rural Liberia which are enforcing the lockdown. With that, it says, “This will accelerate the travel time for vehicles transporting perishable food commodities – furthering reducing food costs and continuing to motivate farm production and trade”.
- Agriculture Liberia Incorporated, a multipurpose Liberian-owned farm in northern Liberia, Nimba County, is nearing 400 acres of rice planting with an additional 45 acres for vegetables. It is now targeting a substantial acreage for onion production in this planting season. However, the farm needs agro equipment like rice harvesters, mini rice mills and powers tillers along with fertilizers.



RESPONSE:

The MoA's has completed the procurement plans under its Emergency Food Security Plan to provide farming inputs and implements to farmers. Since March, the ministry started giving out power tillers to farmers which international donors brought into country for farmers. The MoA has been working with the World Bank and the African Development Bank to ensure the speedy procurement of the inputs under its plan. This plans also deals with procurement of processed cassava products, rice, beans and palm oil to store as Liberia's first food reserve to mitigate shocks and disruptions in the availability of food supplies should the pandemic continues.

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