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Agriculture Minister Dispels Rumors on Matching Grant Program

[Monrovia, Liberia – October 8, 2024] – Agriculture Minister Dr. J. Alexander Nuetah, has firmly dispelled recent rumors regarding the suspension of the agricultural matching grants program. Speaking at a press briefing held at the Ministry of Information, Dr. Nuetah clarified that the program has not been halted by the Ministry but rather temporarily paused in response to a request from the World Bank. The request was made to facilitate a comprehensive review, ensuring the program is fully aligned with the National Agriculture Development Plan (NADP) objectives.

“The Ministry has not placed any hold on the matching grants,” Dr. Nuetah affirmed. “We are cooperating with the World Bank, which is conducting a mid-term review of the Rural Economic and Transformation Project (RETRAP). This review is critical in assessing the alignment of the program’s more than 20 initiatives with the National Agriculture Development Plan.”

Dr. Nuetah further disclosed that, under the Smallholder Agriculture Transformation Project (STAR-P), 14 project proposals were submitted and approved for consideration by the World Bank. However, he noted that the Bank had requested a reassessment of the review processes that contributed to the recommendations for these projects.

A World Bank team is currently in Liberia as part of the mid-term review process for the STAR-P and RETRAP initiatives. These programs, which include matching grant components, are vital to supporting smallholder farmers and agribusinesses, integral to the government’s broader strategy for promoting agricultural development and fostering economic growth. The programs are managed by the Liberia Agriculture Commercialization Fund (LACF), funded by the World Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The LACF plays a crucial role in providing financial access to farmers and encouraging private sector investments that boost agricultural productivity and commercialization nationwide.

In addition, Minister Nuetah highlighted that the Ministry is reviewing the contract for the financial firm currently managing the LACF. This review, expected to conclude by November, aims to ensure that the fund continues to operate efficiently and meets its stated goals of transforming Liberia’s agricultural sector.