



# Republic of Liberia Ministry of Agriculture

## COVID-19 FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE SITUATION REPORT# 2

April 28, 2020

### Highlights

- In a statement on April 24, His Excellency President George Manneh extended Liberia's lockdown for additional 15 days with compulsory wearing of face masks in public to contain the virus spread. The first 14 days relaxed lockdown started from April 11 and ended April 24.
- Forty-two new confirmed COVID-19 cases and 18 recoveries reported from the issuance of the first Ministry of Agriculture's Situation Report on April 19 to April 26. The total confirmed cases from March 16 up to April 26 is 133 with 26 persons recovered.
- The virus has now spread to four other counties from three before April 19 thus affecting seven of Liberia's 15 counties.

### Situation Overview

- On April 23, His Excellency President Weah, through teleconference, addressed 14 Presidents of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at an Extraordinary Summit on the impacts of Covid-19 on the region. The Authority of ECOWAS Heads of State and Government agreed, among others agenda items, to increase domestic agriculture production.
- At separate ministerial levels, Liberia's Agriculture Minister, Jeanine M. Cooper, also virtually joined her counterparts of the African Union and ECOWAS. They agreed to continuous collaboration and knowledge sharing on stepping up domestic food production in their respective countries to mitigate the pandemic impacts on food security.
- The increase in confirmed Covid-19 cases in cocoa-rich Nimba county, from two cases as at the time of the maiden Situation Report to five cases, now poses risk to cocoa farmers and farming in that county. This may hinder cocoa exports that would shrink national revenue and affect livelihood. Montserrado where the Capital, Monrovia is situated, has 122 cases.
- Collectively, there are three new confirmed cases in the heavily forested southeastern region's timber, cassava, rice and oil palm belt of Sinoe and River Gee Counties respectively, while Maryland County, where fishing and oil palm are sources of livelihood, has a single case. Margibi County, a horticulture and rice region which did not have a confirmed case reported at the issuance of our first Situation Report, now has two cases. Cattle breeding Grand Kru County still has a single case.
- Within three weeks of negotiations, the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) secured funding through persuasive efforts with the Government of Liberia, African Development Bank (ABD), International Funds for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank to support the COVID-19 National Emergency Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihood Plan. It contains four implementation pillars should the Covid-19 pandemic continues amidst global shut down which may affect food imports and food systems. Empowering local farmers and supporting agribusinesses to thrive are the focus of this plan.

# COVID-19 National Emergency Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihood Plan Snapshot

## PRE-POSITIONING OF FOOD STOCKS

MoA and WFP begin emergency purchase of rice, cassava, edible oils, beans and pulses ahead of the rainy season. Emergency distribution targets the most vulnerable households, as well as households facing lost income as a result of the COVID emergency.

Other stocks are pre-positioned in warehouses and storage facilities in hard-to-reach areas.

## COORDINATION

Seamlessly working with government ministries and public entities; international finance institutions and development partners; private sector companies; commercial and investment banks; as well as smallholders and other farmers; cooperatives; agro-processors; and agro-allied industries requires synergies across networks and communities of practice.



## EXPANDING CULTIVATION

Boost local production of staple crops -rice, cassava, edible oils, beans, vegetables- to mitigate imminent slow-downs in global trade, and the worst effects of worldwide recession. Private-Public Partnership that utilize existing infrastructure and untapped potential for crop production is scaled up to meet demand. Emergency purchase and distribution of seeds, tools and equipment, possibly using vouchers and e-wallet solutions.

## AGRO PROCESSING

A stimulus for agro-processors will transform crops and raw materials, into consumer-ready food. When existing processing plants remain operational, this will preserve jobs and incomes, and boost local production capacities during the emergency period and beyond.

With funding and support from:





## Food Security

### Food Availability and Affordability

- The Government of Liberia, through the National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority, made a significant intervention in price reduction for each case of different fishery products by US\$ 2.00 to ensure affordability for the public during this lockdown.
- Crops production in rural Liberia is ongoing, and for the time being, there are still locally grown and imported food products available on the Liberian markets.
- As reported and because of the lockdown, Liberian-owned vegetables farm, FEED, situated in northern Liberia Nimba County along with a poultry, PASSION FARMS in central region -Bong County, are utilizing online shopping models to deliver produce and livestock to customers. They can be reached at:

<b>FEED</b>	<b>+231880555551 WhatsApp</b>
<b>PASSION FARMS</b>	<b>0777718016</b>

### Price Monitoring:

- Price monitoring of basic food items are essential component during emergencies. In so doing, the European Union-Liberia Agriculture Programme -- Prosperous Agriculture Roadmap to Nutrition and Entrepreneurship, Reinforcing Sustainability (EULAP-PARTNERS) Programme is working with the MoA COVID-19 response with data monitoring of market prices of basic agriculture produce. They include: Welthungerhilfe (Lead); Concern Worldwide; ZOA; SPARK.
- According to ZOA, there are “four levels of market: Urban (Red light, and Duala), Semi-Urban (County Capitals), Rural (local communities) and Country Markets (weekly aggregated rural markets). The data for the month of April has been provided primarily from Monrovia, Kakata, Greenville and an aggregation of rural markets in Margibi and Bomi”. See table below of prices collected:

Location	Rice Cup	Gari	Wet Fufu Ball	Bony Fish	Stock Cubes
<b>All prices are in Liberian dollars</b>					
MONROVIA	50-53	40	35	100	23
KAKATA	50-53	35	20	100	20
GREENVILLE	60	50	20	200	23
<b>Average prices in other rural parts</b>					
OTHER RURAL PARTS	72	33	12	140	31

- The analysis shows prices are beginning to rise in both urban and rural markets. For a large part, this has to do with fuel shortages in the month of March. The planned

Household Food Support Program is likely to impact local producers and domestic informal markets.

**RESPONSE:** In an effort to boost cultivation, the MoA and its partners like Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), CNFA-LADA, and Global Agro are intensifying plans to help local farmers gain access to farming implements ahead of this planting season. Moreover, the MoA, through its newly released Emergency Food Security Plan, is accelerating the purchase of tools, equipment and seeds locally for farmers for this planting season by expanding cultivation.



## Food Assistance

- The United Nations food assistance agency, World Food Program (WFP) through direct budgetary support of US\$ 25 million from the GOL with additional funding from the World Bank will conduct rapid household food security support to an estimated 1.97 million inhabitants amounting to 394,000 households in four targeted lockdown counties. They are Montserrado, Nimba, Margibi and Grand Kru Counties.

**RESPONSE:** The 22-member National Steering Committee, which is chaired by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and co-chaired by the MoA; and appointed by President Weah, is coordinating this food security support under banner: “The COVID-19 Household Food Support Program (COHFSP)”. Identification of targeted beneficiaries and procurement of food through domestic markets are in concluding stages.



## Livelihoods

- The Liberia Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority (LACRA) reported that the pandemic has affected the export of cocoa and coffee from Liberia as exporters are no longer buying from farmers. Cocoa and coffee are rapidly perishing in warehouses. LACRA serves as state regulator of all agricultural trade, particularly those involving cocoa, coffee, and oil palm.
- According to the National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia (NOPPOL), “At present, some rural smallholders oil palm farmers are now requesting food items instead of cash from large holders. This points to an issue around food insecurity for smallholders; especially if large holders cannot supply them with food items”.

**RESPONSE:** As part of its food pre-positioning, the MoA is working with large scale oil palm concessionaires as well as oil palm Small and Medium Enterprises to buy available stocks of red palm oil and store them against any potential food shortage.



## COORDINATION

- The MoA, as lead for the Pillar on Food Security and Nutrition, hosts a virtual coordination meeting this week –under the aegis of its newly restructured Program Management Unit –with all stakeholders in the agriculture sector that includes state actors, UN agencies, donors, INGOs, farmers, agro equipment suppliers and agribusiness chain.
- The core objectives of this coordination structure are: “Identifying specific food security needs of individuals and communities affected by, or at risk of being affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Coordinate preparedness, response and recovery actions

*at community and national levels that will result in saving lives, improved livelihoods and increased resilience of households and communities”.*

- The FAO is distributing 10 metric tons of seeds and tools to farmers in Bong and Lofa.

**RESPONSE:** The virtual coordination meeting is to begin the tracking process of WHO DOES, WHAT & WHERE to avoid activities duplications and identify gaps in food security and the agriculture sector where interventions will be needed. This model has not been implemented by the MoA.

With this, GOL can effectively monitor and track activities of INGOs and NGOs and monitor funds utilization so they can be aligned with GOL’s agriculture development agenda.

GROW Liberia has published a series of blogs and articles on ways to leverage local markets during a crisis. GROW also has several tools that can be used to track the impact of food and non-food interventions during crisis.

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has also published a number of lessons-learned blogs and articles on preserving local markets during emergencies.

**Five considerations for supporting markets in crisis:**

1. **Identify needs:** conduct a problem analysis to consider what has happened, and what is likely to happen.
2. **Identify potential responses:** market assessments prove useful in illuminating market gaps. These gaps will point to whether or not a cash or in-kind intervention or simply supplying information and structuring new trade relationships, for examples, are most needed.
3. **Improve how aid is delivered:** think and work creatively to bolster networks and support households to deliver support – rather than delivering it directly.
4. **Work with the private sector:** a critical approach to thinking about who the market players are would facilitate thinking about the most constructive way to support economic activity. Often, the private sector brings goods, networks, logistics, and finance that are needed – and would be difficult and nonsensical for agencies or governments develop in parallel.
5. **Preparedness and disaster risk reduction:** understanding the different ways crises and aid change markets enables agencies to act ahead of crisis to strengthen the resilience of market systems.

*For more information: [Markets in crises: the implications for humanitarian action](#)*

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