



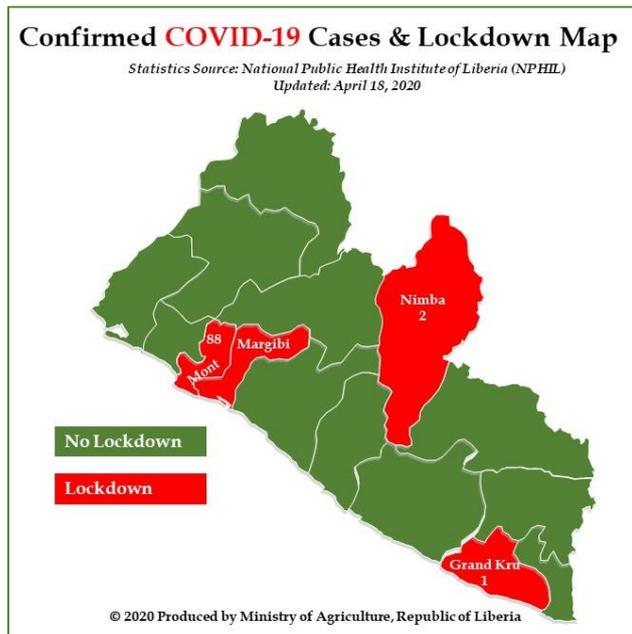
Republic of Liberia Ministry of Agriculture

COVID-19 FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE SITUATION REPORT# 1

April 19, 2020

Highlights

- From March 16 to April 18, Liberia has registered 91 COVID-19 confirmed cases. Seven recovered and eight deaths. Confirmed cases are in three of Liberia's fifteen counties.
- On April 8, His Excellency, President George M. Weah declared a State of Emergency and a 14-day lockdown in four Liberian counties which started on April 11 to contain the virus spread.
- On April 17, the National Legislature approved President Weah's declaration of a State of Emergency that includes a stimulus package to provide emergency food aid to vulnerable groups; purchase of locally grown food crops; and payments of utilities bills to mitigate the effects of the lockdown on the population.
- President Weah, also on April 18, named the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) as Co-Chair of a 20-member National Steering Committee –of select government agencies, multilateral bodies, religious groups, political parties and civil society institutions –to provide oversight on the COVID-19 Household Food Support Program (COHFSP) funded through the national budget.
- The MOA has accordingly prepared a COVID-19 National Emergency Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihood Plan should the pandemic continues amidst global shut down which may affect food imports and food systems in Liberia.



Situation Overview

- The general situation is calm as the Government, private entities, community and religious leaders are rigorously conducting nation-wide COVID-19 awareness to contain its spread.
- The Government has a relaxed lockdown allowing the public to go out in search for food supplies and needed accessories from dawn to 15:00 hours. There are movements restriction after 15:00 hours to allow the public stay home to contain the virus spread.

- Montserrado County, where the country's capital Monrovia is located, has the highest number of confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- Nimba County, a major food and cash crop producing belt, has a single case, while Margibi, noted for rubber and horticulture production, has no confirmed case, but is quarantined to allow for contacts tracing.
- Other major food producing counties –Bong (Central Liberia) and Lofa (Northwestern Liberia) have no confirmed cases of the COVID-19 reported. But farmers are still at risk in those two counties since they lie along the borders with neighboring countries with confirmed cases.



Food Security

- President Weah has named the Minister of Agriculture as lead on Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihood (FSNL) Pillar on the Presidential Emergency Committee on COVID-19 (ECOC).
- Liberia, as a heavily dependent country on food imports, may experience shocks in its food supplies if the lockdown continues in India where most of its staple, rice, is imported.
- The MOA has been engaging local farmers to stockpile locally grown food crops to support food reserves should import and trade movements of food products be disrupted.
- Active working engagements of the MOA with local food producers –rice, cassava and oil palm through their established platforms –to ensure supply of these key products on the market.



Coordination

- The MOA has reactivated the Agriculture Donor Working Group (ADWG), a platform of bilateral and multilateral partners to coordinate responses for impacts.
- Also activated is the Food Security and Nutrition Group consisting of local farmers, producers, processors, agribusinesses and sector NGOs actors to form a synergy to ensure regular supply of locally grown agriculture produce.

- A Movement Control Office (MOCO) has been set up at the MOA to facilitate movements of actors in the agriculture sector and ensure the continuous supply of food across the country.
- A mobile phone-based system has been set-up to facilitate easy acquisition of COVID-19 Travel Passes by farmers, agribusinesses, agriculture commodities transporter, processors and other agriculture actors across Liberia with an MTN short code *747*104#.
- The short code is linked to card reader which will be deployed to each MOA county office to facilitate the printing of these passes across the country.

Constraints:

- **Due to the lockdown, an assessment on food security and vulnerability has been put on hold. The assessment, to be conducted jointly by the UN -FAO and WFP- and the MOA examines current market prices of basic food products at various locations around Liberia in order to determine accessibility and availability of food.**



Livelihoods

- The Government of Liberia has granted unhindered access to concessionaires that include oil palm and rubber plantations which have been one of the main sources of rural livelihoods and national revenue prior to the lockdown.
- The MOA is working with the agriculture concessions under the umbrella group of the Liberia Agriculture Companies Association (LACA) to minimize the disruptions to Liberia's main agricultural exporters. A stimulus package for local Liberian rubber farmers is being studied and it is hoped that some relief will soon be brought to bear.

Constraints:

- **The suspension of the purchasing of rubber from local farmers is a major challenge for the sector that is one of the largest formal employers in the country. Many small farms may have to shut down until purchasing starts again.**

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