



Republic of Liberia Ministry of Agriculture

COVID-19 FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE SITUATION REPORT #5

Reporting Period:
May 15- May 22, 2020

Release Date:
May 23, 2020

Highlights

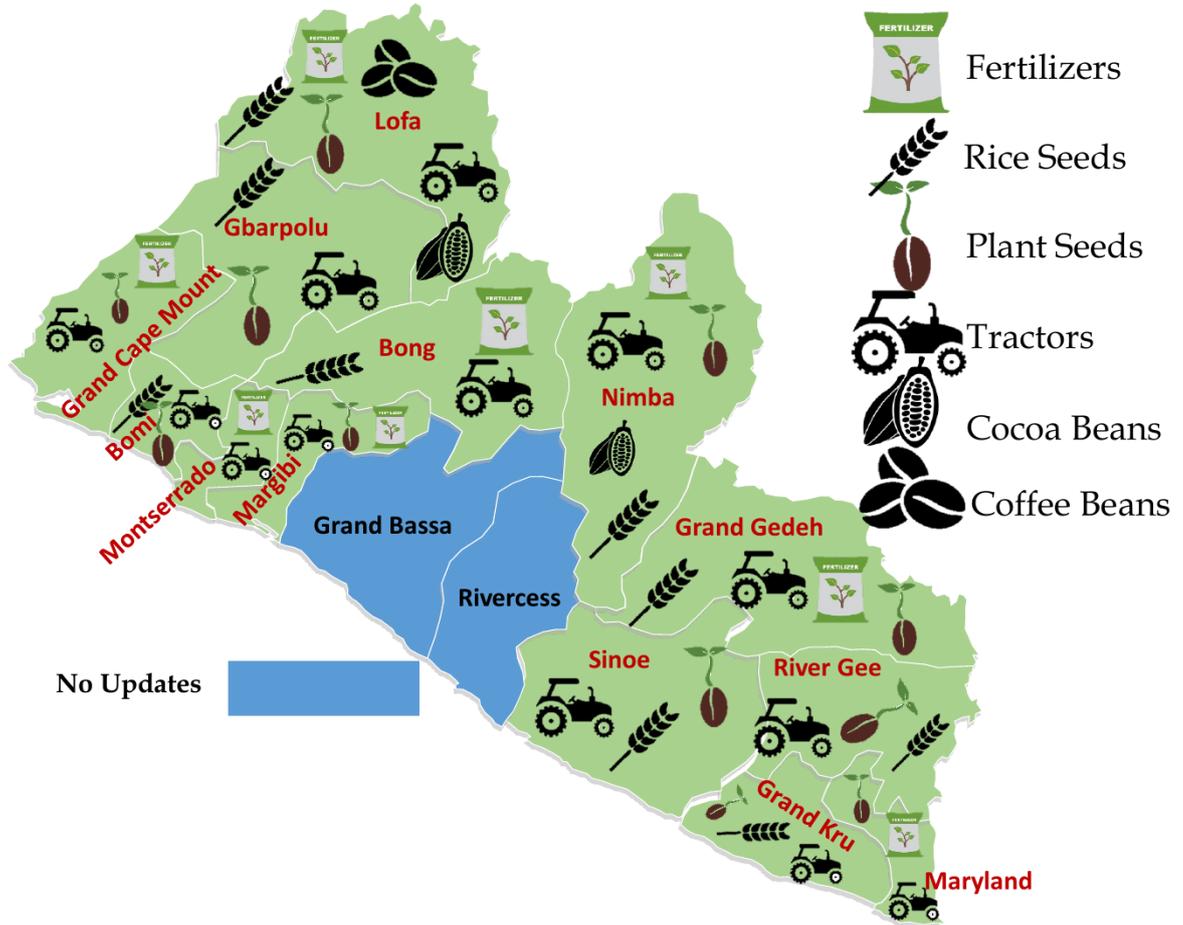
- His Excellency, President George Manneh Weah Sr., on May 22, extended –for the third time –Liberia’s COVID-19 relaxed lockdown for additional two weeks starting May 23. The President correspondingly adjusted the STAY HOME time from 15:00 to dusk to dawn with time precision -18:00 to 06: 00.
- The Liberian Leader’s mandate further allows restaurants along with food commodities, dry goods, building materials and electronic appliances stores to reopen with caveats to permit 25% customers intake at a shopping time and ensure social distancing.
- From the lastly issued Situation Report on May 14 to May 21, the number of positive cases climbed from 215 to 249. The virus also hit Liberia’s second deep-water port city of Buchanan, Grand Bassa County at 92 miles (148 km) east of the Liberian capital, Monrovia.
- Grand Bassa County now becomes the 9th Liberian county affected by the COVID-19 virus which translates to 60% of Liberia’s 15 counties battling to contain the virus spread since March 16.
- Because of the increase, the Government of Liberia with support from multilateral partners, opened a voluntary testing center at the country’s main stadium premises situated at Monrovia’s eastern aegis, while two sample collection centers –meant for testing –were established in the western and eastern suburbs of Monrovia.
- There is a major scarcity of fertilizers in the country as farmers, through Ministry of Agriculture’s Coordinators in rural Liberia, lament the shortage hampers crops production in this farming season.

Situation Overview

- As reported by the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL), Liberia’s confirmed COVID-19 patients now undergoing treatment stand at 89, while those recovered went up from 123 to 136 during the period under review from May 13 to May 21.
- The closure of neighboring countries’ borders with Liberia and the restricted inter-county movements of people during lockdown is creating huge demand for fertilizers to enhance crops, fruits, legumes, cocoa and coffee farming at planting early stages.

- Nimba County, which produces substantial outputs of Liberia’s locally grown cabbage, is feeling the pinch of fertilizers’ scarcity.

Liberia’s Farming Implements Scarcity Map



©2020 Map produced by the Ministry of Agriculture’s Program Management Unit (PMU)

- The insufficiency has caused an increase in a widely eaten legume. A 50-kg rice bag-size of cabbage, once sold for US\$ 40 before the lockdown, is now marketed at US\$ 75, Ministry of Agriculture’s (MoA) County Agriculture Coordinators report.
- Unavailability of variety of seeds and tractors exists in all parts of Liberia as the planting season draws closer.
- The Government of Liberia (GOL), through the MoA’s formulated COVID-19 Emergency Food Security Response Plan, is fast tracking the procurement process of various types of fertilizers and tractors for distribution to farmers across the country ahead of the planting season.
- Three multilateral partners: African Development Bank, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank are funding the plan.
- Moreover, MoA is working with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to avail tractors and maize seeds to farmers.

- The FAO has also purchased seed rice from local farmers and verified their qualities through the country's National Standards Laboratory. This puts money back into farmers' pockets to replant this farming season.
- A seed rice demonstration field in the heavily forested southeastern Liberia town of Jarkeken in River Gee County which the country's agriculture research center, the Central Agriculture Institute (CARI) set up, is ready for harvest.
- The harvest will enable farmers have access to rice seeds in that part of Liberia. The African Development Bank and Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GAFSP) funded Smallholder Agricultural Productivity Enhancement & Commercialization (SAPEC), under the MoA, financed the demonstration field



Food Security

Lockdown Impediments

- Rice farmers, through their umbrella organization the National Rice Federation of Liberia, report lack of agriculture technicians and limited manpower on farms to engage in rice production due to restricted movements of people during lockdown.
- The Cooperative Development Agency (CDA), a dependency institution of the MoA, also reports reduction of farmers on farms due to social distancing COVID-19 health protocol. Farmers in cooperatives normally farm in groups of more than 20 persons. The agency worries that food production this year will drop due to the social distancing on farms.
- The National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority (NAFAA) reveals a decline in fish and crustaceans' products locally as fishermen have limited time at sea since they were not fishing when the 15:00 to dawn lockdown was enforced.

Sufficient Pepper Output

- The pepper outputs this harvest season are impressive which result into decline in retail prices of peppers at different parts from the country from LD\$100 to LD\$ 10-LD\$50 a pile on the average except for peri urban Montserrado County and its western neighbor, Bomi County. These two counties maintain higher retail prices of pepper than the rest of the counties.

Increase in animal products prices

- Cattle, goats and sheep breeders still struggle to import these animal livestock into the country from neighboring Guinea and the West African State of Mali as a result of the border closure. The animal breeders warn there could be inadequacy of fresh meat supplies on the market a month from now if measures are not taken to reopen the borders.
- A pound of cow meat previously sold for LD\$ 450 is now LD\$ 550, while a pound of goat meat jumped from LD\$ 700 to LD\$ 800 in Monrovia.

Food Prices Monitoring

MOA'S COUNTY COORDINATORS' FOOD PRICES MONITORING INDEX (LD\$ ONLY)

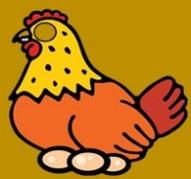
County	Sold by Pile							Gallon
	Pepper	Bitter Ball	Okra	Cassava	Potato	Eddo	Fufu	Palm Oil
Montserrado	100	100	100	200	150	100	100	850
Sinoe	20	20	20	100	100	100	10	500
Maryland	30	100	20	100	100	100	20	650
Grand Cape Mount	25	25	25	200	200	100	20	900
Grand Gedeh	25	20	20	50	100	50	20	1,500
Nimba	10	10	15	50	50	100	25	500
Bong	50	50	100	100	100	200	20	500
Lofa	50	50	50	50	100	100	50	900
Bomi	100	100	200	200	200	200	10	800
Grand Kru	20	50	20	100	100	100	5	400
Margibi	50	100	100	100	100	200	100	600
River Gee	50	20	20	50	100	100	20	750
Gbarpolu	25	25	25	50	50	50	10	800

Grand Bassa & Rivercess could not be reached for updates.

Prices of 25-kg imported rice remain the same from last Situation Report.

- According to a consortium of international non-governmental organizations – led by ZOA - into food prices monitoring in collaboration with the MoA, the price of a cup of rice continues to reduce. “Whether this reduction will continue, or whether the price will stabilize at a higher rate than March, is still unclear”, the group says.
- Liberian farmers are mitigating food supply shortages by doing home deliveries of vegetables, crops, swine and poultry products –directly from their farms –during this lockdown. They are:

A SNAPSHOT OF LIBERIAN FARMS DOING HOME DELIVERIES

				
Sumo Farms 0777959359 0555372955	✓	✓	✓	✓
Passion Farms 0777718016 0776732612	✓	✓	✓	✓
FEED ORGANICS 0880555551	✓	✓	✓	✓
MATAMETH FARMS 0770033000 0775517097	✓	✓	✓	✓

A partial view of Feed Organics Vegetable Farms in Nimba County and delivery to Monrovia



RESPONSE: The MoA is working closely with the National Response Coordinator for the Executive Committee on Coronavirus (ECOC) in Liberia, to ease the restrictions of the lockdown on fishermen, cooperatives and rice farmers.

Additionally, through the ECOC, discussions are being held after request from the MoA, to allow cross-border movements of poultry feeds, cattle and sheep.

Livelihood

- Liberia Agriculture Commodity Regulatory Authority (LACRA) says private cocoa and coffee buying agents, mostly stationed in Monrovia, are no longer traveling leeward to buy these export tree crops fruits. This may cause a shrink in Liberia's revenue envelope and affect the livelihood of tree crops farmers in Lofa and Nimba Counties.
- The Daily Observer newspaper reports Firestone Natural Rubber Company of Liberia has resumed gradual operations, but is not buying from local rubber producers as the paper quoted the company, "the outside purchase of natural rubber remains on hold due to current COVID-19 precautions and an oversupply of raw material on hand".
- The Firestone's policy is hindering the livelihoods of small scale rubber farmers who depend on the company to purchase their latex. However, LAC, a rubber

concession in Grand Bassa, has stepped into the breach for purchasing rubber from local farmers throughout the period since Firestone stopped buying.

- One of Liberia's two major foreign oil palm concessionaires, Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL) laid off 440 employees in its concession areas –Sinoe and Grand Kru Counties – due to the slowness in its operations as of a result of the COVID-19.

RESPONSE: The MoA has shared its Movement Control Service Information procedures with LACRA to enable its export agents use the mobile application system to request passes.

The GOL engaged GVL and reached an understanding with the company to rehire those redundant staff once the company's operations resume.



Funding

- The National Legislature approves Liberia's recast Fiscal Budget 2019/2020 in which it allocates US\$ 25 million for Food Assistance in this COVID 19 emergency period.
- The World Bank approves US\$ 10.5 million funding support to the Government of Liberia (GOL) through the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) for its COVID 19 Food Security, Nutrition and Livelihood Plan.
- Upon a recent request from the GOL, the funding was drawn from which the Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC) within the World Bank's funded Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project (STAR-P) which kicked off in 2019 and is directed and supervised by the MoA through its Program Management Unit (PMU).
- Within the CERC, the United Nations food assistance agency, World Food Program (WFP) and the MoA signed a Memorandum of Understanding to activate a component of CERC valued at US\$ 5 million. This represents an initial funding for the COVID Household Food Support Program.

RESPONSE: The MoA is ensuring proper accountability of funds through adoption and adherence to state-owned and donors financial and procurement standards thereby making sure there is integrity of the process.



Coordination

- Through Executive Order # 101 issued by the President last month, the newly operationalized National Food Assistance Agency (NFAA) held its first Board meeting on May 21st to chart the entity's programs and activities. The Minister of Agriculture chairs the NFAA's nine-member Board.

RESPONSE: The MoA is ensuring NFAA is supported and functional.



Farming Support Services



MOA COVID19
Transport Verification System

- STEP 1**
 - Dial *747*104# use the MOA Movement Control Service
 - A menu with 1. Apply for a permit, 2. Request my code and 3. verify a permit will appear
- STEP 2**
 - Enter 1 to apply for the permit
 - Type your full name
- STEP 3**
 - Choose your occupation
 - Choose what type of trip you making, one way or round trip
- STEP 4**
 - Enter your departure county and city
 - Enter your destination county and city
- STEP 5**
 - Enter the length of your trip
- STEP 6**
 - Your unique reference code will be issued to you. A MOVCON Assistant from the MOA will then call you to obtain necessary details and approve your permit

CALL THE FOLLOWING NUMBERS FOR HELP, VERIFICATION AND INFORMATION:
 0880910592
 077746264
 Email: moco@moa.gov.lr

The MoA through its Movement Control Services (MOCO) that handles passes for farmers and agro processors and workers, has established two hotlines and an email account. The hotline numbers are 0880910592 and 077746264. The email is: moco@moa.gov.lr.

Many farmers have started using the MOCO services and are transporting food products from across counties.

**PRODUCED BY THE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT UNIT (PMU)
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**

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