



Republic of Liberia Ministry of Agriculture

COVID-19 FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE SITUATION REPORT#6

Reporting Period:
May 23- May 29, 2020

Release Date:
May 30, 2020

Highlights

- On Saturday, May 23, the Government of Liberia (GOL) commenced food distribution under the presidential established COVID-19 Household Food Support Program (COHFSP) in collaboration with the United Nations food assistance agency, World Food Program (WFP), to socially disadvantaged groups: orphans, deprived children, visually impaired and physical challenged persons.
- Liberia's COVID-19 Confirmed cases continue to rise even though there are more recoveries. During the period under review, the positive cases increased from 249 on May 21 to 288 on May 30 and the cases have spread to the 10th Liberian county as disclosed by the National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL).
- Here is the snapshot of cases from March 16 to present:



- Liberian local authorities and their Guinean counterparts are now allowing cross border movements of agriculture produce and inputs through four of Liberia's border points: Ganta and Yekepa in northern Liberia Nimba County as well as Yeala and Voinjama in Lofa County in the northwest in small quantities.
- High cost of commercial transport fares, in spite of the reduction in pump prices of petroleum products, is causing price increase of food crops in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, local sellers say. Sellers usually bring farm produce -vegetables and other food crops -from leeward to the capital.

Situation Overview

- Major food basket, cocoa and coffee-rich, Lofa County, is now the 10th Liberian county hit by the COVID-19 with two cases reported.
- The case in Lofa raises concerns of increased risk to farmers there since the county is the lead farming area for rice, cocoa and coffee. Lofa County and that entire northwestern belt of Liberia border the Republics of Guinea and Sierra Leone.
- As a heavily depended nation on animal products from neighboring Guinea, the Ministry of Agriculture's (MoA) Coordinators report that cattle, sheep and goats have

started coming from Guinea through the plain land border post near Yekepa unlike from the main cross-point in Ganta. The retail prices of a pound of cow meat, mutton and goat meat remain stable however.

- Farmers who work with Liberia's Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI) on the production of certified rice seeds are currently harvesting their rice. These farmers are located in River Gee and Grand Gedeh counties. These foundation seeds can be sold to other local farmers who are doing seed multiplication. The production of certified seeds is a core part of the process of expanding rice cultivation in the country.



Food Security

- This report looks into food security issues in three of Liberia's major agriculture regions.

Northwestern Region

- In Grand Cape Mount County, the high cost of public transport from one location to another within the county has created an increase in the 50-kg size of Gari, the local name for processed cassava middling.
- There is only one partly functional cassava processor –with intermittent breakdowns –in that northwestern region which constrained farmers to trek; and sometimes, had to transport their raw cassava from faraway distances to have them processed into middling.
- These two factors are contributing to the high cost of Gari. Because of these, a bag of Gari increased from LD\$3500 to US\$4500, the MoA's Regional Coordinator for Bomi, Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu Counties reveals.
- The County Coordinator in Gbarpolu notes with concern the serious shortage of pesticides for vegetable farmers as pests continue to destroy vegetable farms in this early planting season.

Southeastern Region

- In this region unlike in Gbarpolu, the MoA's Coordinators report a huge stock of vegetables with no buyers. This region, with impassable dirt road during this time of the year, consists of Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Maryland, River Gee and Sinoe counties.
- Another challenge hindering food security is the lack of seed threshers to process rice seeds which farmers normally sell to enable them acquire income to replant.

Central Region

- Farmers in the Central Region: Bong, Nimba and Lofa counties have been lacking behind schedule on the farming season due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Majority has just started clearing their upland (dry land) for rice farming, while those on the low land (swampy terrain) have not started clearing and planting yet, the Regional Coordinator reports. This poses delay in the next rice harvest season.

- Huge demands for agro equipment as the MoA's Regional Office begins to loan out available power tillers to farmers based on need assessments. Only three among seven of such tractors are loaned at the moment. Farmers are lining up for the rest.
- As a region which is heavily dependent on neighboring Guinea and La Côte D'Ivoire for agrochemicals and agro equipment, farmers are now feeling the pain of border closures – a measure taken to contain the cross-country spread of COVID-19.
- A piece of an imported blacksmith hoe from Guinea has gone up from LD\$350 to LD\$ 950 while a widely used insecticides in a 157 ml [as a milk tin size] named EC440 and imported from neighboring Guinea and La Côte D'Ivoire to that region, used to be sold for 300LD and is now on the market between LD\$800 to LD\$900. Hoe is an important material for subsistence farmers to do land preparations before planting.
- Lofa is now harvesting cocoa and coffee. Still in Lofa, Makona River Farms in Foya which lies between Guinea and Sierra Leone is doing 82 plots of rice farm through power tiller rental from Global Agro Inc.

RESPONSE:

- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has procured three tractors and assorted spare parts as a contribution to agriculture and food security in Liberia. The tractors are parked at the Ministry's premises until the launch of the program of support to farmers for land preparation.
- Resources are being made available through agro-dealers across the country to purchase seed rice just ahead of planting season in Liberia. The funding comes from USAID through the Cultivating New Frontiers in Agriculture -Liberian Agribusiness Development Authority (CNFA-LADA) project. The seed rice purchase will begin the first week of June.
- Applications for funding for agriculture Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and informal agribusinesses will begin in early June as well. This is part of the Ministry's Emergency Food Security Response to COVID-19 and is being availed as part of the World Bank-funded Smallholder Transformation & Agribusiness Revitalization Project (STAR-P) under its Contingency Emergency Response Component.
- The grants will be for up to \$10,000 for duly registered Agriculture SMEs as 60:40 matching grants against a business plan; and an amount of up to \$1,000 for informal sector enterprises with proven operations of at least six months. The Request for Applications will be announced on various platforms including on the MoA's website.

Food Prices:

- Through the GOL assistance, more commercial rice dealers are now transporting rice from Monrovia to rural parts without hindrances as a way of making the staple food available and affordable in the hinterland.
- Food prices around Liberia still remain the same with no report of increase from the issuance of the last Situation on May 23.

**MOA & ZOA CONSOLIDATED COUNTY FOOD PRICES
MONITORING INDEX (LD\$ ONLY)**

County	Sold by Pile							Sold by Cup				Gallon
	Pepper	Bitter Ball	Okra	Cassava	Potato	Eddo	Fufu	Bony	Cup of Rice	Beans	Gari	Palm Oil
Montserrado	100	100	100	200	150	100	100	100	50	90	40	850
Grand Bassa								180	50-60	NA	25-30	
Sinoe	20	20	20	100	100	100	10	NA	NA	NA	NA	500
Maryland	30	100	20	100	100	100	20	NA	NA	NA	NA	650
Grand Cape Mount	25	25	25	200	200	100	20	60-100	50-60	60-100	25-50	900
Grand Gedeh	25	20	20	50	100	50	20	NA	NA	NA	NA	1,500
Nimba	10	10	15	50	50	100	25	NA	NA	NA	NA	500
Bong	50	50	100	100	100	200	20	NA	70	110	35	500
Lofa	50	50	50	50	100	100	50	NA	NA	NA	NA	900
Bomi	100	100	200	200	200	200	10	100	50-60	70-80	25-30	800
Grand Kru	20	50	20	100	100	100	5	NA	NA	NA	NA	400
Margibi	50	100	100	100	100	200	100	150-200	50-70	100	35	600
River Gee	50	20	20	50	100	100	20	NA	NA	NA	NA	750
Gbarpolu	25	25	25	50	50	50	10	NA	NA	NA	NA	800
MOA								ZOA				MOA

RESPONSE:

- MoA is working to source funding for a partnership with various actors that would make the monitoring of food prices a regular activity even beyond the COVID-19 period. A previous project with the WFP came to end in March 2020. At present, several partners are monitoring food prices around the country and it is important for food security analyses that these efforts be coordinated.



Farming Support Services

A SNAPSHOT OF LIBERIAN FARMS & AGRIBUSINESSES DOING HOME DELIVERIES

					
Sumo Farms 0777959359 0555372955	✓	✓			
Passion Farms 0777718016 0776732612	✓	✓	✓	✓	
FEED Organics 0880555551	✓	✓			
Matameth Farms 0770033000 0775517097	✓	✓		✓	
Liberia Agriculture Inc. 0777959230	✓	✓			
Evergreen Natural Juices 0776057946 0770601030					✓

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.

If not, dial *747*104# on your Lonestar Cell MTN number to access passes.

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

For further inquiries, please contact:

Ansu Sekou Konneh, akonneh@moa.gov.lr

Lonnie Herring, lherring@moa.gov.lr