Accelerating progress towards SDG2

LIBERIA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report has been produced in the frame of FIRST, the strategic partnership between the Government of Liberia; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Directorate for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission to boost food and nutrition security, sustainable agriculture and resilience.

The policy effectiveness analysis was developed through a consultative process lead by FAO Liberia and in close collaboration with Ministry of Agriculture and the European Union (EU) Delegation in Liberia.

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The analysis and recommendations included in the report are based on a vast literature and policy review, interviews and various multi-stakeholder consultations. In particular, the authors would like to acknowledge Ms. Mariatou Nije (FAO Representative – Liberia), Mr. Robert K. Fagans (Deputy Minister of Planning and Development), Ms. D. Musu B. Flomo Bendah (Director for Planning & Policy/ CAADP Focal Point), Ms. Mbakai Varpilah – Woyee (Planning Officer- Department of Planning & Development) and Mr. JloplehDennis Wiagbe Jr. (Director - Monitoring and Evaluation)

The report received inputs from a technical review team comprising staff from FAO, the EU, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) and Sight for Life.

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List of acronyms

CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme
CARI	Central Agricultural Research Institute
CBL	Central Bank of Liberia
CFSNS	Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EFSA	Emergency Food Security Assessment
ENA	Emergency Nutrition Assessment
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EU	European Union
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAPS	Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FIRST	Food Security and Nutrition Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation
FNSTC	Food and Nutrition Security Technical Committee
FSNSC	Food Security and Nutrition Steering Committee
FSNS	Food Security and Nutrition Strategy
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
GoL	Government of Liberia
HDI	Human Development Index
HIES	Household income and Expenditure Survey
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LAADCO	Liberia Agriculture and Asset Development Company
LASIP	Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Plan
LATA	Liberia Agriculture Transformation Agenda
LDHS	Liberia Demography and Health Survey
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
MAM	Moderate Acute Malnutrition
MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoCI	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
MoH	Ministry of Health

NaFAA	National Fisheries and Aquaculture Authority
NAIP	National Agriculture Investment Plan
NNP	National Nutrition Policy
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
SAM	Severe Acute Malnutrition
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
STCRSP	Smallholders Tree Crop Rehabilitation and Support Project
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Agenda Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Introduction

Liberia is located in West Africa and is a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The country is bordered by Sierra Leone to the west, Guinea to the north, Cote d'Ivoire to the east, and the Atlantic Ocean to the south. Liberia covers a total area of 111 369 square kilometres and the population is estimated at 4 243 475, with an average household size of 4.3 persons, ranging from 3.7 to 4.9 persons (LISGIS, 2016).

The Liberian agricultural sector is dominated by traditional subsistence farming in which rice and cassava are the main staple foods. Farming systems are primarily forest-based and are largely concentrated in the central belt of the country, which accounts for almost half of Liberia's total land area and almost 90 percent of arable land. The main export cash crops (coffee, cocoa rubber and oil palm) are facing a decline in international prices. Despite its agricultural potential (15 049 km2 of water; two planting seasons with annual rainfall averaging from 3 810 mm to 4 320 mm, extensive forestry resources covering 45 percent (4.30 million hectare) of the total land area of Liberia (9.58 million hectare), and contributing around 60 percent of the total Liberia's export revenue) , Liberia is a food deficit country, depends on imports to meet its national requirements, particularly of rice, which is the main staple food. Liberia faces huge development challenges, including low human development, ranking 181 out of 189 countries (UNDP HDI Report, 2018), an alarming prevalence of food insecurity and malnutrition, youth unemployment and gender inequity.

Since 2003, following 14 years of armed conflict, Liberia has been working to reconstruct and rehabilitate the war-torn economy. The Government made the transition from an emergency situation in 2005, to recovery in 2011. In 2008, the 'From Subsistence to Sufficiency' strategy was adopted, with the ultimate goal of building long-term sustainability both in terms of food self-sufficiency, and competitiveness in agricultural export commodities. In 2009, the Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS) was introduced.

Following the Ebola virus disease, the Government developed the Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda (LATA) in 2015 as a presidential initiative. LATA was agribusiness-oriented and focused on developing value chains for selected crops. Other policies and strategies have been developed for fisheries, environment, forestry, and food and nutrition security. The common bottleneck in most of these policies and strategies is that they have either not been officially validated, or they lack implementation plans.

In line with the SDGs and the 2003 Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), the Ministry of Agriculture led the process of formulating the Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (LASIP I) in early 2010 for a period of five years. This plan was followed by the Liberia Agricultural Sector Investment Plan (LASIP II) in 2018, which builds on past progress and reaffirms the Government of Liberia's commitment to transforming its agricultural sector. The LASIP II follows commitments made in the Regional Agricultural Investment Programme (RAIP) 2016-2020, the 2014 Malabo Declaration and the 2014 Economic Community of West African States Agriculture Policy (ECOWAP. The development of LASIP II was supported by ECOWAS and the Food and Nutrition Security Impact, Resilience, Sustainability and Transformation (FIRST) programme. It was developed in close consultation with donors, state and non-state actors, as well as with active participation of some stakeholders in the sector, while additional consultations with the local authorities and communities at grassroots level were limited.

LASIP II emphasized food and nutrition security, which is the first pillar of the plan, and underlined the need for active participation by all stakeholders. FIRST facilitated the actions of the Food and Nutrition Security Technical Committee (FNSTC) as proposed in the action plan of the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (FSNS). It supported evidence-based decision-making, which will rely on the food security monitoring system envisaged in the National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy, which highlighted the need for regular monitoring of the food security and nutrition situation. FIRST supported the national Comprehensive Food and Nutrition Security Survey, as well as the partnership between regional bodies and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) with the view of strengthening the capacity of the Ministry.

The current Government has recently developed and validated a national development plan called the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) 2018-2023. Agriculture is one of the components under Pillar 2 of the PAPD concerning economy and jobs. Although LASIP II has been technically reviewed and adopted by relevant ministries, agencies, authorities and commissions, donors, NGOs, and UN agencies, it has not yet been endorsed by the cabinet. Nevertheless, LASIP II served as the reference for the formulation of Pillar 2 of the PAPD, in which it is embedded and will serve as an action plan for the implementation of that aspect of the Agenda.

LASIP II includes five pillars: (i) Food and Nutrition Security; (ii) Development of Global Value Chains and Market Linkages; (iii) Strengthening of Agricultural Extension, Research and Development; (iv) Support of Sustainable Production and Natural Resource Management; and (v) Governance and Institutional Strengthening.

The LASPI-II and PADP provide the overarching policy and strategic framework for national development and the achievement of SDG targets. The alignment with the 2030 Agenda is further demonstrated by the work initiated by various ministries to develop specific targets and indicators in line with their relevant SDG targets.

These processes revealed the following key bottlenecks in the enabling environment: poor monitoring of policy implementation; limited capacity of the MoA; limited inter-ministerial coordination; lack of data for informed decision-making; and limited public investment in the agriculture sector. These challenges have been recognized by stakeholders, including the MoA, which is committed to addressing them.

LASIP II and PADP were formulated in a context where food insecurity and malnutrition affect a large part of the population. Since well-designed and implemented policies are critical for addressing the situation, the present report will seek to address the following questions:

- What are the underlying causes of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty? Are the policies designed to target the most food insecure and poor people?
- To what extent are existing mechanisms and capacities effective and relevant for supporting effective implementation of policies?
- Are the policies adequately and efficiently resourced?
- What are the main players and their roles in achieving the objective of food and nutrition security?

The inception report of FIRST raised some of these questions, but the effectiveness of the two policies was not deeply analysed. Thus, it was decided to carry out a more comprehensive and in-depth

diagnostic of the effectiveness of the main policy processes in which the Government and its partners are engaged. This report provides an evidence-based analysis of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty in Liberia and their underlying and immediate causes. It looks at the adequacy of policies and strategies to respond to these challenges in terms of implementation mechanisms, monitoring, resources, realism and credibility.

- Inform decisions of the Government, EU, FAO and other stakeholders in prioritizing their actions around SDG 2;
- Serve as a baseline for evaluating policy assistance provided to Liberia;
- Recommend consensus and evidence-based pathways to food and nutrition security, resilience and sustainable agriculture.

This diagnostic focuses primarily on the LASIP II and the PAPD since they are currently Liberia's main policies on agriculture, food security and nutrition. It is important to remember that the context for these policies has been set by international commitments, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and CAADP.

Methodology

The diagnostic employed a participatory approach, which was conducted under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture in close collaboration with the European Union and FAO. The MoA established a working group to oversee the process, with support from stakeholders.

The approach involved the following elements:

- An inception workshop was held with stakeholders to launch the process and agree on the scope of diagnostic as well as on methodology to be used. This helped facilitate a participatory approach to the analysis and created stakeholder ownership of the findings.
- A validation meeting was organized with representatives from the Government, the EU and FAO in May 2019 to get initial feedback before presenting the findings more widely. Participants agreed with the findings in the draft report.
- A national validation meeting was organized to present the findings to stakeholders for their endorsement.

The following tools and techniques were used:

- **A desk review** of global, regional and national information relevant to agriculture, food security and nutrition. The desk review helped set the context for food insecurity and malnutrition in Liberia. It focused on national policies, including PAPD, LASIP II, NFNS, the National Nutrition Policy (NNP), and the Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS). As noted, the Government considers PAPD and LASIP II to be the reference policies for agriculture, food security and nutrition and they serve as the basis for this analysis.
- **Stakeholders' consultative meetings** were organized separately with farmers, civil society and private sector, higher institutions (universities) and donors to discuss the questions posed in the analysis. A summary of these discussions has been integrated into this report.
- **Community focus groups and individual interviews** captured the perspective of beneficiaries on adequacy, relevance and effective implementation of the policies and strategies. Key informant interviews were held with donors, communities and farmers to collect data and perspectives on resources, the relevance of policies for addressing vulnerable people, and views on agriculture, food security and nutrition investment.

In addressing the questions that underpin the policy effectiveness diagnostic, this report has a key role to play in supporting the implementation process and facilitating subsequent discussions and decisions around food insecurity and malnutrition in Liberia. The report will be widely disseminated to stakeholders and decision-makers with the view to influencing policy implementation for greater impact.

1. Major drivers and trends affecting food security, nutrition and poverty in Liberia

What are the trends, geographical and socio-economic patterns, and prospects for eradicating food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty in the country? Key drivers of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty.

Food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty in Liberia

Available figures indicate that the achievement of SDG 1 on ending poverty is unlikely if there is no change in current trends in food security, nutrition and poverty, particularly in rural areas. The report of the last Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (CFSNS, 2018) indicates that 18 percent of the total population is food insecure, of which two percent are severely affected. In 2016, about 20 percent of the population was food-insecure, while it was recorded around 16 percent in the Emergency Food Security Assessment (EFSA) carried out in 2015. However, it is worth noting that 46 percent of the population is marginally food secure, which indicates that most people are vulnerable and could become food insecure if a shock arises.

The CFSNS (2018) found that "households headed by individuals with little or no formal education are more vulnerable to food insecurity". For example, 24 percent of households with no formal education are food insecure (21 percent are moderately food insecure and 3 percent are severely food insecure). Female-headed households (19 percent) are slightly more susceptible to food insecurity than their male counterparts (17 percent) (CFSNS, 2018). This is partly due to the fact that female-headed households have fewer job opportunities and earn less income. In Liberia, the unemployment rate is slightly higher for women (4.1 percent) than for men (3.4 percent) as reported by the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS, 2011), with the vast majority of women working in vulnerable and informal sector jobs (see Table 1). The food security and nutrition security indicators also show important disparities among counties. For example, significant disparities in wealth exist between urban and rural dwellers across the country, where the proportion of food insecure household is highest in poorest wealth quintile (31 percent) compared with 7 percent in the wealthiest quintile. Similarly, households in poorest wealth quintile are disproportionately located in rural areas (23 percent) as compared to urban areas (2 percent). Huge disparities were observed across counties in relation to access to water, with a large proportion of households in River Cess (48%), Grand Bassa (42%), Sinoe (34%), Gbarpolu (22%) and Bong (21%) counties relying on rivers, creeks or streams as their primary source of domestic water.

Maryland county has the highest rate of food insecurity (35 percent) followed by Bomi (29 percent), Nimba (25 percent), River Cess (24 percent) and River Gee (24 percent), Lofa (22 percent), Grand Kru (20 percent), Bong, Grand Bassa (18 percent) and Grand Cape Mount (18 percent).

TABLE 1. LABOUR MARKET INDICATORS: VARIOUS RATIOS

	Labour force participation rate (%)	Inactivity rate (%)	Employment -to-population ratio (%)	Unemployment rate (%)	Vulnerable employment rate (%)	Informal employment rate (%)
Liberia	62.8	37.2	60.5	3.7	77.9	68.0
Urban areas	54.9	45.1	52.0	5.5	67.5	59.3
Rural areas	71.2	28.8	69.6	2.3	86.1	75.0
Male	66.1	33.9	63.8	3.4	68.3	61.3
Female	559.9	40.1	57.5	4.1	87.3	74.7
Greater Monrovia	52.8	47.2	49.3	6.5	63.2	56.6

Source: Liberia LFS, 2010

Liberia has made considerable efforts to achieve key health and nutrition indicators, including a substantial reduction in under-five child mortality by two thirds by 2015, as per MDG 4. However, the prevalence of malnutrition is still high, especially in rural areas where chronic malnutrition affects nearly one third of all children under five. Other factors like communicable diseases and overweight are also identified as major risks to nutrition. The prevalence of anemia is high too, between 59 percent of children from 6 to 35 months and 38 percent of pregnant women (NNP, 2019).

Although there are no detailed data on the prevalence of non-communicable diseases (NCD) in Liberia, it is notable that only a limited number of specialists are available to deal with diseases, such as cancer and mental health problems, which have been identified as serious issues. Many people experienced severe mental health issues as a result of 14 years of civil war. It is estimated that Liberia needs over 1 000 mental health professionals, trained psychiatric nurses, and social workers (WHO-AIMS, 2017).

More than 50 percent of the Liberian population is classified as poor according to LISGIS (2017). Poverty is more prevalent in rural areas, where it affects more than two-thirds of the population. As is the case for food insecurity and malnutrition, there are disparities between the regions with the southeast having the highest poverty levels.

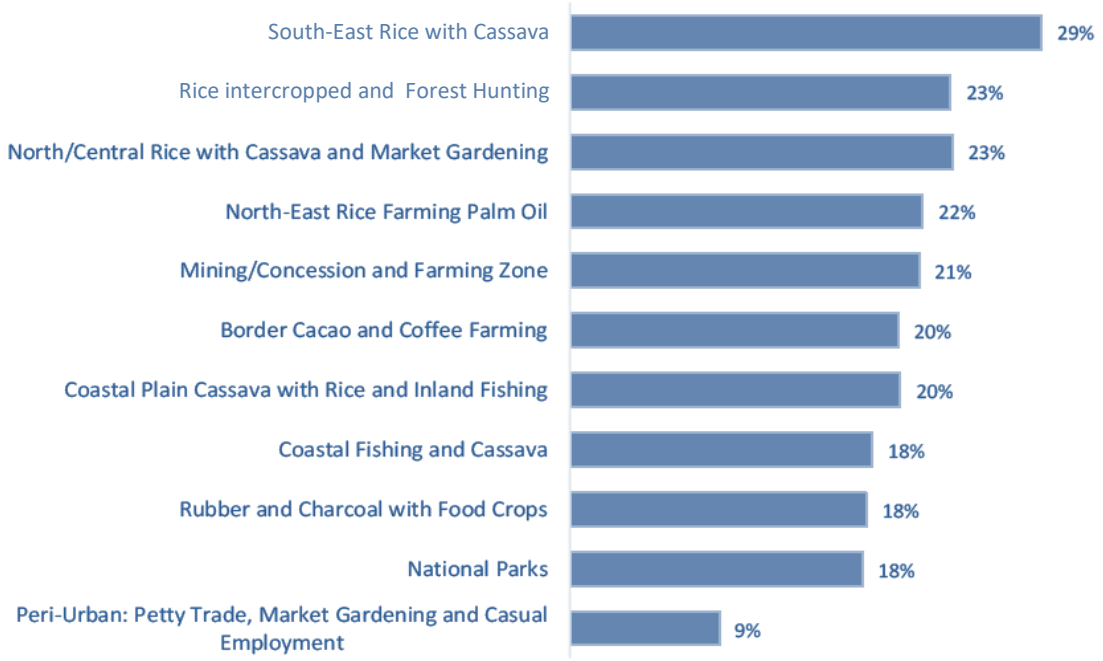
FOOD INSECURITY

Food insecurity in rural areas

The prevalence of food insecurity is higher in rural areas, where 23 percent of people are affected. But as noted, there are some disparities between regions. The south-eastern part of Liberia, where the main production is cassava, and the north/central zone, which relies on rice and forest/hunting, are the most affected, with respectively 29 percent and 23 percent of households classified as food insecure. There are various explanations for the disparate levels of food insecurity between regions. The level of food insecurity tends to be correlated to the activities of the zones (see Figure 1) and also, to some extent, to the adequacy and relevance of the interventions. The south-eastern zone, which relies heavily on markets, is affected by the volatility of food prices, especially during the rainy season when this region is disconnected from the rest of the country due to impassable roads. The north/central zone is overly reliant on rainfed rice and thus vulnerable to erratic rains. The livelihoods zones with diversified food production are less food insecure. The zones that have the poorest access

to basic social services (health systems, education and sanitation) also experience high food insecurity and malnutrition prevalence rates.

FIGURE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF LIVELIHOOD ZONES BY FOOD INSECURITY, 2018



Source: CFSNS, 2018

Access to food is a major dimension of food insecurity in Liberia because the majority of the population depends on the markets. In a context of overreliance on food imports, food shortages are common in Liberia and can affect people rapidly. Statistics show that 58.8 percent of rural households are affected by food shortages, while in urban areas, 44.2 percent of households are affected. The depth of the food deficit (kcal/capita/day) is widening year after year, while the number of undernourished people increased from 0.6 million in 1999-2001 to 1.4 million in 2013-2015. Qualitative information from stakeholders indicate that current interventions are insufficiently focused and not equally relevant to the needs of all citizens (see Box 1).

Food insecurity in urban areas

The urban areas are the least food-insecure parts of Liberia (see Map 1). Only 11 percent of the population in urban setting is affected (CFSNS, 2018) as compared to the rural areas where the food insecurity rate is 23 percent, with national level at 18 percent.

As shown in Figure 1, urban areas enjoy a range of livelihoods opportunities (petty trade, marketing, gardening and casual employment) that contribute to food security. This diversity of activities facilitates access to food in a context where markets play an important role. Here, food expenditures are lower due to relatively cheap market prices and better income of households compared to rural areas. For example, expenditure share in the urban zone of Greater Monrovia is estimated at 23 percent compared to the national level where most people spent more than 65 percent of their income on foods. Households living in urban areas are largely dependent on markets as their primary source of food, and more so than rural households. Urban households relying on unstable sources of income are more exposed to market price volatility and unsanitary and unsafe environment, which increase their vulnerability to food insecurity.

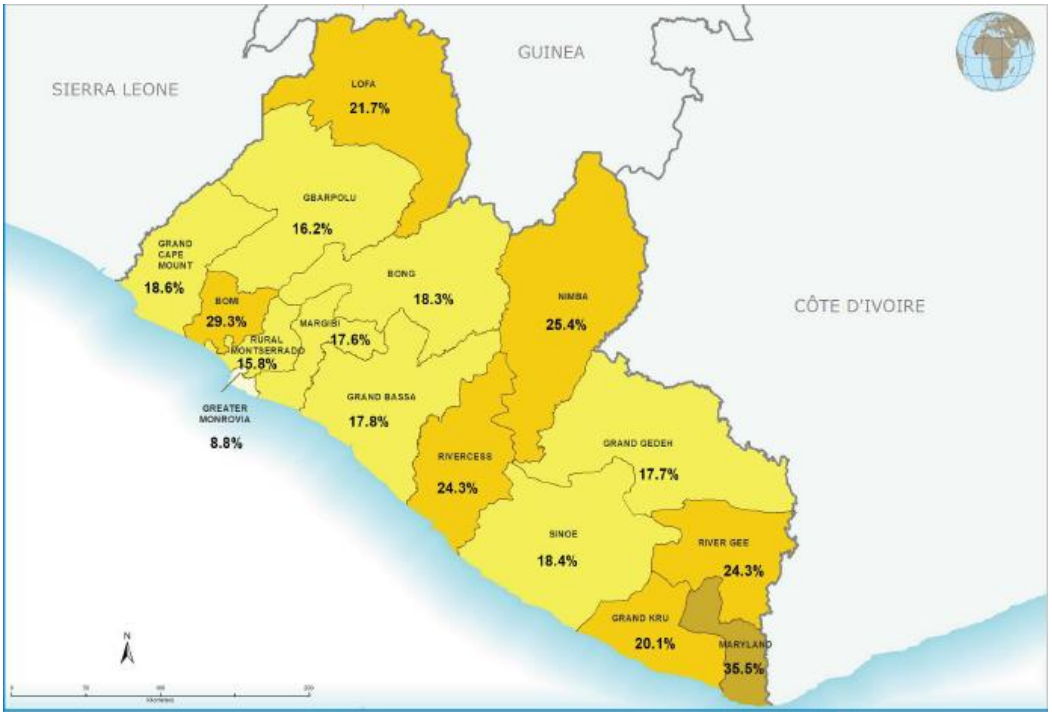
BOX 1: THE INADEQUACY OF THE INTERVENTIONS IN ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE

The south-eastern region of Liberia is beset by serious development challenges, including inaccessible roads, especially during the rainy season, which leaves the region cut off from the rest of the country; poor delivery of extension services; lack of access to basic agricultural inputs; poor access to national markets; and a lack of access to credit; particularly for resource-poor subsistence farmers. The Government and its partners have made efforts to support development in the region, such as through the establishment of large agricultural concessions that provide jobs for the local population.

A portion of county development funds has been used to develop infrastructure, including rice processing mills. However, many actors, especially farmers, perceive that these funds have not contributed enough to agricultural development. Moreover, efforts to improve infrastructure have not been matched by efforts to train farmers to operate and maintain them effectively and efficiently, which results in the abandonment of the facilities, such as the dam built in Grand Kru in 2010.

Given the development challenges in the south-eastern region, stakeholders have expressed the need to increase investment in agriculture with a focus on improving market roads, establishing village savings and loan scheme programmes, promoting livestock development, especially in Grand Kru County, supporting fisheries development and agroforestry practices for environmental protection coupled with capacity development initiatives to manage and sustain the production, processing and marketing facilities. The stakeholders believe that if these conditions are adequately addressed, the barriers to food security and nutrition will be removed.

MAP 1. PREVALENCE OF FOOD INSECURITY BY COUNTY, LIBERIA, 2018



Source: CFSNS, 2018

MALNUTRITION

The malnutrition trend in Liberia is the same as for food insecurity. In 2018, the prevalence of stunting was 35.5 percent[1], including moderate and severe stunting at 22 percent and 13.5 percent respectively. The CFSNS (2018) estimated that 2.9 percent of children were overweight, and 0.85 percent were severely overweight. The highest prevalence of overweight was recorded in Lofa county (5.1 percent). The situation has not really changed since 2013, when the overweight rate was 3 percent according to the Liberia Demographic and Health Survey (2013). The prevalence of overweight women has increased sharply, from 15 percent in 2007 to 27 percent in 2013 (NNP, 2019). Obese and overweight children and more likely to remain obese or overweight in adulthood, which results into increased risks of non-communicable diseases including diabetes and heart diseases. At the same time, 15 percent of Liberian children are underweight. An assessment carried out during the CFSNS of 2018 showed that around 5 percent of women of reproductive age were underweight or malnourished, 8 percent were obese.

Malnutrition in rural areas

In general, the difference in the prevalence rates of chronic malnutrition between rural and urban areas is not significant, although some counties have exceptionally alarming indicators, including Grand Bassa with a critical stunting rate reaching 41 percent (see Map 2). Malnutrition results from several factors, including poor access to drinking water, inadequate and lack of diversified food intake and poor access to health facilities. Access to safe drinking water is much worse in rural areas than in urban areas. Rural households use surface water (river, streams and creeks) as their main source of drinking water, which 23.4 percent use during the rainy season and 28.4 percent during the dry season. This exposes communities to water-borne diseases.[2] This overall figure masks local differences between counties: about 48 percent of the rural households in River Cess, 42 percent in Grand Bassa, 34 percent in Sinoe, 22 percent in Gbarpolu and 21 percent in Bong use surface water – a key vector of water-borne diseases. The data on Food Consumption Score[3] reveals a low consumption of Vitamin A in rural areas, especially in the most food insecure zones (CFSNS, 2018), despite the availability of vegetables.

[1] The stunting rates are reduced over the years, from 39 percent in 2006, to 36.1 percent in 2008 and 35.5 percent in 2018.

[2] Comprehensive Food and Nutrition Security Survey (CFSNS, 2018)

[3] The "Food consumption score" (FCS) is a score calculated using the frequency of consumption of different food groups consumed by a household during the 7 days before the survey. There are standard weights for each of the food groups that comprise the food consumption score. (WFP, 2015)

MAP 2: DISTRIBUTION OF THE PREVALENCE OF STUNTING, LIBERIA, 2018

Source: CFSNS, 2018

Access to health care facilities is more challenging in the rural areas of Liberia, although progress has been made and many people are now within walking distance of health centers. For example, the ratio of skilled birth attendants to population has increased from 4 per 10 000 in 2006 to 11.8 per 10 000 currently. The infant mortality rate has also reduced, decreasing from 72 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2007, to 54 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2018 (PAPD, 2018). Neonatal mortality decreased from 32 in 2007 to 26 for 1 000 live births in 2018, and under-five mortality also decreased from 110 in 2007 to 94 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2018 (PAPD, 2018).

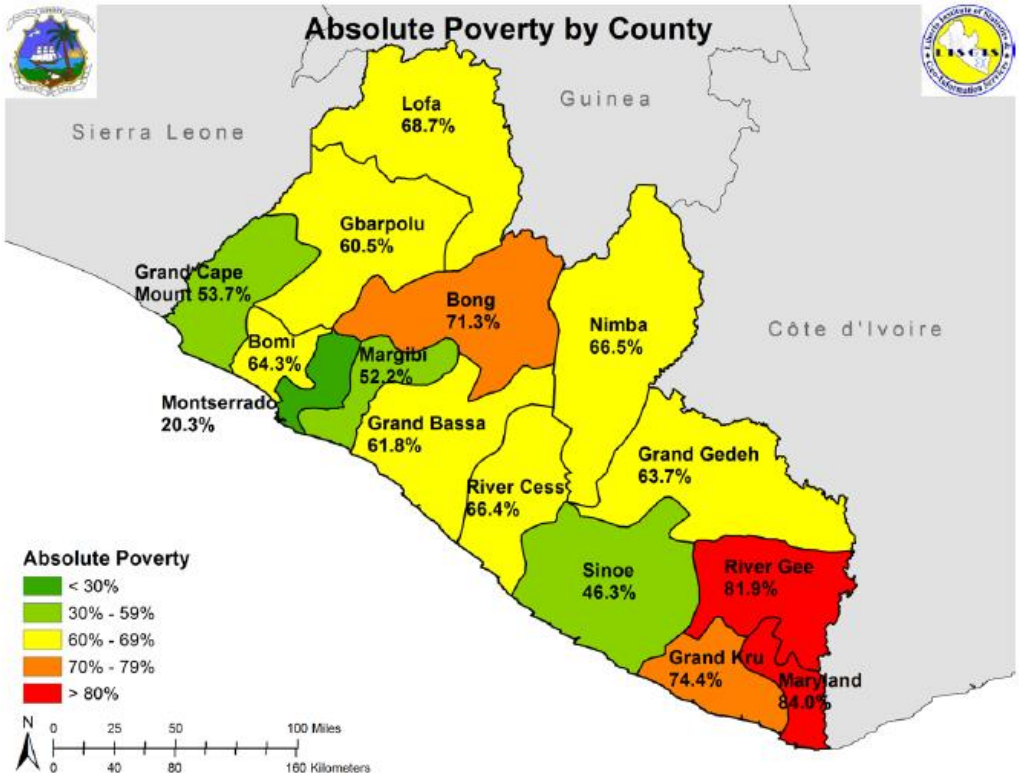
Malnutrition in urban areas

Chronic malnutrition also affects the urban areas of Liberia but not at the same level as in rural areas (see Map 1). This is due to a better access to health facilities, drinking water and sanitation facilities and more diversified food intake.

POVERTY

The Government recently carried out a survey to analyze the three faces of poverty in Liberia: absolute poverty, food poverty and extreme poverty (HIES, 2017). The survey found that about half of the population is poor, with slight differences between the regions (see Map 3) and in terms of gender. Rural areas are more affected by poverty than urban areas, according to LISGIS (2017). Female-headed households (52.3 percent) are poorer than male headed households (46.3 percent). Female-headed households are also more affected by food shortages than are male headed households at 54.6 percent and 49.9 percent respectively.

MAP 3. ABSOLUTE POVERTY BY COUNTY



Source: HIES, 2017

Rural areas

Rural poverty is 71.6 percent compared to urban poverty at 31.5 percent, while food poverty is 50.9 percent in rural areas compared to 28.5 percent in urban areas (HIES, 2017). An analysis of the data shows that food insecurity is correlated to poverty to a certain extent, because most of the regions affected by food insecurity are also affected by poverty (see 1.2.2 below). According to LISGIS (2017), households that primarily depend on agriculture as their main source of livelihoods have substantially higher poverty rates (79.6 percent), compared to those supported by paid employment (34.5 percent) or by non-agricultural self-employment (40.1 percent). This indicates that relying on agriculture as a source of livelihoods does not guarantee a reduction of poverty and increased food security. This raises the question of why agriculture is less profitable for smallholder farmers.

Urban areas

The PAPD analyzes that social, economic, educational, and political disparities between rural and urban populations and amongst Liberia's regions are both the causes and effects of the disproportional concentration of services in urban areas, combined with the fact that urban dwellers have more livelihoods and income generation opportunities. Such disparities between rural and urban areas directly affect the food security and nutrition status of people.

Key drivers of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty

The dynamics of food insecurity and malnutrition have not changed over the years because the drivers of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty remain the same. Discussions with different stakeholders identified the following main drivers of food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty in Liberia.

LOW PRODUCTION AND PRODUCTIVITY FOR INCREASED FOOD DOMESTIC SUPPLY

The major constraint in the agricultural sector is low productivity, which limits the capacity of domestic food supply to meet the needs of population. The low productivity is mainly due to lack of modern technology, lack of development in the livestock, poultry, aquaculture and horticulture sub-sectors despite their high potential. Smallholding and limited access to productive land coupled with middle-aged farmers, inexperienced youth, the high cost of feed, lack of breeding stock and grazing fields all contribute to this underdevelopment. This has had a negative impact on the ability of the country to provide food for the population and has led to high food prices in a country where the reliance on markets is high. Furthermore, domestic competition from imported food items is very high. Similarly, the high cost of imported inputs required for domestic production limit the growth potential of agriculture sector. This is a major concern because of the current depreciation of the Liberian dollar, increasing the cost of food for poor people who are already spending two-thirds of their income on food. Projections of productivity (see Table 2) indicates a reduction in the production deficit. However as large dependence on food import are expected to continue for the near future, the overall situation will remain the same unless the Government prioritizes investments in increasing the productivity of key sub-sectors including livestock and poultry.

> *"We will focus on bringing growth back to the economy by increasing productivity through value chains with emphasis on agricultural processing and marketing. We will promote the production of rice, cassava and vegetables using new and appropriate technologies because the agricultural sector is a major source of foreign exchange and livelihood of our people."*
>
> **H. E. George Manneh Weah**
>
> President of the Republic of Liberia

TABLE 2. PRIORITY FOOD CROP PROJECTIONS

Food Crops and source	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Rice						
Domestic production	215 000	224 348	248 215	284 413	357 025	459 690
	378 250	381 799	370 829	347 528	292 842	210 941
Total national requirements (MT)	593 250	606 147	619 043	631 940	649 867	670 630
Deficit (Imports) (MT)	**Cassava**					
National requirements (MT)	739 200	755 270	771 339	787 409	809 745	835 617
Crop hectares (ha):	92 400	94 409	96 417	98 426	101 218	104 452
Home consumption	369 600	377 635	385 670	393 704	404 873	417 809
Process to finished cassava products (Gari, depah, HQCF, etc)	369 000	377 635	385 670	393 704	404 873	417 809
Potential revenue from processed cassava (USD mn) at US$ 1,017/MT)	376	384	392	400	412	425
Vegetables						
National requirements (MT)	36 500	37 293	38 087	38 880	39 983	41 261
Crop hectares (ha)	304 167	310 779	317 391	324 004	333 195	343 841

Source: PAPD, 2018

LOW-INCOME OPPORTUNITIES AND HIGH POVERTY RATES LIMIT THE CAPACITY OF PEOPLE TO EFFECTIVELY AND APPROPRIATELY INVEST IN AGRICULTURE FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION.

Analysis of data and information show that poverty is associated with food insecurity in regions such as the southeast. The poorest counties tend to be badly connected to the rest of the country, making them less able to access markets and more vulnerable to food insecurity. Counties with more diverse income generation opportunities like Margibi and Greater Monrovia, tend to be less poor and less food insecure. Grand Gedeh and Gbarpolu, which are among the least food-insecure counties, have the highest proportion of remittances in the country, 33.9 percent and 31.7 percent respectively (LISGIS, 2017). In contrast, most households in Nimba, Lofa and River Cess counties, which have the highest levels of food insecurity (see Map 2), depend on agriculture and crop sales for their primary source of income: 41 percent, 39 percent and 33 percent respectively.

LOW EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Better-educated households tend to be less affected by food insecurity and malnutrition (CFSNS, 2018). The 2019 National Nutrition Policy recognized the role that early education should play in enhancing nutrition, noting that in 2015 only “13 percent of children aged between 0-4 years were enrolled in early child development (ECD)” programmes and that “children in urban areas (19 percent) were more likely to receive ECD education services than children in rural areas (9.8 percent).”

HIGH DEPENDENCY ON FOOD IMPORTS AND MARKETS

Liberians are net buyers of food and are therefore quite vulnerable to food price volatility. A report of the European Commission showed that there was an increasing trend in the value of imports over the

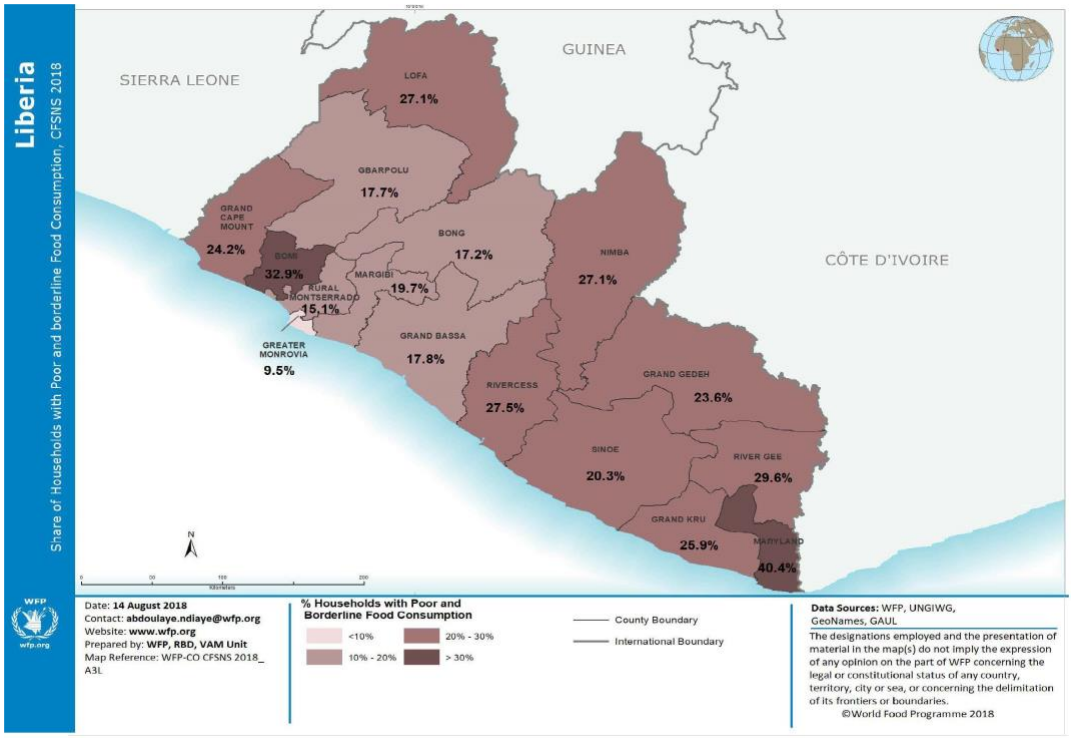
period 2012-2016, averaging 46.7 percent growth, while exports averaged 2.6 percent growth over the same period.[4] About 73 percent of food is imported, particularly rice and wheat. The domestic food supply was estimated at 445 000 tonnes of cereals in 2015, including 350 000 tonnes of rice, 67 000 tonnes of wheat and 28 000 tonnes of maize (FAO and WFP, 2014). This could present a serious risk to food availability, as occurred during the period when the country was hit by the Ebola virus disease and the borders were closed. The CFSNS (2018) stated that "due to low agricultural activities and production, an estimated 81 percent of households depend on the market as their primary source of food."

According to the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL, 2018), food and live animals constitute the major imports of Liberia. They represented 22.31 percent, 25.41 percent and 24.2 percent of total imports in 2016, 2017 and 2018 respectively. However, the overall value of the food and live animals import decreased from US$ 268.03 in 2016, to US$ 253.8 in 2017 to 244.6 million in 2018. This makes the country vulnerable to any food price volatility, as experienced in 1979[i] and 2008. Rice has the largest share of the total food and live animals import in Liberia both in value and percentage terms and is recorded around 35.51 percent in 2016, 48.78 percent in 2017 and 37.8 percent in 2018.

LIMITED FOOD DIVERSIFICATION

The lack of diverse food is a serious problem and a major driver of malnutrition in Liberia (see Map 4). The CFSNS determined that poor intake of diverse foods is a major issue in the counties most affected by chronic malnutrition such as River Gee (34 percent), Grand Kru (31 percent) and Maryland (26 percent). "Nationally, 69.2 percent, 74.5 percent and 45.3 percent of the assessed households' members reportedly consumed iron, protein and vitamin A, respectively (CFSNS, 2018)." Generally, it is reported that the counties most affected by food insecurity have the poorest food consumption score (see Map 4).

MAP 4. DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORE BY COUNTY, 2018



Source: CFSNS, 2018

[4] European Commission (2017) European Commission Trade in Good, 2017

LIMITED ACCESS TO MARKETS

Limited access to markets, especially in the lowlands, is exacerbated by poor rural infrastructures, agroindustry and access to farmland. Liberia's transportation infrastructure is marred by an insufficient network of feeder roads, which hampers the physical access of agricultural goods to markets. For example, during rainy seasons the entire southeast is cut off from the rest of the country due to poor road conditions, making people in the region vulnerable to higher food prices. The poorly performing market system, high level of informality in the distribution system, lack of market information and financial resources contribute to high pre- and post-harvest losses, as well as high transaction costs in the value chain. These factors contribute to lowering the domestic offer of food on markets and make it difficult for people to afford food in a country, resulting in increasing food insecurity and poverty.

LIMITED USE OF QUALITY INPUTS ESPECIALLY SEEDS AND AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGIES

The limited use of quality inputs, especially seeds and farming technologies, constrain the development of agriculture in Liberia, contributing to the high deficit in domestic food supply. On one hand, nearly all farmers (96 percent) lack access to improved rice seeds (HIES, 2015). On another hand, there is no control over seed certification, mainly due to the fact that the policy (which has been drafted) is not yet enforced.

The use of fertilizers is limited due to the difficulty in obtaining and affording the expensive input. Less than 6 percent of planted area (2.8 kilograms of chemical fertilizer are used per hectare) is fertilized and this trend is seen "especially (among) female-headed households, who have the lower level of fertilizer and pesticide usage" (HIES, 2015).

The limited access to quality inputs is due to a lack of a regulatory policy and instruments. LASIP II (2018) analyzed that Liberian farmers do not benefit from advances in agricultural technological inventions, largely due to the limited delivery capacity of extension services, resulting in inadequate dissemination of information on technologies, which is in most cases not adapted to the needs of farmers.

EXTENSION SERVICES DEFICIT

Limited access to extension services is a constraint to improving agriculture and food security in Liberia. While the current agriculture extension system is highly pluralistic with key providers including the MoA, international and national NGOs, FAO and the World Food Programme (WFP) among others, there far too few agents in counties (1 agent per 33 000 farmers). In addition, the extension services do not fully meet the needs of farmers. In general, the major concern of extension services has been to distribute agricultural inputs and equipment to farmers. There are no mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the services, resulting in huge gaps in terms of appropriate adoption and knowledge of technologies. Low production and productivity can partly be blamed on the lack of training and proper advisory services (McNamara *et al.*, 2011).

CONSTRAINED ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OVER NATURAL RESOURCES

Liberia has a huge array of natural resources upon which smallholder farmers depend for their livelihoods. They include water (15 049 km^2 of water), land (41 percent of land mass is arable land), and forests (approximately 43 percent of the upper Guinea Forest representing 4.9 million hectares). However, access to these natural resources is a major constraint to the development of agriculture and food security in the country.

The LASIP-I program has sought to increase the share of arable land under irrigation from less than 0.2 percent to 5 percent. While no irrigation system is fully completed. To support the achievement of this objective, under LASIP-II a nationwide inventory of viable inland swamps was to be conducted; a strategic irrigation investment plan was to be developed; and the construction and promotion of diverse irrigation system, including small-scale schemes utilizing water collection techniques to support sustainable production were to be carried out.

Achievement of this objective of this sub-component has been limited. By the end of LASIP I, no irrigation system has been fully completed. Many projects including Smallholder Agriculture Productivity Enhancement and Commercialization (SAPEC), West African Agricultural Productivity Project (WAAPP) and Agriculture Sector Rehabilitation Project (ASRP), sought to establish irrigation system to ensure sustainable rice production and productivity, but none has fully achieved its objective.

Out of the total arable land of 4.6 million ha, approximately 634 000 ha (14 percent) was under cultivation before the war. By 1998, the total arable land under cultivation was about 230 000 ha (5 percent), out of which 3.3% (20 000 ha) was under controlled water management (WAAPP-IC, 2010). Today, only 28 percent of arable land is used for agriculture, which employs the majority of the working-age population. Less than 3 percent of households cultivate more than five hectares each in a context where the average cultivated area is 1.6 ha (LISGIS, 2016).

The land tenure system, "rooted in colonial law and traditional indigenous practice, is complex and presents major challenges to agricultural production, social equity, and gender equality (Peterson, 2016)." Today, access to and control over land is a challenge for food crop production, due to the non-implementation of the 2018 Land Rights Act. The issue of access to land became more complex during the civil war, when forest resources were transferred to state ownership under the national forestry law. After the war, land disputes erupted when internally displaced people returned to their homes and found their lands occupied (Peterson, 2016).

In 2013, the Land Commission approved the Land Reforms Policy, thus establishing an instrument to guide the acquisition and management of land in the country. The Commission also drafted the Land Rights Act passed at Senate in August 2018.

Large concessions for the development of tree/cash crops have been implemented in recent years. For example, an oil palm development company, "Golden Veroleum" has a concession agreement in the southeastern region (Sinoe, Grand Gedeh and River Cess counties) for rural land holdings between 150 000 and 200 000 hectares of oil palm over the next decade (PAPD, 2018). The Sime Darby Company in the northwestern region (Grand Cape Mount, Bomi and Gbarpolu counties) has established a concession agreement with a land coverage of 220 000 hectares of oil palm under cultivation (PAPD, 2018). In Margibi County, Firestone, which began operations in 1926, has a 99-year lease agreement for up to one million acres to be developed rubber plantations (Lowenstein, 2017).

The potential of water resources in Liberia is huge, with nine major perennial river systems and short coastal watercourses (LASIP, 2018). "The irrigation potential is about 600 000 ha, but little has been achieved and no irrigation system has been fully completed (LASIP I review, 2017)." Liberia also has huge potential in terms of marine resources, but no marine protected areas have yet been established.

Forested areas are important resources for communities and household livelihoods. The development of charcoal and logging is growing and can threaten the livelihoods of communities. Even though measures have been taken to regulate the exploitation of forests, efforts are needed for the conservation and use of sustainable farming.

The issue of women's access to natural resources has always been problematic, particularly since the land rights situation remains unresolved, especially with regard to customary law. There are also social and educational barriers that limit the contribution and participation of women in managing natural resources.

Land access has implications for food security and nutrition, as well as the potential to cause future conflicts between and among ethnic groups. For example, some affluent individuals in rural communities are using community or family land to cultivate cash crops (cocoa, rubber, oil palm, etc.), implying a perpetual ownership and thereby deviating from the usual cultural practices that enable community members to rotate the use of the land for food production through shifting cultivation. The issue of ethnicity in relation to access and control over land is crucial in some areas. For example, the Mandingo ethnic group in Nimba County, which is predominately Muslim, nomadic or traders, fought with the Mano and Gio ethnic groups who supported the former warlord and President Charles Taylor during the civil war (1989-2003). The Mandingos claim that their land has been occupied by the Mano and Gio since the civil war. The Mandingos are currently seeking legal redress through the courts.

A study by the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS, 2010:5) observed that "In post-conflict settings, land disputes often appear as a factor that without due attention and interventions can endanger peace and stability. During Liberia's 15 years of civil war, the civilian population was severely hit and many fled, abandoning houses and land. Abandoned property was often appropriated by squatters, and after the war ended in 2003, many ex-combatants settled in urban areas. Ganta, Liberia's second largest city is a remarkable example of this. During the war, combatants captured land in a process considered to be a rightful re-appropriation of lands wrongfully taken over by others in the past. In the case of Liberia, and also other post-conflict countries, settlement patterns and the composition of communities have been altered by the conflict, along with the sources and patterns of livelihood and the way land is used. In relation to return movements it is necessary to ask – return to what and under what conditions? Likewise, international and national efforts have been put into securing that Liberian ex-combatants are making a living away from the gun and reintegrating into society – but reintegration into what?" Today, individually-claimed properties, especially land occupied by ex-combatants or ordinary citizens during the war, pose a major challenge for the Liberia Land Authority to resolve when implementing the Land Rights Act.

POOR ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION, SANITATION AND POOR FOOD DIVERSIFICATION THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE MALNUTRITION

Considerable efforts have been invested to improve the Liberian health services over the past decade (NNP, 2019). This has helped to improve – to some extent – health indicators in the country. However, the level of access to health and education is still a major driver of malnutrition. A large proportion of households do not have access to toilets. Liberia still struggles to provide safe drinking water and improved sanitations to its citizens. This is evident from the proliferation of substandard drinking water sachets produced commercially in Liberia. The disposal of garbage in communities, streets and market places in Monrovia and its environs exacerbates the problem of poor sanitation. "In 2003, the population's access to safe drinking water was 17 percent and sanitation at 7 percent. In 2010, access to improved water supply in rural and urban areas was 51 percent and 79 percent respectively, while access to sanitation in rural area was 16 percent and urban, 50 percent (including shared latrines); latrines not shared were estimated at 4 percent and 16 percent respectively (Liberia WASH Sector, 2012)."

LOW INVESTMENT ALONG THE FOOD CROP VALUE CHAIN FROM BOTH PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE GOVERNMENT.

There is greater investment in export of cash crops like rubber, cocoa and palm oil than in food crops. These investments are made in large concessions through agreements between the Government and transnational companies (TNC), as seen in Table 3. This has implications for food and nutrition security,

since little attention is paid to the development of food production despite its huge potential. As a result, the cost of food production is high as are food prices in the markets.

TABLE 3: PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT IN LARGE AGRICULTURAL CONCESSIONS

No	Concessionaire	Tenure	Date Signed	Location	Budget (USD)	Status
1	Liberia Corporation Cocoa	40 years	2014	Lofa	12 M	Ongoing
2	Cavalla Plantation Rubber Rehabilitation	50 years	2011	Marylan	78 M	Active
3	Equatorial Oil Palm	43 years	2008	Grand Bassa	100 M	Active
4	Sime Darby Gurthrie Plantation	63 years	2009	Bomi/Cape Mount/Gbarpolu	800 M	Active
5	Golden Veroleum/Southeast Plantation	65 years	2010	Sinoe/Gran Kru	1.6 B	Active
6	Maryland Oil Palm Plantation/Decoris	33 years	2011	Maryland	64 M	Active
7	ADA/LAP Commercial		2007	Lofa	30 M	Inactive
Total					**2.684 B**	

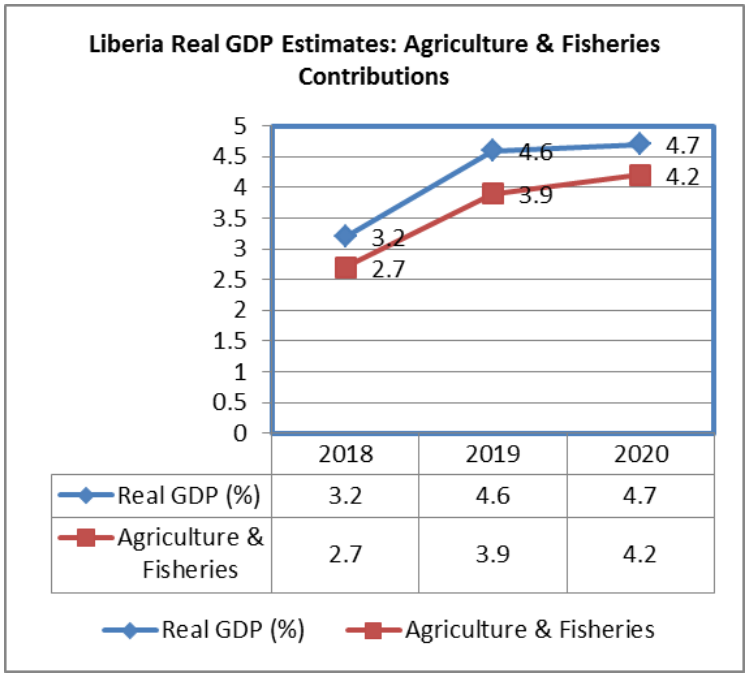
THE CURRENT STATE OF AGRICULTURE AND ITS CONTRIBUTIONS TO GDP

According to the March 2019 publication of the Liberia Commercial Guide,[5] "Agriculture is the primary livelihood for more than 60 percent of Liberia's population and provides sustenance for many households engaging in cassava, rubber, rice, oil palm, cocoa, or sugarcane production, while majority of the households are engaged in cassava production than any other crop. However, overall agricultural productivity is low, resulting in Liberia importing more than 80 percent of its rice, making the country vulnerable to global food price volatility. Poorly integrated, the sector lacks basic infrastructure such as machines, farming equipment/tools, farm-to-market roads, fertilizers and pesticides, and food storage capacity. Cassava and rice are the primary staple food crops. The main cash crops and foreign exchange earners are rubber, cocoa, and timber. Rubber is one of the dominant generators of state revenues, accounting for 17.5 percent of the total export receipts in 2017.

An estimated 30 000 people are employed by commercial rubber farms and up to 60 000 smallholder households are involved in growing rubber trees." Agriculture is indeed an engine of growth of the Liberian economy as indicated by its contributions to real GDP, which amounted to 2.7 percent in 2018; 3.9 percent in 2019; and 4.2 percent (projected) in 2020.

[5] https://www.export.gov/article?id=Liberia-Agricultural-Sectors

FIGURE 2: CONTRIBUTION OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES SECTORS TO NATIONAL GDP



Source: PAPD, 2018 (estimates and projections).

Conclusion

Food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty rates in Liberia are alarming, especially in the rural areas. Even though many factors contribute, most stakeholders indicated that the low level of public investment in smallholder farming and food production is the major bottleneck. Existing policies and strategies recognize the major causes of food insecurity and malnutrition and prioritize actions to address them. However, their relevance, adequacy and realism need to be analyzed to better understand their potential to deal with the underlying causes.

2. Relevance, adequacy and realism of policy response

Question 2: Is the current set of policies and strategies sufficiently focused and well-designed to adequately address the immediate and underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in the most impactful way, both at a national scale and at the level of specific socio-economic groups, geographic areas, agro-ecological zones and/or administrative areas that are facing 'stubborn' or more 'pervasive' problems of food insecurity and malnutrition?

Addressing underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in policies and strategies

Liberia's current policies and strategies, including the Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2018-2023) and the Agriculture Sector Investment Plan II (2018-2022), provide the development frameworks that the Government uses to deliver services and address the development needs of the country. Both LASIP II and PAPD refer to the Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS) developed in 2008 and the National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (NFSNS) revised in 2015. The immediate and underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition are described in LASIP II.

LASIP II

LASIP II describes the food security and nutrition situation and lists among other factors, production gaps due to the subsistence nature of agricultural production and the drudgery of agriculture work experienced by resource-poor subsistence farmers, exacerbated by the use of primitive tools, climate change and dilapidated farm-to-market roads. Productivity is sub-optimal due to depleted soils, with little or no technology and external inputs, resulting in low output and income, compounding the problem of limited access to food, low levels of dietary diversity, difficulty of mainstreaming nutrition in agriculture and access to and control over land, particularly for women-headed households.

Based on this analysis, LASIP II proposed five major interrelated strategic components: food and nutrition security; competitive value chain development and market linkages; agricultural extension, research and development; sustainable production and natural resources management; and improved governance and institutional strengthening.

Food and nutrition security area key pillar of LASIP II. The objective is sustainable access to adequate, diversified and nutritious food for active and healthy lives. The formulation of the document was based on a needs analysis and discussed with stakeholders. The document identifies actions needed to address the causes of food insecurity and malnutrition.

Under LASIP II, the Government of Liberia is aiming to increase local food production and processing through partnerships with agricultural concessions and smallholders in the private sector. In this regard, the Government is focusing on improving the regulatory environment for aggregators and quality control by accelerating the establishment of Liberia Agricultural Commodity Regulatory Agency (LACRA). Since 2005, the Government is putting its efforts in reinforcing the capacity of the Forestry Development Agency (FDA) and establishing the regulatory framework for sustainable forest

management through the passage of the National Forestry Reform Law (NFRL) in 2006 and the Community Rights Law (CRL) in 2009.

THE PAPD

The PAPD analyzes the worrying situation of food insecurity and malnutrition in Liberia. The PADP through its four pillars tend to address the potential drivers of conflict, poverty, and food insecurity in a more coordinated fashion. Pillar One social protection interventions aimed at decreasing economic inequalities and improving educational and health services also contribute to reducing fragility and improving social cohesion. Likewise, economic opportunities created under Pillar Two will target the regions most effected by absolute poverty to decrease regional disparities. Pillar Four interventions aimed at reducing corruption and improving accountability of the state will also reduce actual and perceived of "mismanagement" of national resources.

The proposed actions address food security from the perspective of improving food production by, for example, providing support for private sector participation, including using contract farming to attract farmers. A recent technical review discussed the need to take a multidimensional approach to nutrition, which is considered a health issue and is integrated in Pillar I (power to the people), which focuses on access to basic social services and capacity strengthening.

The PAPD addresses food insecurity under Pillar II (economy and jobs), making reference to LASIP II. One of its development outcomes is "increased agricultural production and productivity and improved forest utilization through competitive value chains and market linkages" (PAPD, 2018). Another development outcome is "increased economic activity and connectivity through critical infrastructure improvements."

Comparing the two development plans, PAPD is an overarching framework and LASIP II is more comprehensive in addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition. The dimensions of access to food, utilization and stability are not very substantially addressed in PAPD. For example, Component 1 Strategic Objective of LASIP II is to "sustainably access adequate, diversified nutritious and needed food for utilization for active and healthy lives." Expected outcomes include a reliable and functioning food and nutrition security information and monitoring system; effective chronic and acute food insecurity and malnutrition prevention and management systems; increased productive capacity and incomes of poor and vulnerable farmers; and improved nutrition and food access (LSAIP II, 2018).

Component 2 Strategic Objective of LASIP II, which is to develop and support competitive value chains and market linkages, complements Strategic Objective 1 as indicated above, by addressing some of the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition related to market and infrastructure access and financing smallholder farmers. Expected outcomes, including an improved business environment for farmers; agroindustry development; agriculture infrastructure development; competitive value chains and market linkages; and promotion of inclusive and innovative agro-financing (LASIP II, 2018), which will contribute to enhancing agriculture in support of food and nutrition security.

The revised National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy and the National Nutrition Policy reflect these policy instruments as reference documents in addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in Liberia.

Addressing immediate and underlying causes at the national scale and at the level of specific socio-economic groups, geographic areas, agro-ecological zones and/or administrative areas that are facing 'stubborn' or more 'pervasive' problems of food insecurity and malnutrition.

While the PAPD and LASIP II describe and analyze the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in Liberia, setting the right targets for the plans has been challenging due to a lack of baseline information, especially around crop production. The strategies target socio-economic groups, while geographic areas, agro-ecological zones and/or administrative areas that face stubborn or pervasive problems of food insecurity and malnutrition are not specifically targeted.

LASIP II

LASIP II has a strategic objective to ensure the food and nutrition security of the Liberian people and to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable population and their livelihoods. As such, it targets socio-economic groups such as children under five, women and other vulnerable people. For example, it proposes to "mainstream nutrition into agricultural programs with strong gender sensitivity" and to enhance the "use of gender and environment sensitive technologies and practices" given the unequal access of men and women to technologies and tools. LASIP II aims to address acute food insecurity situations (e.g. droughts, flooding, bushfires, and unexpected pests and disease outbreaks on crops and livestock) through social protection programmes for vulnerable people, innovative financing systems and improved access to natural resources by the poor.

Relying on secondary information, LASIP II provides some baseline data, and targets to achieve by 2022 for key indicators at the national level, including: (i) poverty rates as per the national poverty line (the baseline at 50.9 percent and target at 38.7 percent); (ii) the proportion of undernourished people (baseline at 42.8 percent and target at 28.5 percent); (iii) the prevalence of wasting in under 5-year-old children (baseline at 4.8 percent and target 2.8 percent); and (iv) the prevalence of stunting (baseline 35.5 percent and target at 19.37 percent). However, the data are not disaggregated to show expected impacts and support systems for food insecurity and malnutrition-prone communities and counties, particularly in the south-eastern counties (see Maps 1 and 2).

For example, although value chains, including rice, cassava, horticulture, rubber, oil palm, cocoa and livestock, are prioritized for easy implementation, the priorities zones are not discussed in the documents. In general, all five counties are targeted for specific actions that address common issues such as nutrition education, food diversification and improved access to food. This is due to the lack of data available on the geographical distribution of food insecurity and malnutrition in the country during the formulation of the LASIP II. However, the 2018 CFSNS, carried out after the formulation of the LASIP II, provided comprehensive data on disparities in the regions with regard to food insecurity and malnutrition (see Maps 1 and 2). This information can be used for the implementation of LASIP II and PAPD Pillar 2 with more relevant and effective targeting.

THE PAPD (2018-2023)

The national development plan prioritized agriculture under Pillar II on economy and jobs. Proposed nutrition actions targeted children, schools, women and other vulnerable people under Pillar I. These included actions for developing social protection for poor and vulnerable households. Eligibility for social protection is based on the level of food insecurity of the households because it is proposed that "10 000 extremely poor and food insecure households and 13 000 individual beneficiaries receive cash transfers by 2023 (PAPD, 2018: 40)."

As in LASIP II, PADP does not provide specific geographic targets for addressing food insecurity and malnutrition. This is evident in the Youth Opportunities Project (2016-2020) where PAPD plans to support youth employment through public works programmes targeting at least 15 000 young beneficiaries (15-35 years) but lacks baseline data on the proportion of vulnerable youth in given geographical areas.

The PAPD (2018) recognizes that "interventions to reduce poverty and seasonal food insecurity should also be implemented with a sense of urgency." In a more integrated approach, the PAPD uses the reduction in the infrastructure deficit as stimulation for access to markets and reducing the factor cost of production. Regarding food security and nutrition, it states that "raising social spending in the neglected regions of the country will lift large majorities out of extreme poverty and food insecurity."

Conclusion

In general, the current set of policies and strategies comprehensively describes and analyses the underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition in Liberia. However, the proposed strategies address immediate and underlying causes at the national level and for specific socio-economic groups but lack geographic specificity. While the LASIP II is more comprehensive in describing underlying causes, the PAPD looks at actions to address food insecurity by developing agriculture value chains through the private sector. Vulnerability is addressed through social protection while nutrition is addressed with a health perspective. As previously noted, these policies and strategies lack sufficient disaggregated baseline data on young people and resource-poor women in given geographic locations that can be used as benchmarks to measure impacts.

As a result, food and nutrition policies and strategies have not sufficiently addressed immediate and underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition at the level of geographic areas, agroecological zones and/or administrative areas. Discussions with stakeholders indicate that the policy processes did not adequately involve target beneficiaries in the design and implementation of the policies and strategies.

At the national level, building synergies between policies and strategies through better coordination could help bridge these gaps. The lack of clarity in terms of geographical targeting raises questions about where and how interventions can address vulnerability, poverty and food and nutrition insecurity.

During consultations, stakeholders noted that, in general, local authorities and beneficiaries were not involved in the design of the policies and strategies. The policies were designed centrally, with the support of development partners. As a result, farmer needs will not be adequately addressed during implementation. For example, livestock in the southeast receive little investment although this subsector has significant potential to improve livelihoods. It is critical to ensure the involvement of beneficiaries in the design and implementation of the policies that affect them.

Unfortunately, farmers' organizations and cooperatives are too weak to advocate on their own behalf. Prior to the civil war, smallholders were organized into cooperatives, particularly concerned with export crop production (i.e. cocoa, coffee, rubber, etc.). The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the Agriculture Cooperatives Development Bank (ACDB) and the Liberia Produce Marketing Cooperation (LPMC) formed a tripartite structure managing agricultural cooperative operations. Under this structure, the Ministry of Agriculture played a supervisory role in terms of cooperative development, training, auditing, coordinating marketing arrangement and provision of inputs The Agriculture

Cooperative Development Bank provided finance to farmers. The Liberia Produce Marketing Corporation provided key services to farmers, who could send tons of cocoa and coffee to the Free Port of Monrovia and have them stored in LPMC warehouses for export (Daily Observer Newspaper, April 30, 2018 edition). By contrast today, the LPMC is being changed to Liberia Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority - LACRA and the ACDB collapsed during the war and no longer exists. The Cooperative Development Agency (CDA) is ineffective, due to weak budgetary support and insufficient human resource capacity exacerbated by poor infrastructure. Access to finance is a major constraint to smallholders, coupled with the high interest rates offered by some commercial banks. The CDA has a registry of 620 cooperatives, but they are weak and have poor governance structures due to lack of resources. Given the enormous challenges faced by the CDA, the interests of the smallholders would be better represented if the Government increased its investment in cooperatives established by smallholders themselves in order to ensure transparency, accountability and effective coordination and leadership, with the CDA continuing to exercise oversight responsibility.

In terms of gender, LASIP II and PAPD emphasized actions and priorities to empower women with the objective of addressing gender inequalities. They will build on the work of the National Gender Policy was established in 2009 to address the gender issues linked to food security, nutrition and climate change.

3. Emerging Problems

Question 3: Are current policies and strategies sufficiently forward-looking to address the food security and nutrition impacts of emerging problems related to migration, youth unemployment, climate change, population growth, urbanization, etc.?

Liberia is a food deficit country and thus relies on food imports to meet the food requirements of its citizens. In 2018, the domestic production of rice amounted to 215 000 metric tonnes; while 378 250 metric tonnes were imported to meet the food requirement of 593 250 metric tonnes (PAPD 2018). Similar statistics were cited for 2019, with a domestic production estimated at 224 348 metric tonnes and imports at 381 799 metric tonnes. As a result, the Government and other stakeholders consider the overreliance on food imports as an emerging issue.

This section will also discuss other emerging issues, including youth unemployment, urban growth, land and climate change. The population of Liberia mostly comprises young people, who are heavily reliant on vulnerable employment. Young people are mostly employed in informal sector and do not have access to decent jobs. As a result, Government policies and strategies have started to pay more attention to youth unemployment.

Rapid urban growth, partly due to an important flux of internal migration to the cities especially by youth who generally do not have adequate job opportunities in rural areas is another emerging challenge.

Access to and control of natural resources – including land – by smallholders poses considerable challenges. Although there are no available statistics on the percentage of land held by smallholders, survey findings indicate that transnational companies have been given huge portions of rural land for investment in tree crops.

3.1 Overreliance on food imports

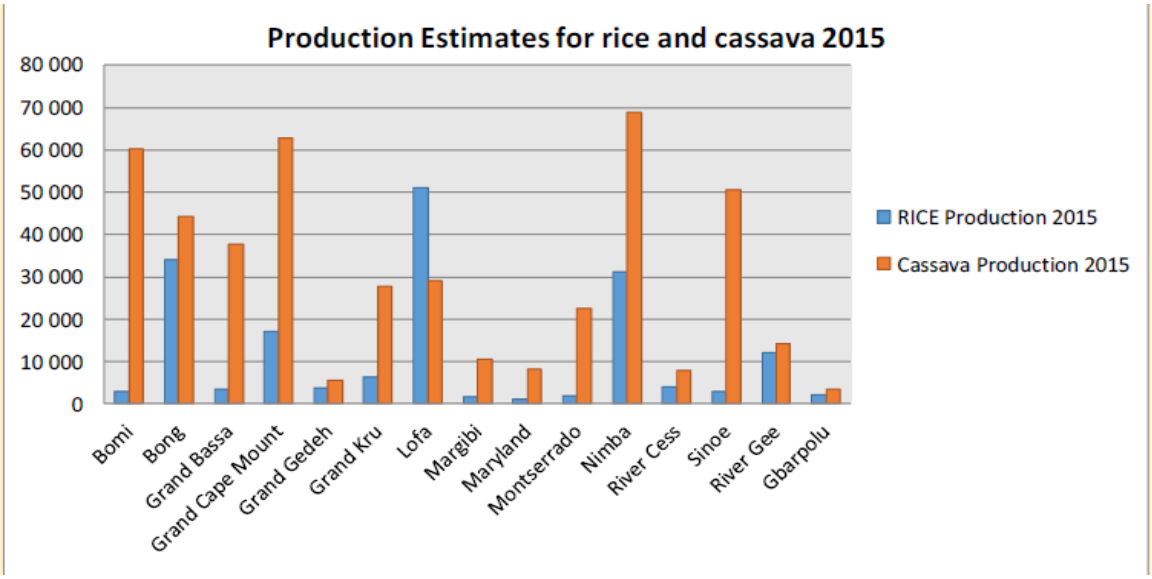
Agricultural investments are to develop cash crops for export (coffee, cocoa rubber and oil palm), which now face a decline in international prices. In addition, low crop production is compensated by food imports. The issue of the impact of food imports on food security and nutrition is regularly discussed but has not been adequately addressed in a comprehensive and sustainable way. To reduce food imports, the PAPD emphasizes increasing food production, especially rice, by supporting private sector participation, through contract farming and developing production around processing facilities.

Rice has the largest share of food and animal imports, amounting to US$ 175 million in 2017 (MoCI Trade Bulletin, 2017). Rice producers in Liberia are extremely vulnerable, with an estimated 69.3 percent living below the poverty line. For this reason, rice is considered a high priority value chain for investment.

The second staple food in Liberia is cassava, whose production and consumption lower overdependence on rice (USAID, 2013) and reduce the import burden. It is for this reason that the Government intends to enhance the cassava value chain, which employs more than 60 percent of farming households (about 264 009 households). While there is no available data on the land cultivated for cassava, a Government survey indicates that Liberia produces far more cassava than rice, as

indicated Figure 2. Among other strategies, the PAPD proposes to increase access to inputs for cassava farmers and especially women.

FIGURE 2. PRODUCTION ESTIMATES FOR RICE AND CASSAVA, 2015



Source: LISGIS, 2015.

Poultry and vegetables are also imported to meet the domestic need. The import of vegetables has led to high prices in rural areas and sometimes to food shortages. For vegetables, the annual requirement is 36 500 metric tonnes with the demand expected to rise to 41 261 metric tonnes over the PAPD implementation period (PAPD, 2018). The Government plans to "promote and support women's participation in vegetables and poultry production and agro-processing;" "provide starter packs for vegetable processing for 15 000 women as a step to mainstream nutrition into agriculture programs with strong gender sensitivity (LASIP II, 2018);" enhance the "use of appropriate production technology and processing of multiple crops to improve productivity and continuous supply of vegetables"; "facilitate the creation of an enabling environment for public and private institutions for increased investments in agriculture, particularly food crops (rice, cassava, and vegetables) and cash crops (rubber, oil palm and cocoa)" and give "priority to food crops (rice, cassava and vegetables) in the most productive regions of the country; and to cash crops (rubber, oil palm and cocoa) to create wealth in rural areas to generate employment (PADP, 2018)."

Youth unemployment

High youth unemployment is a major issue in Liberia, as well as in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) generally, where over 60 percent of a total population of 960 million is below the age of 24 and the population continues to grow (see Table 2). LISGIS (2016) estimates that about 81 percent of Liberians are engaged in informal employment; approximately 50 percent of households in urban areas engage in farming businesses.

The population of Liberia is mainly composed of young people (see Table 4), most of whom are ill-equipped, illiterate, and lack the technical or vocational skills needed for meaningful jobs. According to Liberia's 2010 Labour Force Survey, only about 46 percent of people aged 15-34 are employed. Most of these people work in largely 'vulnerable employment,' defined by the ILO[6] as comprising workers

[6] https://esa.un.org/unmigration/documents/retreat/UN%20WOMEN_Indicator_vulnerable_employment.pdf

who are self-employed without employees or are using unpaid family workers in their businesses. The high number of unemployed or underemployed youth remains a particular challenge, since they are a volatile and vulnerable group. Approximately 75 percent of Liberia's population is under the age of 35 years, with a median age of 18 years. Just under half of the population is male. Young people (ages 15-34) represent 25 percent of the total rural population and 33 percent of the urban population (USAID, 2009).

LASIP II and PAPD place greater attention on youth employment and target the development of productive activities to address this issue. The PAPD seeks to enhance youth employment through strengthening the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) curriculum and proposes some actions regarding involvement of youth and women in agriculture. PAPD emphasizes social protection through cash transfers, with an anticipated outcome of reaching 10 000 extremely poor and food-insecure households and 13 000 individual beneficiaries by 2023. Under LASIP-II, besides other interventions, the employment opportunities are planned to 30 percent of the youth in agriculture through value chains.

TABLE 4. LIBERIA'S YOUTH DEMOGRAPHY

Population by Age Group	
Age Group	percent of Total Population
0-14	47.2
15-19	8.0
20-24	7.9
25-34	12.2
+ 35	24.7
Total 100	Total 100

Source: USAID, 2009 (Liberia Youth Fragility Assessment)

Access to decent employment is also affected by gender: women face higher unemployment rates than men (4.1% and 3.4% respectively) (see Table 1). In addition, women are more likely to be engaged in vulnerable and informal employment than men: women's vulnerable employment rate is 87.3 percent whilst it is 68.3 percent for men. Similarly, women's rate of employment in the informal sector is 74.7 percent whilst it is 61.3 percent for men (LISGIS, 2010).

Rapid urbanization

According to the 2008 Population and Housing Census, 53 percent of the population lived in the rural areas and 47 percent in the urban areas with a growth rate of 2.1 percent (LISGIS, 2009). However, the situation has changed since then due to a rapid migration to the cities. In 2017, about 54 percent of Liberians lived in urban areas, while in 2011 the rate was 48 percent (LISGIS, 2017). This rapid growth is a concern for the Government due to the fact that the cities do not have adequate facilities for absorbing the influx. Since the civil war ended in 2003, a large number of Liberians, particularly young people, migrated to the cities in search of jobs even though most lack the requisite skills set and qualifications to obtain meaningful employment.

The implications of rapid urbanization for food and nutrition security is not evident, given that food insecurity affects rural areas more (23 percent) than urban settings (11 percent) (CFSNS, 2018). Although the PAPD does not provide strategies for addressing rapid urbanization and growing urban stress, particularly in Monrovia, it points out the urgent need for comprehensive urban development strategies that tap into the potential of other rapidly growing, but still manageable, urban centres such as Ganta in Nimba County, Pleebo in Maryland County, Buchanan in Grand Bassa County, and Greenville in Sinoe County (PAPD, 2018).

The development of urban or peri-urban agriculture is an option. For this reason, some civil service organizations (CSOs) have recognized that policy responses involving all stakeholders are needed to support the development of policies and strategies on the role of peri-urban agriculture in support of food security (Welthungerhilfe *et al, 2012)*. With the support of the World Bank, the Government is considering developing a policy on urban agriculture as a strategy for job creation.

The impacts of the implementation of the Land Rights Act on food and nutrition security and agriculture

A Land Rights Authority was established under the previous Government and a Land Rights Act was passed by the National Legislature but has yet to be implemented. When it is implemented, it could help to address the issue of access to natural resources and serve as an instrument to provide opportunities for youth employment. Access to land is a source of conflict and a critical constraint to agricultural production and productivity, affecting both businesses and private individuals. For individuals, the inability to access land has implications for income generation, food security and poverty reduction. Multiplied across communities and districts, this has wider repercussions for society and the economy.

The third pillar of the PAPD (sustaining the peace) prioritizes the improvement of access to land rights and the promotion of land tenure security. It recognizes the urgency of implementing the Land Rights Act and considers customary communities to be the owners of their land.

The Government and its development partners have developed a strategy for the eventual implementation of the Land Rights Act. The Act gives power to the community to own and manage its land without undue interference from political elites and wealthy individuals. For example, according to Article 34, Section 3, “All community members… have equal rights to the use and management of the community land, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion and disability.” The Act also provides opportunities for private ownership, which can support smallholder production. Community land is no longer to be considered public land, although the mineral resources beneath the land are owned by the Government. The implementation of the Land Rights Act is also an opportunity for promoting the rights of women, who represent an estimated 75 percent of the agricultural workforce, to have secure access to land. It aims to pay more attention to women, given their heavy involvement as food crop farmers as opposed to the men, who are more engaged in cash crop farming.

As indicated in the section on Question 1, post-civil war Liberia has given rise to land conflicts among different groups. For example, the Mandingo ethnic group in Nimba County has accused the Gio and Mano ethnic groups of illegally possessing their land and has sued the Government in ECOWAS Court over land-related problems. As it stands, smallholders lack the resources and voices to bring about changes in policy. As previously noted, smallholders are organized into cooperatives, but these are weak, and the infrastructure is poor. A strong cooperative could influence policy dialogues and

promote contract farming, which is key to improving food crop production and productivity. Currently, contract farming is non-existent in Liberia, particularly among small-scale food crop producers.

Climate change

Agriculture in Liberia is highly dependent on precipitation, temperature, and solar radiation. Various studies of the impacts of climate change report substantial variations related to agriculture, such as production and prices. The effects of climate change continue to exert significant pressure on agriculture and therefore have implications for the economy and food security. Agronomic studies suggest that yields fall quite dramatically in the absence of costly adaptation measures, since current farming technology is basic and incomes are low (EPA, 2018).

According to a 2018 United States Environmental Protection Agency policy document, "All of the different types of scenario used in a study conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture in 2013 predict an increase in temperature conditions across Liberia (USDA, 2013)." This is a serious concern for Liberia, where agricultural production practices are very dependent on nature. EPA projections show a spatial variability in precipitation, with a warmer Atlantic Ocean and reduced inland temperatures that result in less rainfall in the interior (EPA ,2018). As a result of increased temperature in the ocean by 2050, the northern parts of Liberia will experience drier conditions, the region with the highest rice production (see Figure 2). In August 2018, there was a little change in rainfall patterns but drier conditions for northern Liberia, reflecting a shift in the pattern of the rainy season (EPA, 2018). A three-year sustainable land management initiative was started in 2008 by the EPA, with funding from the Global Environmental Fund, UNDP and the Government of Liberia, to support the mitigation of land degradation from climate change and to promote ecosystem integrity and stability coupled with enhanced ecological functions and services. The PAPD addresses climate change through a gender lens with the implementation of the Climate Gender Action Plan, which focuses on supporting "women's organizations and entrepreneurs working to mitigate and/or adapt to climate change (PAPD, 2018)." In support of the management of natural resources, LASIP II has proposed an outcome on the enhancement of climate-smart agricultural production techniques.

Climate change is already having an impact on agriculture and food security as a result of increased prevalence of extreme weather conditions, the unpredictability of weather patterns, and crop failures. Business-as-usual scenarios in Liberia, such as slash and burn agricultural production practices, will only exacerbate the adverse impacts of climate change, including land degradation.

Economic activities, including agriculture, mining, charcoal production and logging, are increasing the effects of climate change through deforestation and land degradation. The PAPD highlights the critical constraints of the Government regarding sustainable natural resources management. These relate to the existence of regulatory frameworks which are yet to be enforced in addition to general awareness in a context where efforts to improve environmental management can be undermined by the competition between human economic activities and the environment (PAPD, 2018).

Land

In the past, all land was categorized as private in Liberia. Therefore, the Government has no control on the majority of land, leaving it at the discretion of private investors, influential and wealthy people to manage and sell. In 2009, the Government of Liberia started a land reform process with the formation of the Land Commission, followed by the Land Commission Act, with the mandate to propose, advocate and coordinate reforms of land policy, laws and programmes. On October 10, 2018, the Government of Liberia published the Land Rights Act (LRA), enacted by the Legislature and approved

by the President on September 19, 2018 – a milestone achieved in the process of land reforms in Liberia. The process (law/policy reforms) promotes equitable access to both public and private land, secure tenure governance and investment in and development of national land resources. The entire land tenure and land rights regime in Liberia is changed due to the new Land Rights Act. The mandate of commission now extends to all land and land-based natural resources, including both urban and rural land, private and public land, and land devoted to residential, agricultural, industrial, commercial, forestry, conservation and any other purposes, impacting the lives and livelihoods of the people of Liberia mainly the rural communities/areas. Similar to other policies the challenge lies in managing expectations and successful implementation of the law.

Conclusion

Current policies and strategies recognize the potential impacts of youth unemployment, rapid urbanization, land and climate change on food security and nutrition. But these issues are not yet being addressed in a food security perspective. Youth unemployment is a graver concern because of the high risks it poses to social and political stability. Youth unemployment is more prevalent in urban areas, which are facing high urban growth. Liberia has yet to develop a clear strategy on how to link youth unemployment, urbanization and food security. Regarding climate change, a strategy document exists, but it lacks an implementation plan addressing the impact on food security and nutrition. The development of urban and peri-urban agriculture is a potential response to rapid urbanization, but this was not taken into consideration by the PAPD and LASIP II. In order to be effective, urban and peri-urban agriculture will need to deal with the issues of access to land and availability of facilities such as storage.

Similarly with regard to the issue of climate change, a strategy document exists, but it lacks an implementation plan addressing the impact on food security and nutrition.

In general, land is a cross-cutting issue and is intricately linked to other emerging issues such as climate change, urbanization and youth employment. Addressing this issue will be done through the eventual implementation of the Land Rights Act, which has been delayed due to a lack of resources. Stakeholders argue that the implementation of the Land Rights Act will have to deal with key challenges such as the control of land by political authorities and the capacity of communities to play a meaningful role in the reform. Communities will be expected to have more control over land and tribal certificates[7] will no longer exist. According to the Land Rights Act, tribal certificates will have to be converted to public land sale deeds within 24 months and the “failure to complete this process will result in the land being returned to the community.” In the same vein, implementation will have to address the risk of potential conflicts in the demarcation of customary land boundaries.

[7] Legal documents issued by a tribal authority under the provisions of the 1956 Public Lands Law

4. Implementation mechanisms and capacities

Question 4: Are the implementation mechanisms and capacities in place adequate to reach the people and areas most affected by food insecurity and malnutrition?

Agriculture, food security and nutrition involve different actors playing different roles. The Ministry of Agriculture leads the implementation of Pillar 2 of the PAPD on economy and Jobs and LASIP II. The MoA was established by an act of the Liberia Legislature on May 11, 1972. The MoA's vision is of "a self-sufficient, self-reliant and sustainable agricultural sector by the year 2020." Its mission is "to create an enabling environment for a more dynamic and vibrant agricultural sector to ensure sustainable food security and employment opportunities for all Liberians" (www.moa.gov.lr).

"The mandate of the Ministry of Agriculture to develop the agriculture sector calls for putting in place an effective organizational structure and manned by staff capable of planning, coordinating, implementing, monitoring and evaluating agricultural development programs. It also ensures that its staff and the farmers are trained to cope with the challenges of developing the agriculture sector. In addition, MoA ensures that agricultural challenges that impede production are investigated and lasting solutions found, and the farmers are provided with the supportive services and the enabling environment to produce." (www.moa.gov.lr). However, the current state of the Ministry of Agriculture reveals an insufficient capacity to meet its mandate (i.e. limited financial and human resources, poor infrastructure, weak extension service delivery, weak data repository system, and weak coordinating mechanisms).

Like other Government ministries and agencies, the weak capacity of the MoA can be blamed on the civil war. Post-war Liberia faces enormous development challenges, exacerbated by a dilapidated infrastructure. The lengthy civil way resulted in massive destruction and reversals of capital accumulation that diminished the country's productive capacity. Many roads, bridges, power plants, factories, farms, telecommunications infrastructure, sea and airports were all damaged to near zero utility (Liberia Constraints Analysis, 2013). Trained and skilled workers migrated to other countries, resulting in a major brain drain and the collapse of all productive sectors. As a consequence, Liberia, a country rich in natural resources with a long history of independence, is today one of the poorest countries in the world with a human ranking of 181 out of 189 countries (UNDP HDI Report, 2018). Infrastructural improvements, institutional and human resource capacity development, as well as an enabling environment for sustained growth and development continue to be the major challenges for the Government of Liberia.

The Ebola virus crisis destroyed some of the important gains that Liberia had made in reducing poverty and vulnerability during its post-war reconstruction drive. The Liberian economy was hit hard by the epidemic and related health crisis. Real gross domestic product growth, which was estimated at 8.7 percent in 2013 and projected at 6 percent for 2014 before the crisis, was estimated at less than 1 percent (World Bank, 2015). Rubber production and exports, which slowed due to lower international prices, were also affected by the quarantines and curfews The epidemic resulted in the disruption of production processes across several sectors. Growth in manufacturing was constrained by inadequate electricity and the generally weak business environment. Household incomes suffered from a substantial loss of wage jobs and self-employment. In addition, the fear associated with the outbreak slowed down economic activities: large concession companies suspended their investment plans and

relocated a number of their expatriate staff to other countries (World Bank, 2015).

High inflation due to the devaluation of the Liberian dollar against US currency created food price volatility in the country. This has affected food affordability and accessibility for ordinary citizens, who are generally resource poor. For example, "the inflation rate in Liberia was recorded at 23.30 percent in April of 2019. Inflation rate in Liberia averaged 8.79 percent from 1968 until 2019, reaching an all-time high of 28.50 percent in December of 2018 and a record low of -5.69 percent in December of 1971" (https://tradingeconomics.com/liberia/inflation-cpi). "The USDLRD increased 0.2100 or 0.10 percent to 200.4100 on Thursday July 18 from 200.2000 in the previous trading session. Historically, the Liberian Dollar reached an all-time high of 200.41 in July of 2019 and a record low of 42.94 in December of 2005." [8]

Under the circumstances, political commitment and strong institutional capacity are critical for improving the quality of institutions and work performance. Yet that is far from the situation today. The dwindling political commitment is glaring, as indicated by the infinitesimal public investment in food crop production and national budgetary support to the agricultural sector (i.e. less than 1 percent in the 2017/2018 national budget and 1.38 percent in the 2018/2019 national budget), approximately one-tenth of the 10 percent national budget support to agriculture agreed upon in the Malabo Declaration[9] of June, 2014.

Within the MoA, the mandate of the Regional Development, Research and Extension is not clear, particularly with regard to farmers and their communities. For example, the current ratio of extension staff to farmers is 1:33 000. In addition, extension staff lack transport to the many villages and towns they are assigned. Most farmers do not see extension staff throughout the production period. The Department lacks the capacity to ensure effective service delivery. Subnational offices exist but are unable to reach assigned communities.

Civil society groups, NGOs and development partners wish to help, but there is a problem of coordination and needs prioritization, resulting in fragmented, random and duplicated service delivery.

The Government promotes public-private partnerships, but the concept is in its infancy. The private sector invests in food crop production and processing, and also plays a role as input suppliers. The Government needs to convince private companies to invest more in production, processing and marketing to address food insecurity and malnutrition.

As previously noted, the many stakeholders, missions and levels of engagement complicate the coordination process. For example, nutrition coordination is under the leadership of the Ministry of Health, while the Ministry of Agriculture has a division dealing with food security and nutrition. In the current institutional architecture, there are many implementation mechanisms in place for addressing the issues of food insecurity and malnutrition, but capacity development plans tailored to the needs of each relevant ministry and department should be emphasized.

[8] https://tradingeconomics.com/liberia/currency, retrieved on July 18, 2019.

[9] At the African Union Summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in June 2014, Heads of State and Government adopted a remarkable set of concrete agriculture goals to be attained by 2025. The Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods is a set of new goals showing a more targeted approach to achieve the agricultural vision for the continent which is shared prosperity and improved livelihoods. The Malabo Summit reconfirmed that agriculture should remain high on the development agenda of the continent, and is a critical policy initiative for African economic growth and poverty reduction

Implementation mechanisms

Internal implementation mechanisms

The Ministry of Agriculture is organized in four departments:

- Administration, which manages the operations of the MoA, comprises four technical divisions (Human Resource, Finance, Asset Management and Procurement).
- Technical Services includes four divisions (National Quarantine and Environmental Services, Crop Resource Animal Production and Land Resource Management).
- Regional Development, Research and Extension assists farmers to acquire new skills, techniques and knowledge for the promotion and achievement of innovative ideas and agricultural efficiency and productivity. The Department has only one division, which is Extension Services.
- Planning and Development has oversight responsibilities for planning, development, management, monitoring and evaluating interventions undertaken by the MoA. It is the custodian of the Ministry's policies and plans, such as LASIP II. The Department has seven divisions: Policy and Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Statistics, Agriculture Sector Coordination, Food Security and Safety Management, Agricultural Product Processing and Enhancement, Programme Management Unit.

The Agriculture Sector Coordination Division serves as the liaison between the Ministry of Agriculture and its development partners. Its mandate is to ensure that agricultural activities are aligned with national development objectives. The division is responsible for organizing monthly Agriculture Coordination Committee (ACC) meetings, which objective is to provide the Ministry with advice on policy formulation to propel the sector to growth and development. The ACC is supported by various working groups established by subsector, with membership based on technical knowledge. The general mandate of all working groups is to conduct in-depth analyses of their subsector and develop strategies to increase productivity and improve the quality of agricultural commodities (especially export crops). The review of the LASIP I indicated that the role of the MoA in providing direction and guiding the involvement of partners in the sector is limited. The review stated that this "in many ways has led to the underperformance of many projects in terms of impacts and sustainability. It has also left gaps in the scope and coverage of agricultural interventions, as well as duplication of interventions (Kanneh, 2017)."

Coordination is also carried out through the Agriculture Donor Working Group (ADWG), chaired by the Minister of Agriculture. This group comprises donors and technical partners and its objectives are to facilitate closer collaboration between development partners and the Ministry of Agriculture; provide coordination services for country-level donors, including information, management, communication and technical advice; improve the quality and coherence of policy dialogues and aid; and coordinate participatory support for LASIP. The ADWG seeks to avoid duplication and contradictions between partners and serves as a forum for strategic policy discussions around the agriculture sector. Discussions in this group tend to focus on agriculture, rather than on issues related to food and nutrition security. The ADWG, which has been inactive for more than a year, is set to be rejuvenated with new terms of reference to align to the arrangements proposed in the LASIP II and the PAPD.

Lessons learned from LASIP I indicate that supporting implementation mechanisms is challenging. For example, the Food Security and Nutrition Steering Committee (FSNSC), which is chaired by the vice president and brings "together key ministers and two representatives of bilateral and multilateral

agencies that are active in food security," is not functional. The FSNSC should "develop strategic priorities and to plan appropriate responses to crises emerging in the short-term" and to "identify where intersectoral coordinated action is needed to address issues related to food insecurity and malnutrition and propose options for taking action." Unlike the FSNSC, the Food and Nutrition Security Technical Committee is operating with the support of FIRST after being inactive for some years.

In general, the implementation of plans and policies on food security and nutrition is a major challenge. Even if policy objectives for food and nutrition security are clearly stated, according to stakeholder consultations, high-level efforts are often lacking, given the limited public investment in food and nutrition security. There is a lack of inter-ministerial and multi-stakeholders dialogue on issues related to food security and nutrition. This is one of the main reasons why it has been so difficult to achieve food and nutrition security in Liberia.

To ensure effective and efficient management, implementation, and coordination of donor-funded agriculture projects within the framework of LASIP, the MoA established a Programme Management Unit (PMU) in the Department of Planning and Development in 2010 as part of its ongoing reform initiative. The PMU manages and coordinates projects on food security and poverty alleviation. Although, the Minister of Agriculture has overall authority, the PMU is headed by a director appointed by the President, who reports to the Deputy Minister for Planning and Development, which oversees its day-to-day operations. All other PMU staff members, including coordinators and project staff are contractors hired by the Ministry for the duration of their projects (LASIP I review). An analysis of the situation shows a distinct lack of effective coordination between PMU and the MoA.

A diagnostic done by the Department of Planning and Development revealed some key points to consider for a better coordination of the agriculture sector and food and nutrition sector:

- Win back the confidence of development partners through increased coordination, collaboration and synergy building.
- Use LASIP as a platform for coordination.
- Establish and revitalize new and existing working groups for sector development.
- Identify areas and establish ACC satellites in all of Liberia's 15 counties to smooth proper coordination with the field.
- Map development and implementing partners to avoid duplication.
- Include other partners, such as NGOs and farmers, in the coordination process.
- Improve and update database on partners to enhance informed policy decision-making.

INTER-MINISTERIAL COORDINATION ON FNS

The dimensions of agriculture and food security and nutrition involve multiple actors and Government entities. But, in general, little coordination exists between the different stakeholders.

Coordination for food security and nutrition

In 2008, an institutional framework was defined for the coordination of food security and nutrition activities and the monitoring of food insecurity and undernutrition. However, the institutional Food Security and Nutrition Technical Committee (FSNTC) and the Food Security and Nutrition (FSN) Secretariat, under the president's office were established but does not meet regularly. The Food and Nutrition Security Technical Committee is operating with the support of FIRST after being inactive for some years. Due to lack of clarity on roles and weak capacity, still the ownership and lead of the committee needs to be strengthened at MOA. One of the key activities planned under LASIP-II is the

establishment of food security and nutrition surveillance system. Which was delayed due to dormancy of Food Security and Nutrition Technical Committee and Food Security and Nutrition Steering Committee. The institutional framework has been now been revised to reflect the multiple dimensions of food security and nutrition.

The framework includes three levels of coordination:

1) Food Security and Nutrition Stakeholders Forum: Comprised of public institutions, civil society, international NGOs and bilateral and multilateral agencies involved in food security, the Forum serves as platform for consultation, meeting annually to assess progress on the implementation of the national FSNS and to make recommendations.

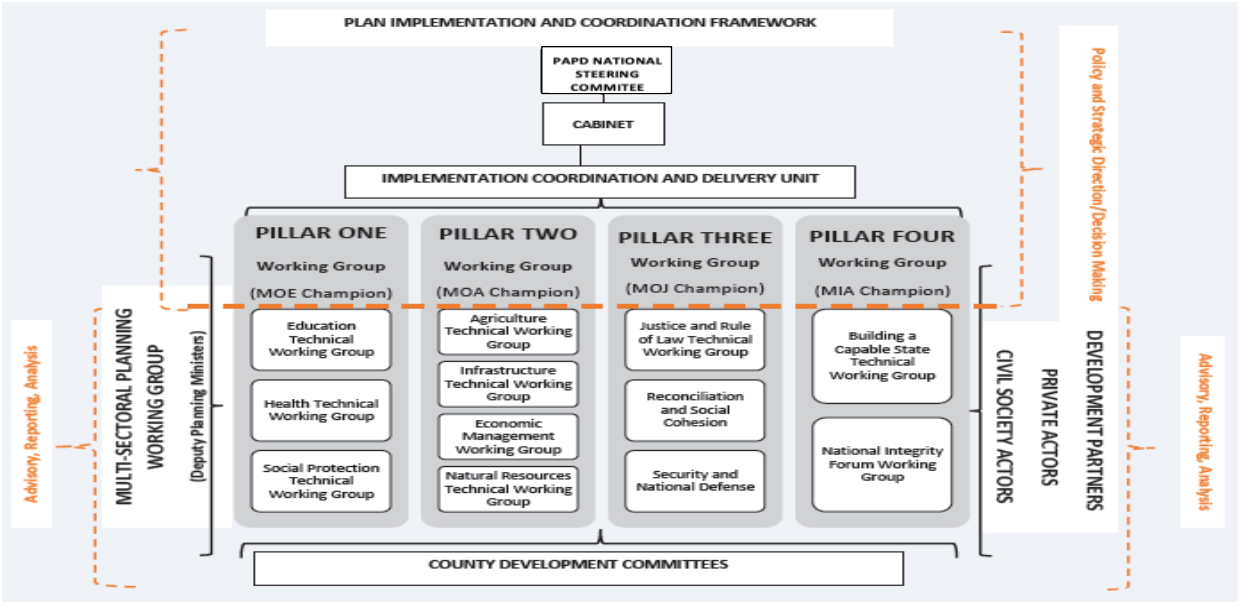
2) The Food Security and Nutrition Steering Committee (FSNSC): The role of the Committee is to coordinate actions necessary to improve food security and nutrition and to advocate for resources. The FSNSC should build linkages with the MoA's Agriculture Coordination Committee and the MOH's Nutrition Coordination Committee to ensure better coordination. Chaired by the Vice President, the FSNSC has never been operational.

3) The Food Security and Nutrition Technical Committee: The main objectives of the Committee are to: i) develop and maintain a clear understanding of the food security and nutritional status of different populations across Liberia; ii) provide oversight on the implementation of the FSNS so that it ensures the right of all Liberians to sufficient food and proper nutrition; iii) play an active role in policy-making within the Government, e.g. ensuring that food insecurity and undernutrition are reflected in national policies; iv) assist partner agencies to revise their policies to better emphasize their role in this regard; v) engage in the annual Government planning process to ensure that sufficient resources are allocated to food security and nutrition; vi) assess at least every three years the overall effectiveness of the efforts being undertaken within the country to attain the objectives of the FSNS; vii) maintain close relations with Liberia's international development partners in order to raise supplemental resources for sectoral activities to address food insecurity and improve nutrition; and viii) communicate to stakeholders and to the nation as a whole through briefings, press releases, and public addresses the policies, priorities, targets, and results of the FSNS.

Coordination for agriculture

In the LASIP II and the PAPD (See Figure 5), it is planned to put in place implementation mechanisms for coordinating and monitoring policies and plans. The proposed arrangements are based on existing coordination mechanisms. The PAPD also proposes to migrate from a sectoral to a multisectoral approach. As noted, a National Steering Committee, chaired by the President with the participation of FSNS Pillar champions including MoA, will support coordination. In addition, sub-committees on Implementation, Coordination and Delivery Unit (ICDU), Pillar Working Groups (PWG), and Technical Working Groups (TWG) will be created.

FIGURE 5. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION FRAMEWORK OF THE PAPD



It is worth noting that other sectors, such as forestry, fisheries and land, have their own coordination mechanisms. The Ministry of Agriculture is not particularly active in these groups. However, the MoA does chair the board of Bureau of National Fisheries and the Liberia Agriculture Commodity Regulatory Authority.

Capacities

In general, the agriculture sector lacks the technical and human resources capacities needed to adequately reach the most vulnerable people. This is coupled with an important staffing gap at both national and county levels, especially in the Department of Extension Services and Technical Services (MoA Capacity Assessment, 2018).

TECHNICAL CAPACITIES

The MoA Capacity Assessment, carried out in 2017 and supported by FAO, underscores the deficit of technical capacities in the agriculture sector in general, and food security in particular. Expertise is lacking in all departments and in all divisions. This is a major constraint for the implementation of policies and strategies on food security and nutrition. For example, the lack of development in the livestock and poultry sub-sectors is recognized as a key driver of food insecurity and malnutrition. However, the MoA has no experts on board to support the development of the sub-sectors. In the Division of Food Security, the staff deficit has made it impossible to develop a proper system for monitoring and evaluation of food and nutrition security. Nor are there adequate staff to effectively coordinate actions on food and nutrition. As a consequence, Liberia is unable to develop adequate and evidence-based response plans to vulnerability. The M&E division of the MoA has only two staff members having experience in monitoring and evaluating policies and strategies, but overall due to staff shortage the division has experienced critical coordination and work relationship gaps with the PMU in the monitoring of projects.

Efforts to implement the Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (CFSNS) are almost entirely supported by donors and technical partners. In this context, Liberia needs to find ways to fill staff gaps through the donor projects that provide technical capacities in the areas of food security and nutrition (surveys, training) and other technical areas such as livestock, agriculture production.

HUMAN RESOURCES CAPACITIES

More than 50 percent of MoA staff is assigned to the central office, leaving the counties with limited and inadequate numbers of staff. The number of staff in the Food and Nutrition Security Division is particularly limited, especially in the area of coordination. The division lacks a nutritionist, despite having a mandate on nutrition. The coordination of nutrition is led by the Ministry of Health, which organizes regular coordination meetings with the participation of the MoA.

It is clear that the MoA needs better collaboration with other Government entities. However, this is made difficult by weak inter-ministerial coordination. For example, while the MoA is responsible for the Food Security Classification under the 'Cadre Harmonisé,' the development of response plans falls under the Disaster Management Agency. The need to establish close collaboration between the two institutions is therefore very important during an emergency. Another example are the concessions agreements between the Government and transnational companies that provide for agricultural support by farmers. Is there effective coordination between the MoA, which is responsible for the monitoring the agreements, and the National Investment Commission, which is responsible for negotiating investment. In recent years, the Bureau of Fisheries (now the National Aquaculture and Fisheries Authority) and the Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI) have been administratively separate from the MoA. This makes internal coordination on issues related to food and nutrition security even more challenging because of the existence of different management authorities.

Another issue is the risk of high turnover when there is a new Government or a change of minister, due to the fact that most of the staff are on limited contracts. As of August 2017, the Ministry had a total of 413 staff at both central and field levels, of which 145 were contractors and 10 were presidential appointees.[10] The staff instability further jeopardizes the technical and institutional capacity to implement policies and programmes.

Conclusion

Most stakeholders agreed that the mechanisms proposed in the different policies and strategies are generally adequate, but they lack effective implementation mechanisms. For example, LASIP II proposed establishing an information system to monitor food insecurity and malnutrition in order to prepare response mechanisms for addressing vulnerability. The fact that this has not occurred, risks an inadequate response to the needs of the people. Stakeholders argued that the inadequate implementation of proposed mechanisms is mainly due to deficits in public investment and the lack of effective coordination in the sector.

The implementation of policies also suffers from a lack of regulatory frameworks around disease control, mechanization policy, seeds, fertilizers and inadequate mechanisms for collaboration among ministries, agencies and commissions on policies and strategies. Mc Namara et al. (2011) observed that the lack of proper linkages between Liberia's research institutes and the Department of Regional Development, Research and Extension of the MoA limits the provision of services to the farmers. It also leads to poor communication between central and local levels, poor communications among development partners and Government agencies, and the absence of synergy and complementarity.

All of this is exacerbated by the low level of technical and human resources in the area of agriculture and food security and nutrition. The LASIP I review pointed out limitations in the areas of human, institutional and technical capacities as a consequence of multiple factors, including prolonged civil

FAO (2018). Institutional Capacity Assessment of the MoA report

war, structural constraints, and a lack of available training opportunities. It stated that “there was limited institutional capacity in terms of system, organization, policies, strategies, and structure that often resulted in poor organization management and development, such as non-productive sector, poor coordination and limited capacity of staff.”

5. Resource allocation

Question 5: To what extent are the existing policies and strategies adequately resourced (from national resources and other sources), implemented, monitored and, in the case of inadequate or incomplete implementation, what are the implications for the achievement of the intended food security and nutrition impacts?

Resources for policies and strategies

Funding for LASIP II and PADP comes from a range of sources. However, experiences gained from the implementation of previous national development plans have shown that Government policies and strategies are not adequately supported from domestic budgets. For example, the Agenda for Transformation (AfT) found the development partners' share rising from 64 percent in 2012/2013 to 76 percent in 2014/2015, thereby making Liberia the most highly dependent country on donor support in Africa (PAPD, 2018). The LASIP I, which was mainly funded by donors, was able to mobilize only 43.18 percent of its required funding. This high dependency on donors is the result of low public investment in agriculture, food security and nutrition (see Table 5). The PAPD aims to change this trend by investing more domestic resources in the implementation of the strategy (59 percent). The commitment of the Government to provide support for agriculture requires massively enhancing domestic resource mobilization. The Government plans to increase the allocation to agriculture over the period of the implementation of the PAPD. Nevertheless, the financing gaps are likely to be huge (US$ 314 million for 2018/2019; other projected gaps include US$ 290 million for 2019/2020; US$ 311 million for 2020/2021; US$ 427 million for 2021/2022; US$ 430 million for 2022/2023).

The largest share (73 percent) of the LASIP budget is allocated to food and nutrition security, while in the PAPD, 10 percent and 6 percent are allocated to agriculture (including food security) and health (including nutrition) respectively. Until now, most of the plans and programmes have been funded by donors. For example, at least 90 percent of the funding for LASIP I came from multilateral and bilateral donors. This dependency reduces Government control over its commitment to achieve SDG 2 and food and nutrition security. In addition, it means that Liberia is unlikely to meet its commitment to the Malabo Declaration to invest at least 10 percent of the national budget in agriculture (see Table 5). The Government asserts its intention to provide more resources to agriculture through the use of aid (loans and grants) as shown in Table 6.

LASIP II lacks a clear funding strategy on how US$1 932 065 603 will be generated to support its full implementation over five years (2018-2022). Support is expected to come from Government, bilateral/multilateral donors and the private sector, but there has been no percentage projection in terms of shares. LASIP I experienced a funding gap of US$ 538.44 million. Funding is likely to remain a major challenge for LASIP II throughout its implementation period.

TABLE 5. SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL BUDGET, 2018/2019

1.7 Sector Summary						
Sector	FY2016-17 Actual	FY2017-18 Budget	FY2017-18 Est. Outturn	FY2018-19 Budget	FY2019-20 Projection	FY2020-21 Projection
01 Public Administration Sector	180,568,685	175,027,441	149,728,416	177,442,775	164,304,698	165,779,795
02 Municipal Government Sector	21,017,568	17,260,587	15,431,533	21,086,194	18,730,980	18,659,755
03 Transparency and Accountability Sector	33,383,243	44,866,260	41,514,740	21,933,442	21,312,958	20,934,267
04 Security and Rule of Law Sector	83,798,145	89,130,433	84,064,266	86,180,273	80,796,154	78,960,839
05 Health Sector	54,073,245	73,064,527	61,702,260	81,704,885	75,235,473	71,644,498
06 Social Development Services Sector	12,464,345	9,632,499	8,052,294	11,824,493	9,906,627	11,555,058
07 Education Sector	76,339,550	81,848,121	72,109,466	85,362,696	77,649,003	76,094,897
08 Energy and Environment Sector	15,504,877	15,060,621	13,648,819	12,337,577	11,162,360	10,407,339
09 Agriculture Sector	6,241,845	5,321,458	5,077,995	7,851,066	6,866,595	7,793,372
10 Infrastructure and Basic Services Sector	37,724,762	16,782,909	15,013,222	57,248,486	42,422,938	62,942,393
11 Industry and Commerce Sector	7,215,895	8,035,069	7,451,860	7,176,113	6,757,427	6,513,431
Grand Total	**528,332,160**	**536,029,925**	**473,794,871**	**570,148,000**	**515,145,214**	**531,285,645**

Source: Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, national budget, 2018/2019

TABLE 6: FY 2018/2019 AID PROJECTION BY NATIONAL BUDGET SECTOR

National Budget Sectors	FY2018/2019 Aid Projection by National Budget Sector			
	Grant	Loan	Total	Percent
Agriculture	19,435,444	17,321,397	36,756,841	6.2%
Education	24,808,487		24,808,487	4.2%
Energy and Enivornment	98,592,324	70,282,948	168,875,272	28.6%
Health	68,859,880	10,100,000	78,959,880	13.4%
Industry and Commerce	2,875,273		2,275,273	0.4%
Infrastructure and Basic Services	79,695,757	43,479,494	123,175,251	20.8%
Municipal Government	5,330,622		5,330,622	0.9%
Public Administration	35,681,785	25,102,384	60,784,169	10.3%
Security and Rule of Law	28,556,781		28,556,781	4.8%
Social Development Services	47,584,620	1,791,760	49,376,380	8.4%
Transparency and Accountability	12,395,471		12,395,471	2.1%
Total	**423,816,443**	**168,077,984**	**591,294,427**	**100%**

Source: Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, national budget, 2018/2019

The PAPD signals the Government's intention to increase the contribution to agriculture and fisheries to the GDP from 26 percent to 35 percent. The strategy aims to reduce post-harvest loss by 50 percent; double the number of women farmers; promote the development of agribusiness incubators[11]; and help 75 percent of women adopt new and innovative technologies (PAPD, 2018). The difficulty for smallholders to access financing is a major constraint and a key driver of food insecurity. As illustrated in Table 7, the share of commercial bank loans for agriculture is weak compared to sectors such as trade and personal credit. At the same time, the private sector makes a large investment in agriculture (see Table 7), but this is mostly to support cash crop production through large concessions (see Table 3). Although LASIP I pressed for private sector investment in smallholder agriculture, their involvement

[11] For in-service training especially for women and youths interested in becoming agri-preneurs, Government aims to support the promotion of incubators under LASIP-II. This activity endeavours to provide training to women and youths in agribusiness. In so doing, incubators strategy will be developed and implemented in the fifteen counties and will primarily target youths and women.

was limited. The review of LASIP I in 2017 revealed that only one private entity, the Agriculture and Assets Development Company (LAADCO), supported cooperatives in Lofa County under the STCRSP/IFAD project. The contribution of the private sector to food security is expressly mentioned in the regulatory instrument, which support concession agreements. However, the implementation of those agreements is suboptimal due to lack of monitoring. The Government intends to obtain an increased share from the flow of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) over the next five years for agriculture sector. This can be accomplished in two key ways: 1) Resolving constraints to private sector investment; and 2) through value addition (PADP, 2018). Many interventions under LASIP-II was planned to involve private sector investment to harness the business opportunities. Under SAPEC, the Government has installed five rice milling plants with the capacity of 18MT per day to increase rice production and involved private sector to manage the rice mills through the provision of mechanized equipment and support services. The objectives for such interventions are to strengthen public private partnership, establish agriculture mechanization service center, provision of extension services at the doorstep of farmers and many more.

TABLE 7: COMMERCIAL BANK LOANS BY ECONOMIC SECTOR, 2016 - 2018

	Dec-16		Dec-17		Nov-18	
	L$	Share (%)	L$	Share (%)	L$	Share (%)
Agriculture	1,793.90	4.4	2,699.80	4.9	4,274.0	5.9
Extractive (Mining & Quarrying)	47.9	0.1	121.4	0.2	458.8	0.6
Manufacturing	2,193.90	5.4	1,684.10	3.1	1,554.1	2.1
Construction	4,330.60	10.6	4,465.00	8.2	7,536.1	10.4
Services	3,153.70	7.7	7,957.90	14.6	7,696.8	10.6
Trade	10,737.00	26.4	16,575.30	30.3	24,154.8	33.2
Personal	5,040.40	12.4	13,556.60	24.8	14,825.7	20.4
Gen. Government	-	-	-	-	1,357.5	1.9
Central Bank	-	-	-	-	0.4	0.0
Public Corporations	40.6	0.1	895.5	1.6	892.6	1.2
Oil and Gas	1,466.10	3.6	2,801.70	5.1	4,638.5	6.4
Others	11,924.30	29.3	3,921.20	7.2	5,356.4	7.4
TOTAL Loan (All Sectors)	**40,728.30**	**100**	**54,678.40**	**100**	72,745.6	100.0
Total Loans (Private Sector)	40,687.70	99.9	53,782.90	98.4	70,495.1	96.9

Source: CBL, 2018

The lack of public investment in agriculture limits Liberia's efforts to enhance food security and nutrition. Nor does investment in agriculture guarantee increases in food crop production if the investments focus on cash crops. The shortage of funds for the PAPD is likely to lead to intersectoral budget trade-offs around priorities for domestic resource allocation, unless adequate funds can be obtained from foreign support (loans and grants), domestic private sector investments, foreign direct and portfolio investments, and public/private partnerships, as called for in the plan. Yet the low level of public investment in food security and nutrition (see Tables 5 and 6) undermines the leadership of the Government over the choice of priorities and options. A random selection of sectors shows that the allotment to agriculture is consistently low compared to most other sectors (see Table 8). The agriculture sector was allotted less than 1 percent of the total national budget in 2017/2018, with security and rule of law topping the list at 16.63 percent; followed by education, at 15.27 percent; and health, at 13.63 percent. Similar trends were observed in the 2018/2019 fiscal year. This trend shows a pronounced lack of political will on the part of the Government to prioritize the development of agriculture, particularly food crop production, in order to address the issues of food insecurity and malnutrition in the country. Here, Liberia lags behind the rest of the region in terms of meeting its commitments under the Malabo Declaration as previously mentioned. Discussions with various

stakeholders confirm that more agricultural engagement is needed from the Government, including from the national budget.

Why is public investment low? In addition to the lack of political commitment to food and nutrition security, other factors influence public investment as well. So far only anecdotal evidence is available about these other factors due to a lack of empirical data. This is an important knowledge gap that needs to be tackled in order to better understand and address the bottlenecks to implementing food security and nutrition policies.

TABLE 8: NATIONAL BUDGET (PROPORTION OF ALLOTMENT BY SECTOR)

FY 2017-18		FY 2018-19
Sector	**Percent (total national budget)**	**Percent (total national budget)**
Agriculture	0.99	1.38
Education	15.27	14.97
Health	13.63	14.33
Social development services	1.79	2.07
Energy and environment	2.81	2.16
Security and rule of law	16.63	15.12

Multiple donor-funded projects have created an environment characterized by fragmented interventions that risk the ineffective use of resources in terms of targeting and choice of priorities.

Implementation and monitoring of policies and strategies

Implementation mechanisms were discussed at length in the section on Question 4, where it was concluded that these are inadequate to support Liberia's food security and nutrition policies and strategies. The project approach has tended to take precedence in the implementation of policies, leading to fragmented reporting and monitoring systems.

The review of LASIP I provides detailed information on the level of implementation of plans, activities and programmes. It concluded that, in general, "individual projects contributing to the achievements of LASIP objectives have very good and strong M&E frameworks and systems but this did not feed well into an overall M&E system or framework for LASIP." The result has been a lack of coherent, coordinated and systematized data collection, analysis and reporting on policies and strategies. In the absence of a centralized M&E system, it is virtually impossible to establish an accurate baseline and thus it becomes very difficult to measure progress. For this reason, the Government does not have a good overview of interventions in the sector. However, stakeholders have observed that food crop interventions have not tended to reach the most vulnerable people, because projects often introduce equipment and technologies that are not adapted to the needs of farmers.

LASIP II proposed putting into place "consistent monitoring and evaluation accompanied by regular supervision of projects" through the establishment of a centralized system that will be implemented by the M&E Unit of the MoA. In parallel, the PAPD has proposed a Government-wide M&E system to track disaggregated indicators and conduct annual progress reports on targets and aggregate change. National statistics are currently gathered by the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information

Services. As proposed in the PAPD, a process to develop detailed M&E in consultations with partners, including FIRST, is taking place under the leadership of the Ministry of Finance and with support from the World Bank. The hosting and leadership of such a system for the agriculture sector is currently under discussion by MoA, LISGIS and MFDP.

Conclusion

Although recognized by the Government as an engine of growth, the agriculture sector is not well-resourced and lacks appropriate and effective implementation mechanisms to support food security and nutrition. This is coupled with a lack of a central M&E system to help monitor the implementation of policies and strategies. These factors have a major impact on the effectiveness of efforts to achieve food security and nutrition. Funding for such efforts come mainly from donors and, to a lesser extent, from the private sector, despite being a major investor in cash crops. Against this background, stakeholders have suggested to have strong sectoral coordination and compliance between National Bureau of Concessions and the National Investment that have policies on private sector investment to better integrate the dimensions of food security and nutrition in the said policies.

Both LASIP II and PAPD have proposed mechanisms for implementation and monitoring. But LASIP II's proposal is more specifically concerned with food security and nutrition, since it recommends establishing a food and nutrition security information system to collect, analyze and publish data for the purpose of addressing the needs of vulnerable people. Nevertheless, LASIP II lacks an enabling environment to support such a system, including the funding.

The lack of funding and the means to implement and monitor the policies and strategies is largely due to meagre Government investment in terms of human resources and coordination mechanisms. The current project-funded approach does not support Government leadership at sector and intersectoral levels in the implementation and monitoring of the policies and strategies.

If the funding gaps identified LASIP II and PAPD are not addressed soon it is likely that a good many of the development outcomes will not be achieved, which will have negative consequences for food and nutrition security. In the various meetings held with stakeholders, the Ministry of Finance usually argued that agriculture, food security and nutrition are not under resourced given the investments by donors and other development partners. This is why the agriculture sector has such a low priority in intersectoral budget trade-offs. Some actors feel that investment in cash crops is the best way to develop the Liberian economy. Such an investment could also benefit vulnerable people if they had more power in the cash crop value chain.

6. Political Economy Analysis

Question 6: What are the political economy factors that may prevent the adoption and/or implementation of the right measures, actions, and implementation mechanisms to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition by 2030?

Interest conflicts in addressing some key drivers of food insecurity and malnutrition

The overreliance on food imports is discussed at length in the sections on Questions 1 and 3. There is a general agreement on the urgent need to reduce this reliance by helping local farmers to increase their incomes and improve their access to food at cheaper prices. However, raising smallholder production, as proposed in the PAPD and LASIP II, conflicts with the Government objective to increase fiscal revenues based on tariffs. Moreover, the powerful influence of the food import lobby can be felt with regard to the implementation of trade instruments, such as increases in tariffs on staple foods like rice.

The eventual implementation of the Land Rights Act will create concerns among large landowners and officials around losing political power and control over land, including land obtained through tribal certificates. This is likely to lead to conflict. At the same time, ensuring the equitable distribution of land to women famers might face some opposition. The implementation of the Land Rights Act will imply the renegotiation of some concession agreements in which communities are involved.

Different views in the models of agriculture that support food security and nutrition

The discussion around Question 2 indicates that Liberia is well aware of the immediate and underlying causes of food insecurity and nutrition in the country. Many Government officials are convinced that the development of agriculture is the only way ahead. However, they do not agree on strategy, with many supporting the development of tree crops and agribusiness value chains to increase the income of producers and reduce dependence on imports. These approaches risk leaving behind poor and vulnerable people, who cannot access the capital to participate in the marketplace.

In conclusion, decision-makers are mostly skewed toward promoting greater investment in export crops (tree crops) rather than food crops, particularly staples (rice and cassava) and vegetables, which are essential to food security and nutrition. The main thrust of their argument is that export crops will promote the growth of the overall economy. However, in his recent address to the nation, President George Manneh Weah introduced the notion of using mechanized farming to produce more rice to meet national consumption requirements and export the excesses to the subregion. Local stakeholders, especially women who engage in subsistence food crop farming and disproportionately bear the adverse effects of food insecurity and malnutrition, believe that such a plan could make nutritious food available, accessible and affordable.

In support of investing more in food crop production, civil society and farmers are advocating for the development of agriculture, food security and nutrition by facilitating access to adequate financing system, inputs and land, especially for women and youth.

Inter-Governmental agency competitiveness of various policies and programs and projects implementation

Liberia has multiple policies, strategies, acts and regulatory frameworks related to agriculture, food security and nutrition, including in the areas of fisheries, livestock, trade, environment and forestry. In addition, numerous autonomous agencies and commissions work in the fields of food security, nutrition and agriculture, including land, commodities, research, forestry, disaster management, fisheries and agricultural investment. The multiplicity of independent policies and Government entities and a lack of higher-level leadership make coordination difficult. It has also created a lack of clarity on the boundaries between ministries, agencies and commissions and competitiveness in the implementation of policies. For example, as explained in the section on Question 2, the Ministry of Agriculture has limited responsibility on disaster management, while it has the mandate of monitoring the food security and nutrition situation nationwide as well as coordinating food security-related activities and programmes.

Absence of political will for resources allocation on food security and nutrition

Question 5 focused on the resources dedicated to implementing food security and nutrition policies and strategies. Stakeholders argue that the limited investment in these areas is due to a lack of political will on achieving SDG 2. In Liberia, it is evident that the interest groups promoting cash crop production constitute the elites in Government and private sector. For example, some legislators and officials in the executive branch are cash crop farmers. These elites protect the large concessionaires because of the benefits accrued through cash crops, as evidence by their lobbying efforts to pass the Concession Act through the national legislature. These interest groups are dominated by men, who have traditionally demonstrated a high interest for cash crops, since the profit margins are huge compared to the food crops dominated by women.

As previously noted, smallholder farmers have weak cooperative organizations and lack capacity; they do not have the resources to lobby and advocate on behalf of their members. Local authorities support and implement orders from the central Government whether or not these benefit local people. The ineffectiveness of policy, however, is more due to the lack of human resource capacity and political commitment, rather than to partisan dynamics. The huge human resource gaps at the Ministry of Agriculture are a typical example of the weak institutional capacity of the Government.

Liberia badly needs to change minds and attitudes toward increasing investment in crop production to reduce food imports, particularly rice. This includes changing attitudes among the elites, who prefer foreign to locally-produced rice, due to its poor and traditional processing. It requires improving extension services delivery to meet the needs of all target groups.

The current model of agriculture in Liberia is based on the development of cash crops that attract large investments on the one hand, and large reliance on external resource partners on the other hand. The focus of international donors on agriculture, food security and nutrition investment gives them considerable influence to bear on sector.

Box B describes how community land was taken over by a large concession company through appropriation by the central Government without community involvement.

BOX B: FOOD-INSECURE CONCESSION COMMUNITIES AND CONCESSIONAIRE RELATIONSHIP: THE CASE OF SIME DARBY PLANTATION (LIBERIA) INC.

The Concession Agreement with the Sime Darby Plantation (Liberia) Inc. has limited provisions for ensuring improved food security and nutrition for vulnerable communities inside the periphery of the concession area. The agreement allocated 220 000 hectares of land for concession operations. The communities have very little or no access to land for food crop production, particularly rice and cassava as expressed by the inhabitants during community consultations.

However, based on the concession agreement with Sime Darby, concession communities should have benefited from an outgrowers' programme (44 000 hectares), which was to start within three years after the effective date of the agreement (July 23, 2009) as provided in Section 15.2. However, some communities in Grand Cape Mount (Sinje, Kon Town, D-8 Community) and Bomi County (Gbah Town, Borbor Town and Zalaka Town) indicated during consultation meetings that they never engaged in any outgrowers' programme discussions. "Outgrowers are Liberian small land holders that have been selected to participate in the outgrowers' programme and have agreed to be bound by all of the requirements of the programme (Concession Agreement between Sime Darby Plantation, Inc. and the Government of Liberia, 2009)." In Section 19.5 of the Concession Agreement, it is stated that there should be a community development contribution in the amount of US$ 5.00/ha annually.

This fund should be managed by ten members nominated and selected by the surrounding community, the Government of Liberia and investors. Some residents in Grand Cape Mount and Bomi Counties indicated that this action has not been implemented. The communities are prone to food insecurity and malnutrition, and if actions are not taken to address their needs, their desperate conditions may lead to unwholesome practices and social unrest. The communities also indicated that the Government has not involved them in policy discussions, including demarcating and allocating land for concession purposes.

To support smallholder access to credit and agriculture inputs, it has been proposed to rehabilitate the agricultural bank. But this will require dealing with competition among commercial banks. In this context, the weak negotiating power of farmers will not help to increase resources for food security and nutrition. This is why farmers insist that the sector needs a champion to advocate for increased public budget to counter the argument of the MFPD that the sector is well-resourced by donors and projects.

7. Policy Realism

Question 7: Considering the above analysis, how realistic and credible are the current policies and strategies?

The LASIP II and the PAPD are general frameworks and therefore have to be translated into more precise and implementable plans. The design of these frameworks has been achieved in a participatory manner with the engagement and involvement of most relevant stakeholders from both the Government and its partners, with the exception of relevant local authorities and beneficiaries. The policies and strategies adequately respond to the needs of the population and the proposed actions are built on evidence-based analysis. Based on the above analysis, the PAPD and LASSIP II are credible, but they are very ambitious given the funding requirements coupled with the limited financial capacity of the Government to meet funding needs. They are not adapted to the existing resources and capacities and are therefore not realistic, based on the experience of LASIP I and the AfT implementation.

The Government has a revenue envelope of little more than US$ 5.2 billion for the PAPD with a plan to borrow an additional US$ 1 billion to support infrastructure improvements, thus increasing the total revenue envelope to approximately US$ 6.2 billion. The need to identify implementation capacity gaps to address the issue of anticipated budget deficits cannot be overemphasized. This will facilitate the allocation of resources to evidence-based targets and make the policies and plans more realistic. Some of the donor funded projects mentioned below contribute to different activities under five pillars of LASIP-II. Many joint proposals were drafted and submitted to development partners for possible funding, i.e. GAFSP, mobilizing programs/ECOWAS , EUD etc.

TABLE 9: DONOR-FUNDED PROJECTS AND THEIR PERFORMANCE

Project Name	Implementing Partner	Project costs (US$ million)
Smallholder agriculture transformation and agribusiness revitalization project (STAR-P)	World Bank IFAD co-financing	25 23
Land Administration project	World Bank	7
Social safety nets	World Bank	10
Tree crops extension project	IFAD	36.67
Tree crops extension project II	IFAD	47.6
Rural Community Finance project	IFAD	10.86
Agriculture Sector Rehabilitation project	IFAD	26.86
Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project	IFAD World Bank	24.9 15
Smallholder agricultural productivity enhancement and commercialization project (SAPEC)	AfDB / GAFSP	54.4
Agriculture sector rehabilitation project	AfDB	21.9

A high-level commitment was noted in the formulation processes of LASIP II and the PADP by the Government and development partners. It was envisaged that if the stakeholders mainly development partners, Government and development banks manage to ensure investment, support in the resources mobilization, contribute to the establishment of functional and effective coordination mechanisms, resultantly the overall aims will be achieved, and policies and their implementation will be improved. However, it is worth highlighting that experience shows that there are most often delays in policy enactment, together with poor implementation strategies and little private sector engagement in the development of livelihoods.

8. Priority areas for investment

Question 8: Considering the above analysis and given a scenario of continued resource and capacity constraints, what areas of the policy framework and what implementation capacity gaps should be prioritized for resource allocation?

The analysis of policies and strategies to support agriculture, food security and nutrition in Liberia give rise to a general consensus on priorities for resource allocation in a context of continued resource and capacity constraints.

Financing

Agriculture, especially food crop production, suffers from a lack of adequate funding from both public and non-state actors, including donors and the private sector. Based on this analysis, it is suggested that financing be the top priority in policy implementation. This will involve the following actions:

- A.1. Creation of donor pool funding to help harmonize and align interventions to national priorities in a more impactful, effective and coordinated way. The establishment of donor pool funding should be based on clearly defined priorities and investment plans (to be explored).
- A.2. Greater public investment to achieve the objective of allocating 10 percent of the national budget to agriculture, as committed in the Malabo Declaration on Africa Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods. This will help establish Liberia's leadership in food security, nutrition and sustainable agriculture.
- A.3. Access to finance through the rehabilitation of the agriculture bank in order to improve access by smallholder farmers to capital.
- A.4. Improving the effectiveness of resource targeting through the establishment of innovative systems of funding focusing on vulnerable and poor people.

Implementation and governance

- B.1. Establishment and institutionalization of an inter-ministerial coordination system for a proper and effective implementation of actions to address underlying causes of food insecurity and malnutrition, and appropriate targeting of interventions at all levels. This system will be built around the frameworks of the LASIP II and the PAPD for joint and aligned intervention.
- B.2. Establishment of a monitoring and evaluation and data information system as proposed in the LASIP II and the PAPD for better-informed decision-making. The system will support the provision of data and information sharing around the policies and strategies.
- B.3. Strengthening the resilience capacity of households through early warning systems, response plans, joint implementation/facilitation of response plan and innovative access

to inputs. The resilience of households can be increased by using, for example, social protection to support food insecure people.

- B.4. Investing in multi-stakeholder coordination for effective and efficient implementation. This will require the establishment of a multi-stakeholder policy dialogue to support the engagement of all actors. It will involve developing proactive engagements with higher institutions to support training, research, data collection, M&E, extension etc.; a permanent dialogue with stakeholders on the implementation of policies and strategies; and the participation and support of the private sector.

- B.4. Create employment opportunities for young people and women in the agriculture sector. This will require the development of strategies to support the participation of youth and women in agriculture in order to address gender inequity and youth unemployment (see D3 below). Strategies that focus on the value chains of selected products, such as poultry and vegetables, can be prioritized along with a capacity development programme.

- B.5. Expedite the implementation of the Land Rights Act and promote private sector investment and participation. This will help address the issue of access to land for smallholders, particularly women, who dominate food crop production. Promoting public-private partnership will enhance private sector investments in food crop production, processing and marketing in order to address the issues of food deficits and malnutrition.

Investment in smallholder food production, productivity and value addition

Smallholders agriculture, livestock and fisheries have huge potential for supporting food security and nutrition in Liberia but lack adequate support and investment. LASIP II and PAPD have proposed clear actions for supporting the agriculture sector. However, given current constraints, the following have been identified as priorities for resource allocation:

- C.1. Investment in pluralistic extension, research and development to support the capacities of farmers involved in food production. This will help link encourage international researchers to bring their innovations and findings to Liberia.

- C. 2. Prioritization of food diversification and value addition in the food chain to make food more accessible and nutritious. Investment will be prioritized in cereal, livestock and poultry (already prioritized in PAPD and LASIP II), including breeding stocks and certified planting materials. Such an investment will require the participation of private sector, especially the TNC. A strategy for involving more people, especially youth, in these areas will be prioritized (see area B).

- C.3. Prioritize the approach of large-scale investment programmes (e.g. irrigation) to better exploit the potential of the land and increase the productivity of agriculture, especially for rice.

Improved enabling environment and facilitation of access to appropriate agro-inputs

- D.1 Implementing regulatory policies and acts to facilitate access to quality agro-inputs, including seeds;

- D.2 Supporting the translation of policies into prioritized implementation/action plans with realistic targets. This will help match actions and responses to the needs and the emergencies of food and nutrition security; and

- D.3 Facilitate the development of a strategy on women and youth employment in agriculture and peri-urban agriculture to deal with the impact of rapid urbanization on food security and nutrition. This will involve making agriculture attractive with the introduction of mini-mechanization and digital innovation (e.g. price and market information).

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Co-funded by the
European Union