



# USAID'S FOOD AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR LIBERIA (FED)

BI-WEEKLY REPORT: JULY 1 – 15



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**COVER PHOTO:** UDP Site Activity in action at Dekita Site in Bong County.

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## **Executive Summary**

Between July 1-15 FED has intensified support to farmers as production season for FED's crop-based value chains picks up across the six counties of operation; Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Bassa, Margibi and Montserrado.

This reporting period saw a lot of activity in the promotion of the role of Liberia's youth in FED activities. Various MoUs were signed and progressed between FED and Community Colleges, UNICEF and AYP.E Involving youth and building their capacity is something that is integral to the FED program.

Progress is being made towards developing input supply pilot voucher program; six co-operatives representing over 1000 farmers will be participating in the voucher program which aims to encourage use of inputs through partial subsidy.

On 4<sup>th</sup> July an MoU was signed with Ag-Input dealer Wienco, this new public-private-partnership will help to significantly increase FED beneficiaries access to ag-inputs As dealers are established close to FED-supported farming communities. Through this agreement, USAID's FED is leveraging private sector resources as Wienco will be putting in up to \$5200 worth of stocks consisting of fertilizers and pesticides on consignment to each of the 15 dealers.

Significant progress was made this reporting period towards forging long-lasting links between farmers, aggregators and large-scale food caterers in Liberia. Between July 1-15 meetings were also held with key stakeholders such as those involved with ArcelorMittal mining company and the chief caterer for UNMIL. These activities were carried out in collaboration with USAID's Sustainable Marketplace Initiative-Liberia (SMI-L).

An Interactive Radio Training for 28 Liberian radio journalists (6 female, 28 male) from 14 county radio stations was completed on July 4, in Gbarnga, Bong County. This activity is designed to utilize radio as a medium for carrying out extension messaging in order to communicate recommended technologies and practices to the broadest section of farmers involved in FED's value chains. As part of the training, the journalists developed six-month action plans for developing and producing radio programming with agriculture content. Fourteen MOUs have been signed with the radio stations for future collaboration and four of the radio stations have already aired programs as a result of the training. Fourteen MOUs have also been signed with the radio stations for future collaboration and four of the radio stations have already aired programs as a result of the training.

## **June 1-15 Activities**

### **Component One: Increased Agriculture Productivity**

#### **Input Supply**

- Larry Tweed, IFDC STTA consultant, traveled to Nimba and Bong from July 2-5 to meet with 12 agro-dealers and discuss a planned training activity for improving Product Knowledge for fertilizer products, improved seeds, and agro-chemicals, and for improving basic Business Management skills.
- Meetings were held with six cooperative groups representing over 1,000 rice and vegetable farmers during the first week of July to discuss the pilot voucher program, product preferences, and quantities needed for the next dry season vegetable production season. The groups include Doumpa and Payee in Nimba, and Menlekoyee, Palala, Kokoya, and Dokodan in Bong.
- UDP fertilizer demonstrations began on July 3 in Lofa and will continue in Nimba and Bong at the 20 rice production sites until July 22. Ten UDP pump applicators arrived from Bangladesh and have been sent to selected sites in Lofa, Nimba and Bong.

## **Rice**

### **Bong County**

Ten out of eleven category A sites in Bong County have completed the transplanting of rice at UDP demonstrations sites. Fertilizer application activities have been carried out in all of these ten sites. 280 meters of rice nursery beds have been prepared for rice seedlings at the Bong Mines group site.

### **Grand Bassa**

In District# 1 two farmer groups have completed land preparation on a total of 1.2 hectares with nursery preparation.

Land preparation took place in District 2 for three farmer groups on a total of 3.6 hectares in lowland rice. Nursery preparation has begun and FRK 19 and NRK 19 seeds have been distributed.

In District # 3, seven farmer groups completed land preparation on 8.4 hectares, with nursery bed preparation and distribution of seeds.

### **Nimba County**

Transplanting has been completed at UDP sites in Gbedin, Sanniquellie (NCCC), Payee and Dounpa while Taylay will be completing soon. UPD and Urea Broadcasting demonstrations have been completed at NCCC and Payee. At good number categories B and C sites, basic land preparation is ongoing as seeds have been nursed and awaiting maturity for transplanting. NGO agents have reported that they are carrying out on-site training for farmers at CAT B and C sites. NGO staffs have also reported that 98 plots are ready for transplanting; 68 plot ready for tilling/plowing; 80 nursery beds prepared CAT B & C sites; and 30 new plots are being laid out. Sowing at three out of four upland sites is near completion. M&E team is also carrying out plot measurement and site monitoring at all rice fields in the County.

## **Cassava**

- Shovels, wheelbarrows, cutlasses, pingalings, planting twine, regular hoes, sharpening files and other essential tools were delivered to the Liberia Renaissance Education Complex on July 2, 2013
- On July 11 the Cassava Value Chain Specialist visited the NGW site in Clay Ashland, Montserrado. An additional 3.5 hectares of upland area has been planted with clean cassava cuttings at the site and 1.5 hectares of land have been brushed, burned and cleared. Rapid field preparation is taking place
- A meeting was held with the Program Manager of ZOA (Dutch NGO) on July 12 to explore collaboration opportunities which could involve FED's assistance in training ZOA staff during our training session for the 2014 planting season.
- A meeting was held on July 11 with IITA Liberia to explore possible collaboration and assistance in sourcing clean high yielding cassava varieties for FED multi-locational nurseries activities. Present at the meeting for FED was the Agribusiness specialist and the Cassava Value Chain Manager. As a follow-up to the meeting at IITA, a message was sent to the CARI Director to inquire on the availability of 11 varieties of cassava elite clones.

- Nimba Community College (NCCC) has been added to the FED cassava production groups. This group is represented by a volunteer women's group of 40 members who have received access to cassava production land area in exchange for volunteer labor on the NCCC farm. They have now been provided with 70 bundles of clean cassava cuttings by FED to cultivate 2 hectares in Sanniquelle.

#### Peri-urban Vegetables

- On July 4, 'Gwegbewmue' farmers group in Montserrado planted 6 plots of corn and 1 plot of cabbage.
- 'Beginner Vegetable Growers' in Margibi planted one plot of groundnut.
- Two plots were laid out at the Kakata Demonstration Site and 635m<sup>2</sup> of additional land was brushed in preparation for rainy season production.
- 'Kuwaki Vegetable Farmers' in Margibi planted four plots of groundnuts, using 4900 seeds.
- 'Gbolokai-Ta Vegetables Group' tilled, de-stumped and layout one plot for the planting of cowpeas
- 'Demgola Farmer Association' in Lofa County on July 7, transplanted 100 pepper seedlings while 'Help Yourself Developmental Project' carried out fertilizer application on 1305 bitter ball and eggplant seeds in Lofa.

#### Goats

- FED's Goat Value Chain Specialist carried out site inspection of the proposed CARI goat quarantine site on July 1 and made recommendations for building rehabilitation requirements. A proposal is now in progress to design and construct an improved facility which will house 500 goats for a period of two weeks at a time. This activity is being carried out in collaboration with USDA's Food for Progress Program being implemented by Land O'Lakes (LOL).
- FED's COP and Goat Value Chain Specialist met with Mrs. Wiles, MoA Livestock Coordinator and Ekramul Kabir, COP of Land O'Lakes and agreed on plans and roles and responsibilities among FED, LOL and MoA/CARI pertaining to the importation of improved performance goats from ITC facilities.

#### COMPONENT TWO: STIMULATE PRIVATE ENTERPRISE

- An Interactive Radio Training for 28 Liberian radio journalists (6 female, 28 male) from 14 county radio stations was completed on July 4 in Grbanga, Bong County. As part of the training, the journalists developed six-month action plans for developing and producing radio programming with agriculture content. Fourteen MOUs have been signed with the radio stations for future collaboration and four of the radio stations have already aired programs as a result of the training.
- The ED rice team is moving forward with the Pilot Rice Business Cluster project, a project to further demonstrate post-harvest rice technology through the use of threshers, single pass rice mills and de-stoners for farming groups and entrepreneurs. The ED team discussed roles and responsibilities and MOUs with three of the eight targeted farming groups. In addition, an expression of interest was developed and circulated to locate four additional participating entrepreneurs.
- The ED vegetable team met with a selected group of aggregators, including Mrs. Anna Blackett of ROSNA, the contracted caterer for ArcelorMittal and the Monrovia Vegetable Growers Association to discuss specific constraints in the value chain to supplying large buyers with local produce. The key constraint consistently mentioned is the lack of adequate storage for vegetables. Mrs. Blackett is working with FED to identify low cost / low tech solutions for storage. In addition, The ED team encouraged the aggregators to register their businesses and offered advice on the process.
- On July 10, FED partnered with USAID's Liberia Energy Sector Support Project (LESSP) to conduct a biomass energy workshop with 21 entrepreneurs (18 males and 3 females) representing the agri-business sector. The purpose of the workshop was to demonstrate a new technology that uses biomass as a low cost alternative to diesel/gas to generate energy through generators. As a follow up to the

workshop, LESSP is providing the participants more information regarding capital costs, fuel consumption, and maintenance requirements.

- On July 11, 'Agri-impact' was selected to conduct the cassava market study, FED is partnering with ZOA and the European Union to assess the profitability of cassava production, processing and marketing of cassava products, a comprehensive domestic market overview, consultation on best business models and investment costs for processed cassava products. It is anticipated this project will run August-October 2013.
- On July 13 the ED Vegetable team along with Building Markets met with SARAH Group, the caterer for UNMIL to discuss an increase in sourcing local produce. FED will work with selected vegetable growers to assess how these needs can be met. Representatives from ten farmer groups attended.
- Nine business service providers were selected and hired under an Indefinite Quantity Contract to provide business training to farming groups and agri-business entrepreneurs. The first phase will run from mid August -end of September and will train 74 A site farming groups.
- On July 3, the Women in Business Officer consulted the women of Fuamah Multipurpose Cooperative in a coaching session on leadership and gender related issues, 67 women and 5 men attended this session. The Fuamah Cooperative, located in Bong Mines, Bong is a cooperative of 526 members active in lowland rice production on 300 acres. The consultation was a precursor to a larger workshop to be conducted by the Cooperative Development Agency (CDA) in order to select new leadership. As a result of the consultation, it was evident that neither the men, nor the women were educated about leadership, properly managing a cooperative, or farming as a business, and that women have been traditionally marginalized in the group.

### **Component Three: Build Human Capacity**

- July 3, Component Three FED staff met with the principal of Booker T. Washington Institute (BWI) to discuss the establishment of a Soils Laboratory and an Enterprise Service Centre. The principal expressed keen interest on these activities.
- MoU was signed on 5 July with Grand Bassa County College (GBCC); with the MoU FED is now providing the college with comprehensive internet connectivity.
- Interviews were conducted to hire a FED funded Vocational Agribusiness Education Officer (VAEO) at the Nimba County Community College (NCCC) on July 10; the VAEO will be helping NCCC in establishing its career and enterprise service center.
- STTAs J.C Bunch and Sarah Eaton began preparations for the Ministry of Education's Bureau of Science, Technical, Vocational and Special Education National Diploma in Agriculture Training that will be held in Gbarnga, Bong. 22 college instructors (agriculture, business education and mathematics) from Vocational Education Institutions (BWI, GBCC, MOE, LCCC, and NCCC) will participate in the training.

### **Cross Cutting Initiatives**

#### **Youth:**

- 10 junior students from Grand Bassa County Community College successfully completed an exam and qualified for an internship to work with 20 schools participating in the Back-to-School Garden Competition Pilot Program in Grand Bassa. Technical Agriculture trainings will be provided and these interns will oversee Youth Club activities for five months beginning in August 2013.

- On July 12, the final copy of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between FED and UNICEF was signed. This collaboration involves UNICEF's National Youth Service Program and will allow recent graduates the opportunity to volunteer in the agriculture sector in Liberia.

#### **Nutrition:**

- A field visit to measure the knowledge of women trained by COSEO in food preservation and processing and nutrition-hygiene best practices was conducted with Ganta Old Timer Women Association and Fuamah District Farmers' Cooperative in Bong Miles from July 1-5, 2013.
- From July 9-12, the nutritionist participated in the National Nutrition Program Annual Review Meeting held in Buchanan City, Grand Bassa. The meeting allowed nutrition stakeholders to discuss and review the implementation and achievements of the program at the county level for the past year, and its added value in responding to the nutrition problem in the country.
- FED COP, Nutrition Officer and Knowledge Management Specialist met with the Country Representative and Nutrition Specialist of the World Food Program in Liberia to discuss the issue of hunger, and have agreed to jointly spearhead a coordination workshop of involving organizations implementing food security projects; tentatively set on the first week of August.

#### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Completed 80% of the site measurement for CAT B sites; including doing site measurement for Arjay Farms.
- Information gathering for FY2Q3 Report.

## **July 16-31 Planned Activities**

#### **Component One**

- Goat shelter construction and de-worming activities continue at all goat breeding stations in the period of July 15-31.
- A MOU has been drafted for finalization with FED, CARI Land O' Lakes during the next bi-weekly period. This agreement defines responsibilities for the creation of a goat quarantine facility at CARI.
- A follow up meeting is planned for the week of July 22 with CARI Director Aaron Marshall concerning the sourcing of disease free cassava cuttings from the CARI multiplication site, and possible sources outside of Liberia.
- Rice Value Chain Manager Patrick Farnga will be conducting ISFM training on July 29-Aug 1 for 20 lead farmers and 10 community based facilitators with practical demonstrations at eight upland farmer sites in Bong County.
- Training activities are planned for 12 agro-dealers located in Nimba and Bong counties during the week of July 29. The Wwenco agriculture inputs supplier will be providing training in product knowledge and a business training provider (to be determined) will provide training in business skills.
- UDP fertilizer demonstrations will continue during the week of July 15 for any of the remaining 20 category a sites involved in rice production.
- A follow up meeting is planned for the week of July 22 with CARI Director Aaron Marshall concerning the sourcing of disease free cassava cuttings from the CARI multiplication site, and possible sources outside of Liberia.

## Component Two

- The ED vegetable team will be analyzing cold storage and packaging options for aggregators in Liberia between July 17 and 30.
- The ED cassava team will finalize plans for a project to support the upgrade and support of five cassava processing entrepreneurs by July 30.
- Two business service providers have been selected to deliver Village Savings and Loan training to 25 USAID FED farming groups. Contracts will be signed and training will begin in August.
- In conjunction with Component Three, Farming as a Business training for approximately 70 farming groups will begin roll-out in August utilizing the recently hired business service providers.
- Leadership and gender mainstreaming training with Fuamah Cooperative will take place in conjunction with the CDA's workshop to establish new leadership for the group in August.
- For the Rice Business Cluster project, final MOUs will be signed with farming groups, four entrepreneurs will be selected to participate in the program, and an engineer will be hired for the design of the warehouse / stores in August.

## Component Three

- From July 15 to 19 Robert Alela (STTA) will provide Training of Trainers (ToT) for *Farming As A Business (FAAB)* to 35 persons 2013 in Gbarnga. A second training will take place in Monrovia from 22 to 29 July.
- July 29 -31, Component 3 team will conduct a three - day orientation/TOT workshop on the cassava and vegetables value chains for the 10 interns before they can take up assignment

## Youth:

- On July 19, FED will meet with Advancing Youth Project (AYP) to finalize the MoU.

## Nutrition

- Initiated the process for the production of IEC materials (brochures, pamphlets, posters, stickers etc.) for vegetables, goat and cassava value chain;
- FED nutritionist will attend National Nutrition Coordination and ENA Technical Working Group Meeting;