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# FOOD AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (FED) PROGRAM FOR LIBERIA

CONTRACT NO. 669-C-00-11-00047

MONTHLY REPORT: FEBRUARY 2016



This publication was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development. It was prepared by Development Alternatives Incorporated under Contract No. 669-C-00-11-00047.

**Contractor:** DAI  
**Program Title:** Food and Enterprise Development Program for Liberia (FED)  
**Sponsoring USAID Office:** USAID/Liberia  
**Contract Number:** 669-00-11-00047  
**Date of Publication:** March 15, 2016

**Photo Caption:** Farmers operating a shredder machine to convert vegetation for easy composting in Mount Barclay, Montserrado County.

## **DISCLAIMER**

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

## Acronyms

ACC	Agriculture Coordination Committee
AEDE	Agency for Economic Development and Empowerment
APDRA	Association Pisciculture et Development Rural en Afrique
AVTP	Accelerated Vocational Training Program
AYP	Advancing Youth Project
BSTVSE	Bureau of Science, Technical, Vocational and Special Education
BWI	Booker Washington Institute
CARI	Center of Agriculture Research Institute
CAHW	Community Animal Health Worker
CBF	County Based Facilitator
CBL	Central Bank of Liberia
CGCWYEP	Chosen General Church Women and Youth Empowerment Project
CILSS	Permanent Interstates Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel
CoE	Center of Excellence
CYNP	Community Youth Network Program
DAI	Development Alternatives Inc.
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECREP	Evangelical Children Rehabilitation Program
EMMP	Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
ENA	Essential Nutrition Action
EO	Extension Officer
FtF	Feed the Future
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FUN	Farmer Union Network
GAP	Good Agriculture Practices
GBCC	Grand Bassa Community College
G-CAP	Green Coast Agricultural Program
GoL	Government of Liberia
GPS	Global Positioning Systems
IBEX	Investing in Business Expansion Liberia
IFAD	International Foundation for Agriculture Development
IFDC	International Fertilizer Developmental Center
IITA	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
IP	Implementing Partner
IPM	Integrated Pests Management
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract

ISFM	Integrated Soil Fertility Management
IREX	International Research and Exchanges Board
KRTTI	Kakata Rural Teachers Training Institute
LABEE IPG	Liberia Agriculture Business Enabling Environment Inter-Agency Policy Group
LAUNCH	Liberia Agriculture, Upgrading Nutrition & Child Health
LEAD	Liberia Entrepreneurial & Asset Development
LCCC	Lofa County Community College
LIFE	Livelihood Improvement for Farming Enterprises
LIPAS	Liberia Integrated Professional Agriculture Service
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics & Geo-Information Services (LISGIS)
LMEP	Liberia Monitoring and Evaluation Program
LNGO	Local Non-Governmental Organization
MFI	Micro Finance Institution
MIS	Market Information Systems
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoCI	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHSW	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
MoP	Muriate of Potash
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
MVSA	Monrovia Vegetable Sellers Association
NDA	National Diploma in Agriculture
NCCC	Nimba County Community College
NIC	National Investment Commission
NSL	National Standards Laboratory
PERSUAP	Pesticide Evaluation Report and Safer Use Action Plan
PIDS	Performance Indicator Database System
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PUA	Peri-Urban Agriculture
R&RF	Rights & Rice Foundation
RFTOP	Requests for Task Order Proposals
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
TAMIS	Technical Administrative Management Information System
TSP	Triple Super-Phosphate
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
UDP	Urea Deep Placement

UL	University of Liberia
USADF	United States African Development Foundation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET GOV	Veterinary Governance in Africa
WAAPP	West Africa Agriculture Productivity Program
WAFP	West Africa Fertilizer Project
WASP	West Africa Seed Project
WFP	World Food Programme

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## Background

The USAID Food and Enterprise Development (FED) Program is a flagship Feed the Future (FtF) Initiative, USAID-funded development program in Liberia launched in September 2011. USAID FED uses an all-inclusive strategy incorporating micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME), farmers, processors, suppliers, women, and youth while partnering with the Government of Liberia (GoL) and local civil society to achieve food security.

USAID FED is increasing food availability, utilization, and accessibility in Liberia by building an indigenous incentive structure that assists agricultural stakeholders in adopting commercial approaches.

This incentive structure is built upon:

- Improved technology for productivity and profitability;
- Expanded and modernized input supply and extension systems;
- Commercial production, marketing, and processing;
- Enterprise services; and
- Workforce development.

USAID FED works with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), civil society, and the private sector to provide communities with access to agricultural inputs, extension services, nutrition messages, processing services, market information, transportation, credit, agro-business education, training, and business development services.

USAID FED's thrust to expand market linkages contributes to increases in income and job opportunities. The project is significantly boosting the production, processing, marketing, and nutritional utilization of rice, cassava, and vegetables, and is enhancing the productivity of goat farming in the counties covered by the program.

These initiatives are carried out in Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Bassa, Montserrado, and Margibi counties. USAID FED focuses on these counties because they are situated along regional development corridors that are crucial to promoting intra- and inter-county commerce. The focus on these growth corridors is improving food availability and access for all Liberians.

Project methodology is market-led, value chain-driven and committed to capacity building, with a specific focus on Liberia's women and youth demographics.

USAID FED is implemented by five partners: Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), Winrock International, International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC), Louisiana State University (LSU), and The Cadmus Group.

## Executive Summary

Highlights for this reporting period include the following activities:

- Internal project data quality review in process: DAI initiated an intensive, comprehensive analysis to address the completeness, accuracy and quality of USAID FED's results data reported to USAID over the life of the project. Data management systems and the extent to which they yield reliable, valid, precise and timely data are being scrutinized. Following the analysis, DAI will produce a report outlining the findings and recommendations for adjusting the previously reported results data for 18 FtF indicators. This review is in follow-up to previous data quality assessments conducted by USAID's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) contractor. Any quantitative information reported previously by the project, as well as that which appears in this monthly report, are estimates and should be considered tentative pending the results of this review.
- USAID FED, BRAC-Liberia and MoA launch *Peste de Petite de Ruminant* (PPR) Vaccination Campaign: Approximately 108,000 small ruminants (sheep and goats) will be vaccinated across Bong, Lofa, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties during the course of this campaign. A launch ceremony at the MoA was held during this reporting period with Deputy Minister Hon. Sizi Subah presiding. USAID FED subcontracted BRAC to train and mobilize 300 community animal health workers to administer the vaccinations.
- Increased adoption of good agricultural practices: A recent internal USAID FED survey suggests that approximately 60 percent of USAID FED-supported farmers are applying improved growing methods including proper nursery care, use of improved seed, proper application of fertilizers, spacing, planting in rows and ridges, water management, pest control, staking of climber vegetables (e.g., tomatoes), plant maintenance and post-harvest practices.
- New cassava micro-processors identified: Four new cassava micro-processors were identified to receive assistance in Grand Bassa County this reporting period. These micro-processors are currently operating manually but will be provided with mechanized graders and presses to increase processing capacity from one MT per week to up to eight MT per week. These efforts will provide increased market opportunities for approximately 8,000 cassava growers.
- Sustainable market linkages: USAID FED facilitated a buyer-seller linkage between 40 project-supported vegetable farmers supplying Monrovia's Royal Grand Hotel. Approximately 11,000 kgs of lettuce, cabbage, cucumber and tomatoes will be supplied to the hotel on an annual basis; resulting in a projected \$45,000 annual sales volume should current prices hold. The volume represents 80 percent of the hotel's total requirements for these vegetables. USAID FED continues to explore ways to replicate this buyer-seller relationship with several other Monrovia hotels and supermarkets.
- Transforming Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) into microenterprises: Twelve USAID FED supported VSLA groups received loans from the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) this month. NAPEX, a clearinghouse for microfinance institutions (MFI) in Liberia, reported that USAID FED coordinated with the CBL to convert the 12 previously "unbankable" VSLA businesses into successful microenterprises. Each of the 12 loans totaled approximately US\$2,250, reflecting a total value of just under US\$30,000. Each VSLA averages 30 members, meaning the loans benefit 360 direct and indirect beneficiaries across the four value chains. Loan terms are three years at one percent interest per annum.



- VSLA training provided: USAID FED's EDUCARE subcontractor hosted a comprehensive training on VSLA methodology for 250 new groups. The training focused on establishing group governance structures, constitutions, by-laws and member leadership for the 250 new groups. Supervisory attention was also given to the 373 existing VSLA groups via periodic monitoring.
- USAID FED realigns program implementation timeline: The approved USAID FED FY2016 workplan assumed a no-cost contract extension through mid-December 2016, with activity implementation ending in August in order provide sufficient time for close-out of such a large and complex project. However, as this no-cost extension request remains uncertain, the current contract end date of September 11, 2016 remains in force. In the absence of no-cost extension approval, USAID FED plans to cease all activity implementation by the end of May 2015 in order to ensure sufficient time for close-out activity.

## **Component One: Increase Agricultural Productivity and Profitability**

### **Task 1A: Increased Productivity and Profitability of the Rice Value Chain**

#### **Improving productivity and profitability of upland and lowland rice**

##### **Technical assistance to FY13, FY14, and FY15 upland and lowland rice groups:**

USAID FED technical assistance continues to support upland and lowland rice farming groups. This assistance was provided through project county extension officers and five contracted local non-governmental organizations (LNGO). Technical assistance was primarily focused on harvest and post-harvest activities given the time of year being harvest season. Contracts for four LNGOs expired during this reporting period. One LNGO will continue to provide technical assistance to rice farming groups in Nimba County through the end of March. After March, USAID FED will utilize its rice extension officers to monitor activities in collaboration with lead farmers.

##### **Support 5,250 new upland rice farmers to apply improved technologies on 750 hectares of new upland areas:**

By the end of February, USAID FED mobilized an estimated 5,250 beneficiaries (3,405 men and 1,845 women) in receiving assistance to develop new areas for upland rice production in FY16. These farming groups started by signing Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with UASID FED and are expected to commence planting of upland rice in May. Without the requested no-cost extension, USAID FED will not be in a position to continue these proposed upland rice production activities in May.

##### **Support 7,000 new lowland farmers to apply improved technologies on 1,000 hectares of new lowland areas:**

A total of 7,000 beneficiaries (4,001 men and 2,999 women) were identified to receive assistance to develop new areas for lowland rice production in FY16. These farming groups started by signing MoUs with USAID FED and are expected to commence planting of upland rice in June 2016. As with upland rice, the lowland rice activities will not proceed in the absence of a no-cost extension.

#### **Promoting embedded services by the private sector**

##### **Technical assistance to aggregators, traders, processors, and rice business hubs in establishing business-to-business models for embed services to farming groups:**

Afriland Bank conducted field evaluations of Selma Agriculture Corporation operations to determine whether the aggregator had sufficient collateral and future contracts to qualify for trade credit. A decision on this loan application is likely to be issued during the next reporting period.

By the end of February, Selma Agriculture milled an estimated 50 MT of rice to be delivered to FABRAR Liberia against a target of 280MT valued at US\$168,000. Selma Agriculture also milled 30MT valued at US\$21,000 to be delivered to WFP in March. The aggregator previously established an extensive network of rice farmers (both USAID FED-supported and non-USAID FED supported) who will supply paddy rice for milling, expanding marketing opportunities for these farmers.

**Support two aggregators with trucks on cost-share to support timely and reliable aggregation and transportation of paddy rice:**

In February, USAID agreed to provide a Selma Agricultural Corporation with a truck to strengthen transport linkages between farmers, processors and markets. The process for final disposition/transfer of the vehicle is expected to be finalized in March. The Selma Corporation Agricultural will cost-share an estimated US\$123,000, comprised of purchases of additional heavy trucks and pick-ups as well as provision of tarpaulin moveable warehouses for storage.

**Promoting two rice crops per year**

**Hire a STTA to provide technical assistance to 42 irrigation spillway sites for double cropping:**

In February, USAID FED's Rice Technical Specialist continued to provide technical assistance to the water management sites in preparation for double cropping. By the end of February, early indications were that approximately 90 ha out of 210 ha supported by spillways were developed for double cropping.

**Enhancing post-harvest management practices**

**FY14 Rice Business Hubs:**

In February, three rice business hubs located in Lofa and Bong counties (established in FY14) milled an estimated total of 51 MT valued at \$36,720. To date, the FY14 rice business hubs have milled an estimated total of 187 MT of paddy rice and generated revenue of US\$113,073 through milling and sales to community markets.

**Figure 1: Milling taking place at Rice Business Hub, Lofa County**



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Figure 2: Rice Business Hub in Salala, Bong County

Construction of nine new rice business hubs continued apace this reporting period. The most significant progress was seen at Salala, Bong County where the hub was completed and all equipment installed. The remaining eight sites are expected to be completed by April. To date, all the sites have the necessary materials required by the contractors to complete construction.

### Task IB: Increased Productivity and Profitability of the Cassava Value Chain

#### Improve productivity of cassava farmers

**Provide technical assistance and farming guides to FY13, FY14 and FY15 cassava groups to ensure they continue to apply improved practices and use improved varieties:**

With the conclusion of LNGO subcontracts in February, USAID FED county extension officers provided ongoing technical assistance to continuing cassava farmers. Recruitment of additional extension staff is ongoing in order to ensure that adequate monitoring continues uninterrupted.

#### Support an additional of 6,000 new beneficiaries for FY16 cassava production:

USAID FED mobilized 6,000 new cassava farmers for the FY16 production season after their respective farmer groups signed MoUs. The establishment of 300 demonstration farms and training of more than 200 *Kuu* (group) leaders will commence in March.

#### Increase Access of Processors, Traders, Logistics Providers, and Integrators to Financial and Business Development Services

#### Support at least five new micro-processors in Grand Bassa County to upgrade their processing and storage capacities:

By the end of February, five new micro-processors to be supported in FY16 were identified in Grand Bassa County (Table I below). In March, USAID FED will conduct a further assessment of their facilities to determine what technical and hardware support each requires. Further verification of the numbers reported below will also be conducted.

Table I: Proposed cassava micro-processors for Grand Bassa County

No.	Name of processor	Manager	Location	Contact #	Year in operation	Capacity (bags/week)			# of workers	CFT Source
						Gari	Fufu	Total		
1	Hard work pays	Emu Faikai	Varmah Town, District #1		6	10	20	30	5	15
2	Love and unity	Oldpa Wredyu	James Henry Town, District #3	886311021	3	4	1	5	4	18
3	Boss Investment Limited Inc.	Basie Woods	Edwin Dean Town, District #3	888795155	2	6	25	31	11	20
4	Kpain-kpain-gbo	Samuel Blamo	Dabay Town, District #3	777223325	2	2	20	22	4	16
5	Muhn Town Friendship	Harris J. Wilson	Muhn Town, District #4	7776877425	15	4	30	34	5	19
<b>Total</b>						<b>26</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>29</b>	

### **Establish an industrial size processing facility with an investor through cost-share:**

In February, USAID FED's in-house engineer and the Cassava Value Chain Manager conducted site visits to FALAMA's proposed site in Montserrado County where the cassava industrial processing facility will be constructed. USAID FED supported the completion of construction designs and the company is now exploring self-financing options. The procurement for the processing equipment is scheduled for March in order to provide sufficient time to identify needs and plan effectively with precise specifications.

### **Task IC: Increased Productivity and Profitability of the Horticulture Value Chain**

In February, USAID FED continued to provide technical assistance to vegetable farmers to ensure that the technologies and management practices previously demonstrated were properly applied. USAID FED's Horticulture Specialist and extension officers provided technical assistance during the reporting period.

#### **Improving productivity through GAP and IPM**

##### **Provide technical assistance to 321 farmer groups (including 25 agribusinesses) on GAP and Integrated Pests Management (IPM) and organize them into production units:**

Technical assistance was provided to high value vegetable production clusters to improve land preparation efficiency. A demonstration on the use of power tillers in vegetable land preparation was conducted at the Chosen General Church Women and Youth Empowerment Project (CGCWYEP) cluster in Montserrado County. There, the power tiller demonstrated that 600M<sup>2</sup> of land can be tilled in 15 minutes rather than eight hours when prepared manually. The use of power tillers also allows better root development as the soil can be tilled at greater depths. As a result of the demonstrations, CGCWYEP members have expressed interest in cost-sharing in the acquisition of a power tiller.

##### **Production of high value vegetables:**

USAID FED farmers continue to grow high value vegetables such as cabbage, tomato, lettuce and cucumber in rains shelters. Cabbage, cucumber, lettuce and African eggplant are also being planted in open fields.

##### **Technology Adoption and Introduction:**

USAID FED-supported farmers are increasingly adopting improved technologies and practices. These include proper use of fertilizer, planting in rows and ridges, good water management, pest control, staking of climber vegetables (such as tomatoes), better nursery care and improved maintenance and planting methods. Initial figures suggest approximately 60 percent of the high value vegetable farmers are utilizing fertilizers. Most farmers are adopting the use of trellis for climber plants, such as cucumbers, to improve productivity. One farmer in Whiteplains cluster harvested 100kgs of cucumber from his 20 M<sup>2</sup> plot using trellises, which is the equivalent harvest of a 0.4 Ha non-trellis using farm. Farmers are growing seedlings in plastic trays and plastic bags for better growth and vigor. One farmer at the Fendel Israel Community seeded tomatoes in recycled drinking water plastic bags under his shed.

##### **Link farmers to agro-dealers/integrators to ensure they have access to disease resistant and high yielding seeds, chemicals and pesticides:**

USAID FED project staff held discussions with the seed supply company GMR to discuss how the company could supply affordable, good quality vegetable seeds to high value vegetable clusters. USAID FED will

organize follow-up meetings between the company and lead farmers to formalize these linkages in March. Farmers also accessed fertilizer such as NPK 15-15-15 and foliar fertilizers from local traders and agro-dealers based in Monrovia.

Farmers need to be vigilant when they buy fertilizer as some of the products have been tampered with and/or are counterfeit. USAID FED is working with farmers to ensure that the fertilizer they purchase is legitimate. Fertilizers are often mixed with secondary substances and, in some instances, may have been replaced or diluted with less effective, potentially harmful chemicals. This was observed in Bensonville where an 'insecticide' scorched the leaves of chilies.

### Improving irrigation delivery to vegetable clusters:



**Figure 3: Installing and testing a sprinkler irrigation system, Mount Barclay, Montserrado**

Technical assistance was provided this reporting period to high value vegetable clusters on the efficient use of irrigation equipment for dry season vegetable production. These clusters received water pumps and drip kits to support irrigation. However, as farmers expanded their fields, additional pressure was exerted on the irrigation infrastructure.

USAID FED assisted the CGCWYEP cluster in Mount Barclay, Montserrado County to test an expanded sprinkler irrigation system on 600M<sup>2</sup> of land. Mawah cluster in Mount Barclay also received assistance to test a similar irrigation system. With these improved

systems, farmers can reduce the irrigation time on their plots from four hours to one hour. The systems also mitigate water loss and provide more even water coverage thereby improving germination rates of seeds and survival rates of seedlings. The system is portable enough for easy transfer from one farm to another.

USAID FED noted that some farmers have already purchased their own water pumps. These farmers have expanded their production areas from the traditional 20m x 20m garden plots to as large as three ha (30,000 m<sup>2</sup>) requiring a dedicated water pump to provide stable irrigation.

It was also observed that some farmers were applying innovative approaches to improving productivity. For example, John Kollie of the Bensonville cluster adapted an old fire hose to his irrigation system to cover more area and apply a gentle spray of water to his plants. With his new attachment he can water an area of 30 m by 20 m.

**Figure 4: John Kollie's (Cluster Member) innovative irrigation system**



USAID FED continues to monitor the working conditions of the drip irrigation systems in rain shelters. On the recommendation of USAID FED field staff, farmers in Mawah cluster replaced the old decaying platform of their rain shelter water tank with a lower, stronger and more stable one for easy refilling.

**Provide marketing expertise to assist integrators access contracts with institutional buyers and supermarkets:**

On February 8, USAID FED initiated a public private partnership with the Royal Hotel to provide a market for USAID FED supported vegetable farmers. As a result of this meeting, USAID FED farmers from Careysburg and Mount Barclay delivered lettuce, cabbage, radish and assorted fruits to the Royal Hotel. The Royal Hotel's general manager Mr. Wael Herza will be visiting these clusters throughout March to select suppliers and schedule supply contracts with farmers. Approximately 11,000 kgs of vegetables will be supplied to the hotel on an annual basis, resulting in projected annual sales of \$45,000. This sales volume represents 80 percent of the hotel's total requirements for these particular vegetables. FED is currently exploring other buyer-seller opportunities with several Monrovia hotels, as well as with local supermarkets which would comprise an even bigger market than the hotels.



**Figure 5: Wael Herza of the Royal Grand Hotel visits USAID FED farm site**

**Collaboration with USAID/World Vegetable Center (AVRDC) project in Liberia for Selected Vegetable Seeds Testing:**

USAID FED continues to collaborate with AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center - to test vegetable seed varieties developed from their pool of research materials. AVRDC provided USAID FED with 3.2 kgs of five vegetable seed types (two varieties of eggplant, two varieties of chili pepper, and one variety of okra) that will be planted in select vegetable farms to test adaptability. The results of the tests will then be shared with AVRDC.

The USAID Bureau of Food Security officials responsible for the AVRDC project also visited USAID FED-supported farms in Montserrado County. Field visits were made to five sites at Bensonville, Caresburg, Fendel Israel Community, Central White Plains and Marwah to assess the suitability of the sites for these crops. Discussions were held with four cooperating farmers from Montserrado and one from Margibi, for plots prepared and planted with okra. The first planting was done on February 29, at Fendel's Israel Community. Two okra cultivars (Batoumambe and Kooni) are being evaluated alongside commercial varieties of Clemson spineless and Indiana.

**Task ID: Increased Productivity and Profitability of the Goat Value Chain**

**Promote Improved Herd Management Practices**

**Technical assistance to continuing FY13, FY14, and FY15 farmers:**

Throughout February, USAID FED continued to provide technical assistance to goat producer groups in 180 goat production intensification sites. This assistance was provided through field extension staff and four sub-contracted LNGOs. Technical assistance promoted farmers' continued use of goat shelters for herd management, provision of appropriate feed, and selection of the most appropriate animals to fatten before sale. The four sub-contracted LNGOs will continue to provide technical assistance throughout March. After March, USAID FED will continue to engage the most active community animal health workers and lead farmers within these sites to ensure that information on productivity and sales can be accessed on a monthly basis.

However, based on USAID FED's experience, it is not a guarantee that all the community animal health workers (CAHW) and lead farmers will effectively and routinely provide this kind of information without expecting financial remuneration. Efforts will be made to ensure that farmers take advantage of the fee-based services provided by CAHW and that information from these CAHWs and lead farmers are collected through regular visits by USAID FED's field extension officers and Monrovia-based technical staff.

### **Train 3,928 new beneficiaries on herd management practices and mineral salt lick fabrication:**

By the end of January, USAID FED mobilized close to 4,000 beneficiaries (approximately 40 percent women) from satellite communities around the existing 180 goat production intensification sites supported in FY13, FY14 and FY15. These goat producers will continue to receive assistance in designing smaller shelters using locally available materials, at no cost to USAID FED, and will be trained on mineral salt lick fabrication.

### **Establish Aggregators to Provide Embedded and Technical Services**

#### **Provide technical assistance and training to lead farmers/private sector actors on breeding and community buck exchange:**

In February, ACDI/VOCA deployed a volunteer specialist, Dr. Daniel Miller, to train USAID FED assisted farmers in goat raising and breeding. The specialist trained 83 participants (19 women and 64 men) in Lorplay, Tappita district, Nimba County. The farmers were trained on kid management, care of pregnant does, disease prevention, feeding practices, castration and animal selection for breeding. The specialist also conducted site visits to goat producer groups located in Nyao and Tropoue, Saclepea Mah and Zoe-Geh Districts in Nimba County. On February 26, Dr. Miller presented his assignment findings to ACDI/VOCA senior management and USAID FED. Representatives of the ACDI/VOCA Farmer-to-Farmer program will submit a final report of Dr. Miller's volunteer assignment to USAID FED in March.



**Figure 6: Dr. Daniel Miller trains farmers at Lorplay, Tappita District, Nimba County**

### **Establish Nucleus Breeding Herd at CARI**

#### **Renovate the quarantine facility at CARI for housing the nucleus breeding herd:**

In February, USAID FED completed the design to be implemented during the conversion of the nucleus breeding herd facility. This task was accomplished by USAID FED's in-house engineer. A request for proposals (RFP) was launched to source an architectural and engineering firm to review and approve the designs as well as a construction firm to engage in the renovations, which are expected to begin in March. Ms. Alison Williams, the Chief of Party of Land O' Lakes, confirmed the organization's commitment to

provide 100 animals for the nucleus breeding herd once the facility is completed.



**Figure 7: Hon Seklau Wiles, Deputy Minister for Administration provides remarks during the PPR Vaccination Campaign launch**

### **Provide Assistance to MoA in the Control of Peste de Petite de Ruminant (PPR):**

On February 26, BRAC Liberia and the MoA convened the 2016 PPR Vaccination Campaign kick-off meeting at the MoA in Monrovia. The meeting was attended by The Deputy Minister for Agriculture Hon Sizi Subah, The Deputy Minister for Administration Hon Seklau Wiles, BRAC and USAID FED senior management among others. The vaccination exercise will commence on March 15 once the planning meetings and training of vaccinators are completed at the county level. It is anticipated that 108,000 small ruminants (goats and sheep) will be vaccinated in Bong, Nimba, Lofa and Grand Bassa Counties during this exercise.

## **Subtask I.1 Special Studies and MoA Data Collection System Development**

### **Deliverable I.1.3 MoA staff capacity developed**

#### **Activity 1.1.3 Organize workshops to develop MoA Central Office Technical & M&E Staff Capacity building on GPS/PDAs data collection**

An RFP to undertake five capacity building workshops for the MoA was published in February with a deadline for candidate agencies to submit proposals by March 11, 2016. Training in data collection and reporting with or without GPS/PDAs is scheduled to be completed by the end of April.

#### **Activity 1.1.4 Assessments of attitudes to reveal increased acceptance of agribusiness by youth and women**

USAID expressed the urgent need for USAID FED to immediately conduct a study of the percentage of USAID FED farmers applying technology after on-sites learning interventions. The study is intended to determine the rate of new technology application in keeping with FtF Indicator 4.5.2(42), which calls for community based organization (CBOs) and/or trade and business associations applying improved technology or management practices as a result of USG assistance. The study results will be used as strategic information to support a USAID FED portfolio review. Data collectors have been recruited to work in the four USAID FED target counties (Bassa, Bong Lofa and Nimba) to ensure a rapid but precise response to USAID's request.

#### **Activity 4.3 Daily FED Monitoring and Evaluation**



As indicated in the Executive Summary, a rigorous internal data quality review was initiated this reporting period. USAID FED data management systems and verification of previously reported data are undergoing a review and analysis. The final internal data quality review report will be presented to USAID by the end of March.

## **Sub Task 1.2 Improved Access to Agricultural Inputs**

### **Increase access to improved seed and good planting material**

#### **Technical assistance to 70 rice seed multiplication sites in collaboration with Africa Rice:**

By the end of February, all 70 targeted upland and lowland rice seed multiplication sites were reported to be harvested. Fifteen Rice Seed Inspectors continue to conduct final inspections by collecting seed samples that will be submitted to CARI for testing and possible certification.

To date, these seed inspectors have conducted and submitted reports for 275 inspections of which 73 are pending. A final analysis documenting available improved seed and sites that have strictly adhered to the protocol guidelines is being compiled and will be reported in March. It is expected that some of the sites will not pass the certification protocols, especially those where farmers did not adhere to the protocols or where seed samples failed testing for analytical purity, germination, seed weight and moisture content.



**Figure 8: Farmers operating the shredder machine in Mount Barclay**

While inspectors from the West African Agriculture Productivity Program (WAAPP) were supposed to regularly and independently inspect USAID FED Rice Seed Multiplication sites for compliance throughout the entire growing season, their personnel only conducted one inspection visit in 2015, which may have implications for certification. Further, WAAPP has yet to commit to buying available seed rice from farmers. The implications are that farmers may have either consumed or sold some of the seed to third parties. The ability of CARI to test the seed samples accurately and quickly is also crucial for the certification process.

In March, USAID FED will extend its contract with the consultant responsible for managing the implementation of rice seed multiplication activities. The consultant will provide technical assistance to ensure seed samples are tested and analyzed and that all the inspection reports and sites are profiled for compliance. The consultant will be the liaison point person with WAAPP and Africa Rice.

#### **Cassava cuttings:**

This reporting period, USAID FED continued to maintain the cassava cuttings screening sites in Lofa County. Two supervisors and eight laborers were contracted to clear weeds and vegetation in preparation for the upcoming harvest. The area of cuttings was measured and reported as 1.3 Ha. Harvest and distribution of the cassava cuttings to commercial nurseries will commence in March. Approximately 131,000 cuttings, each of 25cm length, will be harvested from the area.

#### **Support to commercial production and marketing of**

#### **Promote embedded financing for inputs through Agro-Dealers and Aggregators:**

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Several meetings were held with personnel from the USAID Liberia Agriculture Development Activity (LADA) implemented by CNFA to discuss potential areas of collaboration on support to embedded financing for agro-dealers. USAID FED provided LADA with a list of contact details for 27 agro-dealers in its zone of influence. LADA will conduct an assessment of existing agro-dealers and input suppliers to determine areas of support required.

## Promote Organic Fertilizer mix/Efficient use of Inorganic Fertilizer

### Provide technical assistance to farmer groups to adopt composting at farm level:

On February 25, USAID FED conducted a composting demonstration using a motorized shredder machine at the Mawah vegetable cluster in Mount Barclay, Montserrado County. A total of six farmers (four men and two women) participated in the demonstration, which showed farmers how they can use locally available organic matter to develop compost ingredients for their farms. The cluster expressed an interest to purchase the machine through a cost-share with USAID FED. Once a MoU is signed with the cluster and appropriate cost-share determined, USAID FED will propose to USAID to dispose of this machine to this group.

## Sub Task I.3 Agricultural Extension Support

### Task I.3.3.1 Extension materials addressing technical aspects of production techniques, production planning, integrated pest and disease management, variety selection and post-harvest handling developed for rice, cassava, goats and horticulture value chains

FED's extension team initiated training sessions for Agricultural Extension Advisory Service (AEAS) providers across Grand Bassa county on the use of the MoA and USAID FED's newly developed and validated extension materials. The training targeted USAID FED partners including LINGOs, MoA's District Agriculture Officers as well as private sector and civil society stakeholders across the six counties of USAID FED's interventions. The training moves the project into a transitioning phase which ensures extension services are provided beyond the end of the USAID FED program by those embedded in the communities.



**Figure 9: Jonathan Brown, USAID FED Nutrition Officer, leads a session on nutrition in Grand Bassa**

Approximately 50 stakeholders received the two-day training in Grand Bassa on February 24-25. The trainings were value chain based with two sessions each day covering topics of cassava, rice, goat and horticulture value chains. Participants received published copies of the various extension materials which will support them in their own activities at the local level and also allow them to share these materials with other farmers. Jonathan Brown, USAID FED's Nutrition Officer, also presented on improving dietary diversity.

### **Task 1.3.3.5 Agricultural radio program content for monthly radio shows produced in collaboration with communications unit and five community radio stations**

The eighth edition of the “On The Farm” radio program was produced and aired on two partner stations; United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Radio and the United Methodist Radio. These two stations continue to air the agriculture show at no cost to the project. This edition focused specifically on rice value chain activities and highlighted the construction of rice business hubs across the counties. Farmers benefitting from the hubs in Lofa gave feedback, as did Rice Value Chain manager Eric Yeasu who spoke on the ability of rice farmers to transform their farms into profitable businesses.

## **Sub Task 1.5: Improving Human Nutrition**

### **Implement dietary behavior change strategy:**

During a training workshop in Grand Bassa, nutrition messages were disseminated using extension materials organized by the USAID FED extension support unit. Participants included farmers from the cassava, goat, vegetables and rice value chains as well as LNGO partners, MoA District Agriculture Officers and civil society organizations. The nutrition messages discussed are based on the nutrition teaching aids embedded in the extension materials for each value chain.

## **Component Two: Stimulate Private Sector Growth and Investment**

### **Task 2: Policy Enabling Environment for Private Sector Growth**

#### **Policy Reform Activities via Technical Working Groups and 10 Percent Cassava Composite Flour Policy Development:**

USAID FED continues to support the GoL in developing its technical capacity to identify, formulate, and implement policies that will contribute to the growth of agriculture in the private sector. In this regard, USAID FED contracted Dr. Roland Massaquoi to work on two policy reform initiatives for the remainder of FY16.

The first policy reform is a 10 percent Cassava Flour Composite policy that will require flour distributors in Liberia to ensure their product consists of 10 percent cassava composite rather than a product entirely made from wheat. The policy proposal received broad-based support at the 2015 MSME Conference, supported by USAID FED, and subsequently concurred by the GoL. This reporting period, Dr. Massaquoi held a series of meetings on February 25-16 at CARI Cassava Research Program and with the National Seed Board. USAID FED is in the early stages of establishing a cassava working group to move this policy forward. Working group membership is scheduled to be finalized in March.

The second reform effort will work towards the policy initiated by FED in 2014 to “domesticate” ECOWAS seed, fertilizer and pesticide regulations. This effort will include draft legislation and the formal domestic adoption of three policies. The draft regulation should lay the framework for governance structures that function with expanded responsibilities to both local and international public/private stakeholders.

### **Subtask 2.1 Access to Finance**

#### **Village Savings and Loan Expansion:**

During this reporting period, NAPEX reported to USAID FED that 12 USAID FED supported VSLA groups received loans from the CBL. As such, the project is able to report that it converted 12 previously “unbankable” businesses into successful microenterprises. Working in close collaboration with USAID FED, NAPEX reviews and pre-qualifies VSLA groups that are mature enough to qualify for a CBL loan and then passes the recommendation onto the bank. The FED Access to Finance Officer met with CBL officials in late February to confirm the number of groups who received loans and requested a copy of the loans for verification. If correct, this will reflect a significant achievement. The groups qualify for a 3-year loan, repaid at a nominal interest rate of one percent per year. After three years, groups successfully repaying their loans will qualify for larger loans which will allow them to expand their businesses from micro-level enterprises to larger and more lucrative entities in their respective value chains. The 12 groups reported are based in Nimba and received their first loan installments mid-February.

Also during this reporting period, EDUCARE submitted its comprehensive report covering the 12 month contract period which ended in February. EDUCARE reported achieving 38 of 41 workplan goals tied to VSLA success and maturation. These include comprehensive training on VSLA methodology for 250 new groups; establishment of group governing structure; constitution and member leadership for 250 new groups; and supervision to maturity with periodic monitoring of all 373 VSLA groups. The following three activity targets remain outstanding: an audit of the “share out” and graduation at the end of the first VSLA cycle; final presentation to USAID FED; and USAID FED’s acceptance of the final report. USAID FED will conduct an internal technical review before validating the final results in March, which will include an anticipated field visit by the new Component Lead. The achievements reported include 2,345 micro loans intended to support agri-business investment in four USAID FED value chains (rice, cassava, vegetable and goats) and 975 new hires as a result of the investments. EDUCARE also reported achieving repayment of more than \$78,000 in microfinance loans across all six FED counties.

The Universal Empowerment Missions’ (UEM) contract with USAID FED is ongoing and includes continued support to, and monitoring of, 350 VSLA groups. UEM reported active participation and adherence to the VSLA methodology from participants. In addition to ongoing VSLA work, USAID FED finalized its plan to roll out the new VSLA monitoring and support activity that will be implemented in FY16. This activity will provide ongoing assistance to, and verification (through randomized sampling) of, the total 723 VSLA groups supported by USAID FED. The activity will be managed by a program writer and activity manager in Monrovia and a network of 29 village agents and county reporters who will collect village level VSLA data. This data and corresponding reports will be processed in order to facilitate access to Central Bank loans to another 50 VSLA groups before the end of the project.

### **Expanding Embedded Financing:**

USAID FED facilitated a site visit by the Afriland Bank to the Selma Development Corporation in Lofa County. The farm is operated by John Selma, a USAID FED beneficiary who applied for a \$100,000 loan from the Afriland Bank to support the Selma Development Corporation as it completes a contract with the World Food Program (WFP). Mr. Selma is expecting to secure and confirm these funds in March.

## **Subtask 2.2: Access to Business Development Support (BDS) Services and Enterprise Service Centers & Promotion of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) to Benefit Feed the Future Objectives**

### **Supporting BSPs to establish ESCs:**

USAID FED continues its plan to mature five pre-qualified Business Service Providers (BSPs) into fully functioning Enterprise Service Centers (ESCs) benefitting agribusiness MSMEs in target FED counties.

USAID FED conducted a rapid gap assessment of the capacity of four BSPs this reporting period. The purpose was to identify gaps in services provided by the existing BSPs and recommend potential technical assistance and income-generating assets that will sustainably contribute to each of the ESCs. The pre-qualified ESCs include: Jacob Tomei Enterprise Service Center (Foya City, Lofa County), Liberia Entrepreneur Asset Development - LEAD (Ganta, Nimba County), Liberia Initiative Development Service - LIDS (Beanvillie, Bong County) and Community Youth Network Program - CYNP (Gunnigar Town, Grand Bassa County). An assessment report was completed by the Business Development Services Assistant. Draft MoUs for the ESCs were drafted, and the business development services team requested updated business plans from the pre-qualified ESCs. These will provide a clear understanding of the progress made by BSPs to achieve the goal of functioning as an ESC upon conclusion the project. The goal is to work with entities in the private sector that improve the competitiveness, profitability and overall capacity of fledgling ESCs. The team will meet with all the pre-qualified ESCs on March 2 to discuss the process for the next phase to roll out ESC services to the five counties.



**Figure 10: Component Two staff conduct a rapid gap assessment in February at pre-qualified BSP offices, including the LIDS office located in Bong**

### **Subtask 2.3: Women Participation in Agribusiness**

The Women-Owned Enterprise Mentor finalized the groups participating in the agribusiness incubation project and developed a template for tracking their progress. The program did not meet the initial goal of finalizing all businesses in the incubation stages before the end of October. However, the 26 women-owned businesses that were selected for incubation are expected to remain constant for the remainder of the project. The project mentor worked with businesses to establish achievable targets for the incubation period. These initial targets were submitted in February, but USAID FED requested that businesses further quantify their goals for the remainder of the period. USAID FED will provide business development services (BDS) to all women owners, and will select high-performing organizations for additional support in the attainment of their objectives.

## Component Three: Build Local Technical and Managerial Human Resource Capability

### Activity 3.1 Roll out the National Diploma in Agriculture in all Four Centers of Excellence (CoEs)

#### CoEs to recruit additional students to enroll in the National Diploma for Agriculture (NDA) Program to achieve the LOP target of 2,500

Nimba County Community College's Department of Agriculture offered seven NDA courses for Year I, which all currently underway. During one of USAID FED's site visits, it was noted that only about half of the expected enrollment (40 students) was completed, with the remaining students still working through registration. Based on FED recommendations to reduce class size for learning enhancement purposes, NDA instructors are now teaching groups averaging 5-6 students with each group assigned a specific crop. Practical field experience will form part of the courses and five field sites have been identified for this purpose.

#### Strengthen instructor capacity to roll out the NDA Program

During this reporting period, USAID FED assessed the capacity of agriculture science instructors at the four CoEs. The corresponding report, scheduled to be completed in March, will inform follow-up instructor training as well as the next round of recruitment for technical instructors.

#### Develop skills in the use and management of the laboratory facility and laboratory equipment

Soil Science Laboratory Technicians at Nimba and Lofa County Community Colleges conducted initial orientations for NDA students in February by explaining the usage of laboratory equipment supplied by USAID FED. While Booker Washington Institute and LOFA CCC are also making good progress on this activity, a recent USAID FED consultant expressed concern that senior leadership of Grand Bassa Community College is not fully engaged and/or committed to the USAID FED activities, particularly regarding CoE development.



Figure 11: Soil Science Lab Tour on February 24

#### Completing basic facilities needs to enhance learning

USAID FED is exploring whether the planned renovation of CoE libraries will require an engineering risk assessment. The USAID FED Architecture and Engineering Consultant is currently conducting such a review. Recruitment of construction firms to carry out the renovation is imminent pending the results of this review but, with the USAID FED contract scheduled to conclude in September and the fact that project activity will need to wind down three months prior to that, USAID FED's ability to engage in renovations is uncertain.

### Activity 3.6 Promoting Learning by Doing in Partnership with Private Sector

## Student Internships with industrial players and government agencies

Twenty-three senior students of the LOFA CCC agriculture department completed internships at the International Foundation for Agriculture Development (IFAD), Africa Development Corps (ADC) and the Rural Agriculture Alternatives (RAA) by the end of February.

### Activity 3.7 Building the Capacity of CoEs to generate additional funding and to manage their finances

#### Advocate with the Government of Liberia for additional funding especially to support hiring of additional instructors.

In February Hon. Dukuly, the Assistant Minister of Education for the Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET), commenced discussion with the Ministry of Education to accommodate a minimum of 12 additional teachers from the CoEs on the Ministry payroll to replace deceased teachers.

#### Utilize various facilities at the CoEs for income generation

During his consultancy with USAID FED, Dr. Donald Breazeale used a sample of laboratory prices from Honduras to assist the CoEs in determining prices for analyzing soil samples for farmers.

#### Technical support to improve financial management of the CoEs

FED subcontractor Louisiana State University (LSU) is planning to mobilize a Financial Management consultant to provide technical support the CoEs in strengthening their respective financial systems to manage income generated for planned fee-for-service activities.



Figure 12: Dr. Breazeale and other FED staff visit the vegetable enterprise at BWI

### Activity 3.8 Continuing Support to Agro-Enterprises Established in FY14/15

#### Provide STTA to assist these enterprises



Figure 13: Classes underway at NCCC

LSU consultant Dr. Donald Breazeale provided technical assistance to CoEs in the four targeted institutions in the development of their respective business plans. This included identification of potentially sustainable enterprises. Dr. Breazeale assessed each of the institutions to highlight their abilities to become profitable enterprises and helped to establish a business plan. The consultant expressed pessimism, however, about both the technical and institutional capacity of these organizations to effectively manage fee-for-service

COEs. This may be difficult for USAID FED to address in the short time period remaining.

## **Task 4.2: Monitoring & Evaluation**

As indicated in the Executive Summary, DAI has commissioned an internal data quality review involving a thorough, intensive look into USAID FED's data management systems and the extent to which these systems are yielding complete, accurate and timely data. The purpose of this review is to assess levels of confidence in the results USAID FED has been reporting to USAID relative to the 18 FtF indicators included in the USAID FED PMP. This review was initiated during this reporting period. Interviews and documentation review will be completed mid-March and a final report submitted to USAID by the end of March. Until the report is finalized and findings are known, the reader is cautioned to treat any quantitative data reported by FED in this and any previous quarterly and annual reports as estimated and tentative.