GIEWS Country Brief
Liberia

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT
- Favourable moisture conditions in 2018 cropping season allow timely planting of rice
- Average cereal import requirements forecasted
- Strong economic growth projected, food price inflation increasing
- Pockets of poverty remain

Timely start of planting season
The timely onset of rains in late February and early March 2018 allowed for a normal start of the cropping season. Planting of paddy crop, to be harvested from September to December, is to be completed in July. Rainfed paddy is the only cereal grown in the country.

Despite localized dry spells in July and August 2017, the 2017 national cereal production was estimated at 279 000 tonnes, about 6 percent above the previous year and similar to the five-year average.

Average cereal import requirement forecast
Imports account for more than half of the country’s total cereal requirements. Rice for human consumption makes up for over 80 percent of the imports, while wheat and maize account for about 13 and 6 percent, respectively. Cereal import requirements for the 2018 marketing year (January-December) are forecast at a near-average level of 437 000 tonnes.

Strong economic growth projected, food price inflation increasing
There has been a significant recovery of marketing activities since the effects of the Ebola outbreak (June-August 2014) on the national economy (movement restrictions and limited trade flows). According to the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU), the economic growth will pick up during 2018 due to the normalized political environment and infrastructure improvements, sustained growth in agriculture with palm oil and rubber production as well as gold production. The GDP growth is forecast at 4.1 percent in 2018, over 60 percent up from an estimated 2.5 percent in 2017, and well above the estimated 0.7 percent in 2014 during the Ebola outbreak.

Field reports indicate that prices of imported commodities are rising due to the weakening currency (around LRD 130 per...
USD in June 2018 compared to around LRD 90 per USD a year earlier), stronger domestic demand and higher average oil prices. In addition, according to the Central Bank of Liberia, the year-on-year food inflation was 19.5 percent as of March 2018, up from 7.6 percent reported in March 2017.

**Pockets of poverty remain**

As the economy continues to recover, households’ livelihoods and incomes are returning to the levels observed prior to the Ebola crisis. However, despite a projected economic growth, pockets of poverty still remain. According to the October 2017 “Cadre Harmonisé” analysis, about 29 000 people are estimated to be in need of food assistance from October to December 2017 (last figures available). This number is expected to increase to 43 000 people during the June to August 2018 period if no mitigation actions are taken. According to UNHCR, the number of registered refugees in the country is around 11 000 as of April 2018, down from about 15 000 in June 2017.

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