



Republic of Liberia Ministry of Agriculture

COVID-19 FOOD SECURITY RESPONSE SITUATION REPORT #8

Reporting Period:
June 7-June 14, 2020

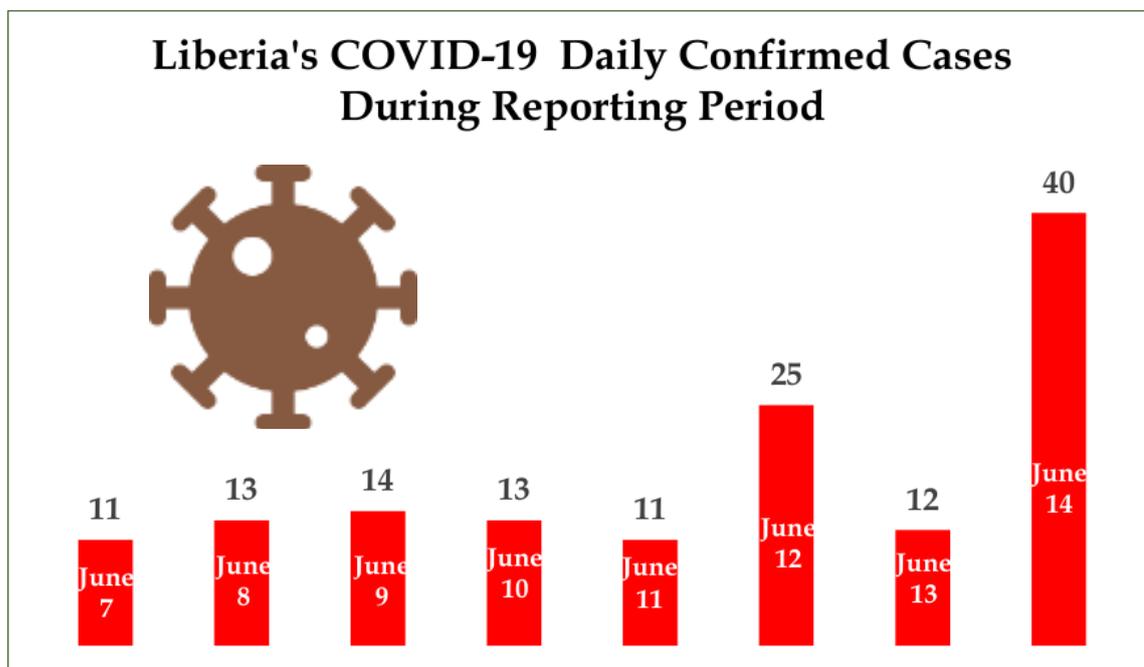
Highlights

Release Date:
June 15, 2020

- As mandated by Excellency President George Manneh Weah, Sr., the Government of Liberia (GOL) continues its COVID-19 food assistance program to socioeconomically disadvantaged and densely populated communities in the capital, Monrovia to mitigate food insecurity impacts. The UN food assistance agency, World Food Program (WFP), is carrying out the distribution in collaboration with relevant government institutions.



- Dishearteningly, Liberia's COVID-19 confirmed cases continue to increase during the reporting period with at least 11 positive cases recorded daily. The number of new cases soared by 139 from June 7 to June 14, 2020. The accumulative detected cases in Liberia are 498.



- Ahead of the reopening of the country's main international airport and resumption of classes for final year secondary schools' students to prepare for their exit exams, the GOL continues to intensify COVID-19 prevention campaigns, trainings and messaging among the public.

- In spite of the closures of border with neighboring countries, local farmers are now exploring cross-border cultural ties to bring in vital agriculture inputs and tools into the country which are scarce along Liberia's border towns.
- Lack of inputs and tools are causing snail-paced starts of farming, but food prices remain stable in many rural parts as County Agriculture Coordinators report.

Situation Overview

- The confirmed cases now stand at 498 from 359 as at the last reporting period. Peri-urban Montserrado County, the seat Monrovia, is COVID-19's hotspot as compared to other 15 counties. It has 423 cases as at June 14.
- Recoveries continue to increase amidst daily escalation of positive cases. The number of persons treated and discharged stand at 221 which represents a slight increase from 194 during the period under review.
- Margibi, the largest rubber plantation's host and the 5th populated county –as per the National Census Report –is the second COVID-19 hotbed with 30 confirmed cases. Cassava-rich Bomi County in the western region is now the latest affected county. COVID-19 has not hit three of Liberia's 15 counties.
- Positive COVID-19 cases in counties where most of the population rely on farming and agriculture activities are declining especially in the southeastern region, but the COVID-19 cases in Lofa and Bong, which predominantly live on farming, need to monitoring to prevent the virus spread.
- However, the frequent movements of Liberian farmers into neighboring La Cote D'Ivoire in the east; and Guinea, the northern neighbor –using secondary crossing-points to bring in agriculture inputs and tools –pose high risks to our farmers as they could easily get COVID-19 infected. Farmers in Grand Gedeh, Lofa and Maryland Counties are at high risks in cross-border movements.
- The World Health Organization's latest report of June 10 states Guinea's positive cases are 4,258 while La Cote D'Ivoire is at 3, 995. Liberia has minimal caseloads as compared to those two sisterly Republics.
- No report from Agriculture Coordinators about Liberia's western region farmers' cross-overs into Sierra Leone for agriculture inputs that shares a river-divided borderline. The Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) continues to monitor the situation. Liberia's positive cases have not reached half of COVID-19 confirmed cases in Sierra Leone that are 1,025 as WHO report says.
- Realizing the shortages of inputs [fertilizers, agrochemicals and seeds] and health risks to farmers, the MoA, through two donor-funded projects, STAR-P [World Bank] and IFAD, is restlessly working to accelerate the procurement processes of acquiring those inputs for free distribution to farmers across the country.
- The processes are under strict adherence of international and national regulatory guidelines to ensure integrity and transparency.



Food Security

Southeastern Region

- In the southeastern region, especially Maryland County, experiences enough supplies of rice seeds. Currently, there is 5-ton of seed rice in that county, but threshing is the main challenge facing farmers as they resorting to do so manually.

- There is a sharp decline in the price of a gallon of palm oil in Grand Gedeh. Two weeks ago, it was sold for LD\$1,900 and it is now LD\$ 950. The increased palm oil production in that county is responsible for the price drop. A pile of Cassava price has gone up by 50% from LD\$ 50 to LD\$ 100.
- River Gee is experiencing an acute shortage of farming inputs due to muddy road which becomes impassable for commercial vehicles because of the huge down pour of rain. There is no agriculture supplies store in that county.
- Large number of rice farmers have completed rice planting in Grand Kru County, the County Agriculture Coordinator says.

Northern Region

- Corn farmers in Nimba County are celebrating the return of their farm gate prices. A bag of corn, which was sold for LD\$ 900 because of no buyer as a result of restricted movements of people during the lockdown, is now sold for LD\$ 2,500 –the original fair market price.
- Lofa farmers continue to do land clearing and preparation for rice production, but, the abolishing of group farming as a mitigating measure to stop and contain the spread of COVID-19 may cause a decline in the county’s rice production.

Central Region

- Farmers are trooping daily at the Margibi County’s Agriculture office requesting for seed rice and fertilizers as these two inputs are scarce in the county which is delaying farming activities there.

Western Region

- Gbarpolu County is having tough moments to start the planting season because of no seeds and other inputs.

RESPONSE:

- **The procurement processes, under the World Bank’s standards, have started and the matrix of timeliness are on page 5.**
- **Agro advisory group, GROW, indicates Liberia should also expect to continue to face difficulties with respect to the COVID-19 health and economic emergency and recommends the following:**
 1. **The distribution of food and agro-inputs aid should be reconsidered in light of availability and pricing findings.**
 2. **Liberia’s business community is facing a finance crunch that could have negative implications for key trading seasons. A stop-gap solution may be needed.**
 3. **Routine practices and measures required to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are employed variably and should be integrated into everyday life and work.**
 4. **Now is the time to set-up the market monitoring systems that should inform future response efforts.**



Agribusiness

- The application deadline for the Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project (STAR-P) US\$ 10,000 matching grant for would-be

selected small and medium enterprise agribusinesses ended during the period under review.

- On Saturday 6th June, the Nimba Rubber Company, one of three Liberia-owned rubber processors in the country, tested the operations of its processing plant for the first time since 1990. The company plans to commence processing rubber by July 1st. At this time, only multi-national concessions are processing rubber in the country, a situation which leaves Liberian rubber farmers vulnerable.

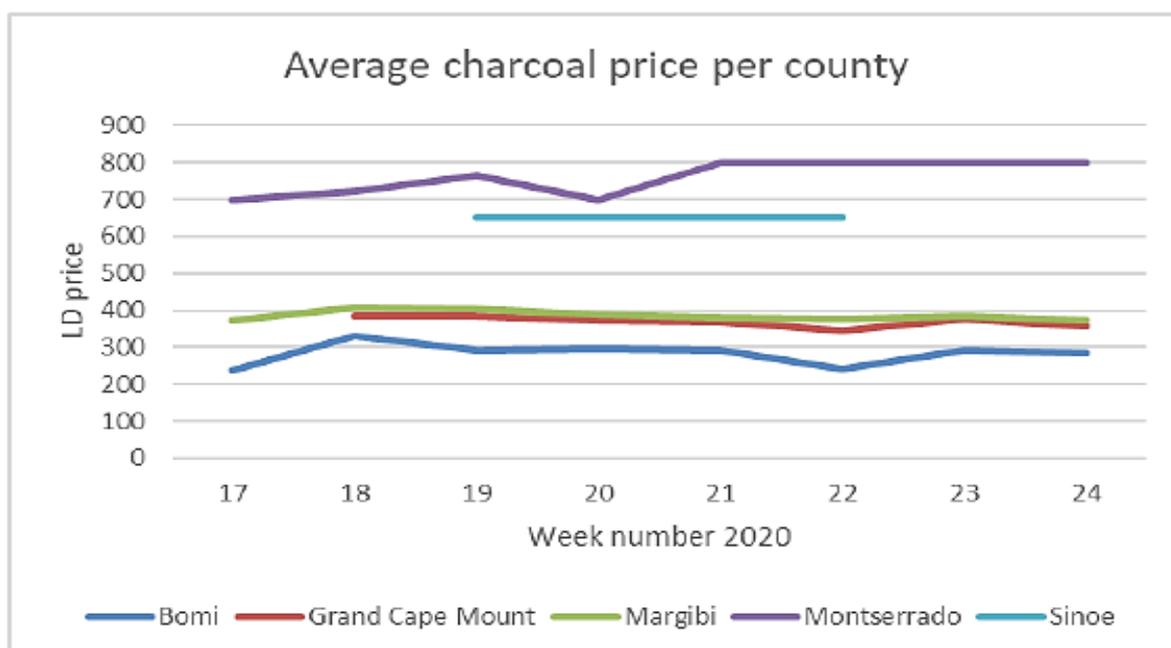
RESPONSE:

About 150 applications were received from various parts of the county. A review panel is being set up. The selection of beneficiaries will be done in a transparent manner.



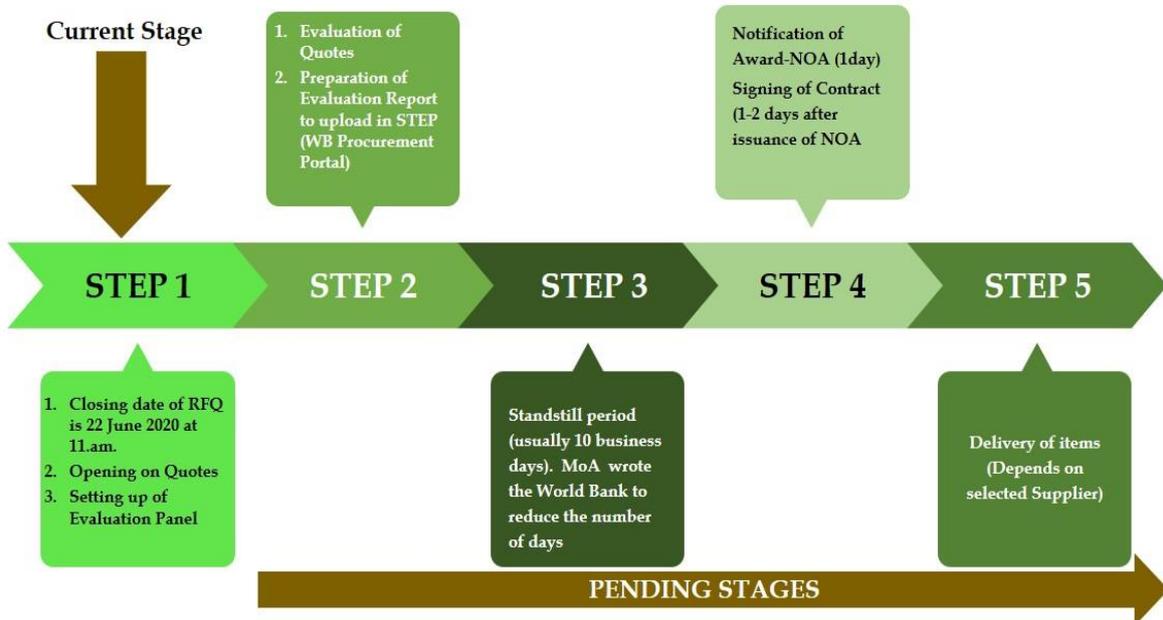
Livelihood

- The state-owned The Liberia Agriculture Commodity Regulatory Authority (LACRA), has started the distribution of high-yielding 500 cocoa seedlings to farmers in Grand Cape Mount County in western Liberia. This is to enable that region noted for oil palm, cassava and fisheries to diversify into this vital tree crop.
- According to Report #9 of the Market Monitoring by the PARTNERS' program led by ZOA, prices of various commodities seem to have stabilized after the March and April months, where it was assumed that movement restrictions were driving price changes
- For charcoal bag, ZOA, says: Charcoal (bag) the price of charcoal in Monrovia remains high, at 800LD. The graph shows some county comparisons in the average price of charcoal since we started to see some stabilization after the price shocks caused by the lockdown. The map on page one shows the various trade corridors and flows that this market monitoring is following. The southeast does not have enough locations surveyed yet to show the flow of charcoal. However, the rates reported from Greenville show that prices are a concern when compared to more rural areas around Monrovia.



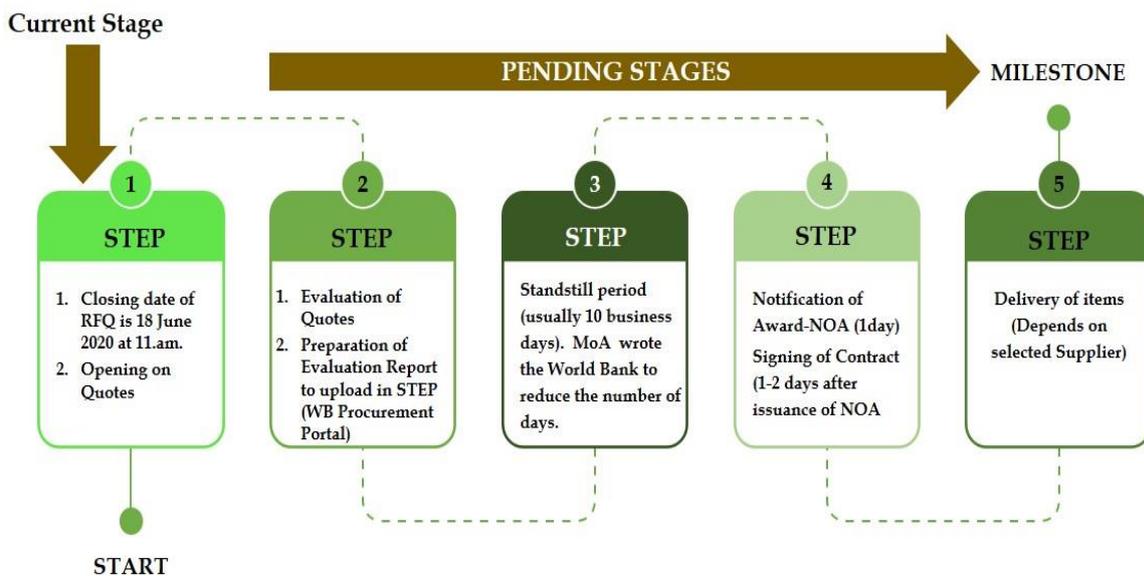
STAGES OF THE PROCUREMENT PROCESSES ON THE PURCHASE OF AGRO PROCESSING EQUIPMENT

They are meant to support post-harvest handling/losses [threshing, winnowing, drying, de-stoning, seed-sorting and bagging]. Tractors and power tillers as well. The equipment and items will be distributed free to farmers



STAGES OF THE PROCUREMENT PROCESSES ON THE PURCHASE OF PRODUCTION INPUTS

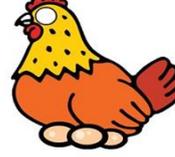
Fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, compost, mulch etc. The equipment and items will be distributed free to farmers





Farming Support Services

A SNAPSHOT OF LIBERIAN FARMS & AGRIBUSINESSES DOING HOME DELIVERIES

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

The MoA through its Movement Control Services (MOCO) that handles passes for farmers and agro processors and workers, has established two hotlines and an email account. The hotline numbers are 0880910592 and 077746264. The email is: moco@moa.gov.lr.

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

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

For further inquiries, please contact:

Ansu Sekou Konneh, akonneh@moa.gov.lr

Lonnie Herring, lherring@moa.gov.lr