LIBERIA FOOD SECURITY FACT SHEET

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Despite a conducive climate and good soils for crop production, Liberia has long suffered from food insecurity due to extreme poverty and endemic inefficiencies in the country’s food and agricultural systems. Approximately 18% of Liberian households were identified as moderately to severely food insecure in Liberia’s last comprehensive food security assessment in 2018. Even before the Ukraine-Russia conflict impacted global commodity prices, food security conditions had worsened due to COVID-19, climate change impacts and high post-harvest losses. The 2021 Global Hunger Index classifies Liberia’s level of hunger as ‘serious’. Liberia ranked 110 of 116 countries on hunger conditions.

To better characterize conditions and guide urgent and long-term responses, the Liberian Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) is undertaking a Rapid Food Security, Livelihoods, Markets and Nutrition Assessment with the support of the U.N., USAID, and other donors. Results of the rapid assessment are expected in August 2022. A new comprehensive food security and nutrition assessment is anticipated to start in October 2022.

LIBERIA FOOD SECURITY WATCH

Average 8% increase in price of RICE since May 2021
Average 42% increase price of FUEL since October 2021
38.9% of population undernourished
45% of deaths under the age of five are linked to malnutrition

*Information from WFP and Welthungerhilfe Market Monitoring May 2022 Report; Global Hunger Index, 2021; UNICEF Liberia

1 Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey, 2018
KEY DRIVERS OF FOOD INSECURITY IN LIBERIA

➔ Low local agricultural productivity - Limited availability of agricultural inputs, mechanized equipment, financial capital and extension services are all serious challenges.

➔ Highly dependent on imported staples (especially rice) - Seventy percent of rice consumed in Liberia is imported making the Liberian table vulnerable to global market price shocks.

➔ Limited nutritional diversity of local production - Local markets for high nutritional value products are underdeveloped due to constraints on both the supply and demand sides.

➔ Extreme poverty prevents Liberians from meeting basic food needs - More than 50% of Liberians live below the poverty line ($1.90/day) and are unable to access sufficient food on a daily basis.

USAID RESPONSE

Liberia is a target country under the U.S. Government’s (USG) Feed the Future (FTF) Initiative aimed at ending global hunger and malnutrition and building sustainable, resilient food systems. USAID’s interventions are designed to meet USG objectives and directly address the drivers of food insecurity.

INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY AND RESILIENCE

USAID’s anticipated five year (2022-2027), ~$20 million Food Security, Nutrition, and Resilience (FSNR) activity will work with smallholder farmers in rural agricultural communities to increase agricultural productivity and build household and community resilience. FSNR will emphasize crop diversification to increase production and marketing of higher value and nutritious foods.

PRIVATE-SECTOR LOCALLY LED ECONOMIC GROWTH

Under the continent-wide Africa Trade and Investment activity, USAID has committed $20 million to support the Agribusiness Development and Incubator (“the Incubator”) activity to provide business support services and co-investment opportunities for Liberian agricultural enterprises working to solve agriculture and food challenges and grow Liberia’s economy. The Incubator will operate over five years (2022-2027) to foster entrepreneurship and innovation especially among women and youth.

SECTOR CAPACITY BUILDING

Through the Liberia Economic Policy Dialogue Activity (LEPDA) USAID provides technical assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning for strategic planning and coordination of Government of Liberia responses to food security challenges.

SCHOOL FEEDING

Through the School Feeding Program II, implemented by Mary’s Meals, USAID provides all students in 221 schools with a hot meal each school day. USAID anticipates expanding this work in response to the current food security crisis. Providing students with daily meals addresses chronic classroom hunger and ensures better attendance and focus which improves students’ chances to achieve their educational goals and a brighter future.