



Liberia and FAO

Building resilience and food and nutrition security

Cooperation between FAO and Liberia dates back to 1977, when the Organization opened its country office. Assistance today is focused on revitalizing the agriculture sector, which is crucial for the consolidation of Liberia's progress from post-conflict stabilization to sustainable economic development and food security. Productive and income-generating agricultural activities are an integral part of the recent emergency interventions required to relieve refugees and host communities in Liberia.



Established in 1977, the FAO Representation in Liberia is pleased to be celebrating its 40th anniversary

Food security and conflict prevention

Food insecurity is deepest in conflict-affected countries, where it can be both a cause and a consequence of violence. Improving food security can make an important contribution to peacebuilding processes, reducing the risk of a relapse into conflict.

Most conflicts mainly affect rural populations, heavily impacting food and agricultural production and smallholder livelihoods. The rehabilitation of agriculture, therefore, has a central role to play in building and consolidating peace while contributing to food security and rural development.

A core objective of FAO's assistance in post-conflict countries is to support recovery and revitalization of the agriculture sector, increasing food production as well as income-generating opportunities for rural communities, including ex-combatants, women and young people. A dual focus on building national capacities and resilient livelihoods is an integral part of FAO's agricultural and food security interventions, particularly in fragile countries. By increasing stability and social cohesion, this approach helps post-conflict countries progress from recovery towards sustainable peace and development.

Matching FAO's expertise to Liberia's development priorities

FAO assistance in Liberia is shaped by the 2016-2019 FAO Country Programming Framework (CPF), which is centred on three priority areas:

- **Enhanced capacity for policy development and advocacy in the agriculture sector and sub-sectors**, through the development of a communication strategy aiming to promote those policies that have been formulated, reviewed and validated as benchmarks for good practices in the agriculture sector
- **Improved production, productivity and competitiveness**, through the provision of technical assistance to farmers and farmers organizations, including access to improved agricultural inputs, post-harvest and value-addition services.
- **Increased sustainable natural resources management and utilization**, with a particular emphasis on the forest sector, including through the promotion of inter-sectoral dialogue of stakeholders and the development of a framework for integrated landscape management

Jointly developed with the Government and other development partners, the CPF reflects relevant priorities in key national development policies, including the Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda (LATA), the Food and Agriculture Policy Strategy (FAPS), the national development framework – the Agenda for Transformation (AfT), the Draft Poverty reduction Strategy – Two (2012-2015), the National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (FSNS), Liberia's Medium Term Economic Growth and Development Strategy (2010-2017) and the Liberia Rising – Vision 2030. The CPF is fully aligned with the UN Development Assistance Framework for Liberia (2013-2017).

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Emergency crop assistance contributes to sustainability

In 2010–2011, post-election violence in neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire caused a large-scale refugee crisis in which more than 120 000 Ivorians sought refuge in Liberia, depleting food reserves of local host residents and exacerbating the food insecurity situation. Together with partners, FAO responded rapidly with essential farming inputs as well as training, both for refugees and host communities. In addition to averting a food crisis, the intervention contributed to more resilient and market-oriented livelihoods in the areas affected.

"Peace is fundamental to food security and food security is fundamental for keeping peace."

FAO Director-General

With the seeds, tools, fertilizer and training provided, farmers produced more and diverse crops and sold the surplus. Proceeds paid for food, housing,

mechanization and vehicles (e.g. motorbikes) and schooling. As one family farmer reported: "It's through this farm that we eat and send children to school. These were things that we did not do before".

Implemented in Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Maryland Counties, the project benefited 7 500 households, allowing farmers to build up thriving market gardens with turnovers in the order of US\$600.

Project: Emergency Food Security Assistance for Ivorian Refugees and Affected Host Communities in Liberia. Funded by ECHO.

Family snail farming increases incomes

Also in Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Maryland Counties, farmers are benefiting from the introduction of a new agroforestry activity. As part of a broader post-conflict initiative, FAO and the Government have encouraged families to set up small-scale snail production and sales enterprises, whereas in the past people gathered the local delicacy from the wild. Snail farming rapidly increases snail populations, helps safeguard the environment, serves as an additional source of income for farmers and provides the essential dietary nutrients.

FAO trained 100 farmers in improved snail farming, including the adoption of appropriate technologies and business skills, to ensure the maximum productivity and sustainability of operations. One project participant from Maryland County admitted she never used to like snails: "I thought snails were unsafe for human consumption. I thought they had diseases. But I learned from FAO training that snails are good for humans. Even the hospital advised us that it was good for pregnant women to eat snails".

Project: Cross-border Initiative to Strengthen Resilience, Community-Based Protection and Conflict Prevention. Funded by ECHO.

Global knowledge transfer

Since 2012, Liberia's drive to revitalize agriculture and achieve food security has received a considerable boost with the assignment of Chinese agricultural experts under FAO's South-South Cooperation framework. Liberian technicians have acquired new skills and are now in a better position to support farmers. The Chinese experts, including engineers, agronomists, livestock and aquaculture experts, have been stationed in five institutes in Liberia: the Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI), Tumutu, Center Songhai Liberia, Klay and Measuagoon. Over 90 new agricultural techniques and 27 varieties of crops have been introduced and 24 pilot demonstration sites initiated under this successful South-South experience. Manuals have been distributed and more than 700 practical and theoretical training courses conducted.

One Liberian trainee to have benefited from the exchange is now a qualified Liberian agro-technician. He said he was grateful for the computer literacy and agricultural skills gained, but also for the practical aspects of training such as learning to ride a motorbike – a viable means of transport for his work. In another case, a family progressed from subsistence cassava farming to nursery preparation and marketing gardening. They are producing and selling a variety of the improved crops introduced, such as watermelon, eggplant and Chinese pepper seeds. With pepper in demand, the family's earnings increased to more than US\$500 within a short period.

