FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT
- Favourable moisture conditions allowed timely planting of 2019 rice crop
- Average rice production harvested in 2018
- Decreasing economic growth and food price inflation
- Pockets of poverty remain in the country

Favourable moisture conditions allowed timely start of 2019 planting season
The onset of the rains in late February and early March 2019 allowed a timely start of the cropping season. Planting of the paddy crop, to be harvested from September to December, started in April 2019. Rainfed paddy is the only cereal grown in the country. Adequate rainfall amounts are supporting soil moisture conditions for crop growth and development and contributed to the recovery of pasture conditions across the country. Weeding activities are underway in most cropping areas.

Average rice production harvested in 2018
Despite localized flooding in some parts of the South-Western Region, the 2018 national rice production was estimated at 280 000 tonnes, similar to the previous year and the five-year-average.

Imports account for more than half of country’s total cereal requirements. Rice for human consumption accounts for over 80 percent of imports, while wheat and maize account for about 13 percent and 6 percent, respectively. Cereal import requirements for the 2019 marketing year (January-December) are forecast at 500 000 tonnes, about 2 percent above the previous year and 16 percent above the average due to higher demand for human consumption.

Decreasing economic growth and food price inflation
According to the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU), the economic growth will slow down from 2.9 percent in 2018 to 1.6 percent in 2019 as a result of unfavourable prospects for international prices of some of the country’s exports, including iron ore, gold and diamonds. Moreover, the local currency is expected to weaken from around LRD 130 per USD in 2018 to LRD 166 per USD in 2019 as a result of a greater exchange rate liberalization and a large current account deficit, which put downward pressure on the Liberian Dollar.
Despite the depreciation of the Liberian Dollar, the year-on-year food inflation is expected to decline from 23.6 percent in 2018 to 13.9 percent in 2019 as a result of the lower prices of staple food, including rice, as well as oil for consumption.

Pockets of poverty remain in the country

Despite the overall satisfactory food security conditions, some vulnerable households still need external food assistance. According to the March 2019 "Cadre Harmonisé" analysis, about 29 500 people are estimated to be in need of food assistance from March to May 2019. This number is expected to increase to 41 500 during the June to August 2019 period, if no mitigation actions are taken. According to UNHCR, the number of registered refugees in the country is around 9 000 as of March 2019, down from about 11 000 in April 2018.

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