



GIEWS Country Brief Liberia

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FOOD SECURITY SNAPSHOT

- Timely start of 2020 planting season
- Average rice production harvested in 2019
- Increasing prices of staple food due to inflation
- Pockets of poverty remain in country

Timely start of 2020 planting season

Following a timely onset of seasonal rains in late March, planting operations for paddy rice, the only cereal grown in the country, are ongoing and the harvest is expected to start in September. Since the onset of the season, adequate rainfall amounts are supporting soil moisture conditions for crop growth and development. In most areas, crops are at sprouting, seedling and tillering stages, and weeding activities are regularly underway. The latest Agro-Hydro-Climatic Seasonal Forecast in Sudano-Sahelian Africa (PRESASS) points to below-average rainfall amounts during the July-September period, with a likely negative impact on crop yields as well as the availability of pasture and water for livestock.

Recent favourable rains have contributed to the recovery of pasture conditions. Currently, forage availability is satisfactory in the main grazing areas of the country, allowing animals to maintain good body conditions and enhance their market value. The animal health situation is generally good and stable, with just some localized outbreaks of seasonal diseases, including Trypanosomiasis and Contagious Bovine Peripneumonia.

Average rice production harvested in 2019

Despite localized flooding in some parts of the South-Western Region, the 2019 national rice production was estimated at 269 000 tonnes, similar to the five-year average and 4 percent above the previous year.

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 2020 marketing year (January-December) are forecast at 500 000 tonnes, similar to the previous year and about 10 percent above the average as local traders are aiming to replenish their stocks.

Liberia

Crop Calendar

(*major foodcrop)

Cassava (1st year)*

Cassava (2nd year)*

Rice*

Yams



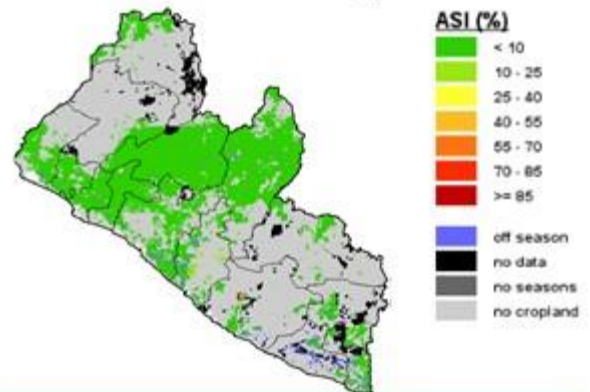
lean period

Sowing
Growing
Harvesting

Source: FAO/GIEWS.

Liberia - Agricultural Stress Index (ASI)

from start of season 1 to Dekad 2, April 2020



Source: FAO/GIEWS Earth Observation System.

Increasing staple food prices due to inflation

Markets are well supplied with both local and imported commodities across the country. However, field reports indicate that prices of staple foods continued to increase in early 2020 due to some macro-economic factors including the high inflation rate, the liberalization of the exchange rate and the weakening of the local currency. According to Trading Economics, the year-on-year food inflation rate increased to 32.38 percent in October 2019. The large trade deficits are maintaining a downward pressure on the exchange rate, which weakened from LRD 164 per USD in early 2019 to about LRD 197 per USD in early 2020.

Pockets of poverty remain in country

Despite the overall satisfactory food security situation, some vulnerable households still need external food assistance. According to the March 2019 “Cadre Harmonisé” analysis, about 41 500 people were estimated to be need food assistance during the lean period between June and August 2019. According to the UNHCR, the number of registered refugees in the country was about 8 600 as of December 2019, slightly down from about 9 000 in March 2019.

COVID-19 and measures adopted by the Government

In view of the evolving COVID-19 situation, the Government has decreed a State of Emergency to include travel restrictions between counties as of early April. The Government has also taken some sanitary, social and economic measures.

In early April, the World Bank through the International Development Association (IDA) approved a USD 7.5 million grant to strengthen the preparedness of the national health system in terms of prevention, detection and response to the threat posed by the virus.

Official restrictions on population movements, combined with heightened levels of fear, have led many people to stay at their homes. Although these measures have not affected the access to food, further restrictions on population movements could hamper the access to land and have a negative impact on 2020 agricultural production.

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Liberia

Cereal Production

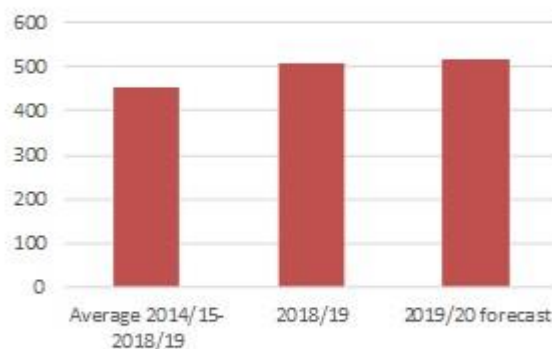
	2014-2018 average	2018	2019 estimate	change 2019/2018
	000 tonnes			percent
Rice (paddy)	267	258	269	4.3
Total	267	258	269	4.3

Note: percentage change calculated from unrounded data.
Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheet.

Liberia

Cereals Imports

000 tonnes



Note: Includes rice in milled terms. Split year refers to individual crop marketing years (for rice, calendar year of second year shown).

Source: FAO/GIEWS Country Cereal Balance Sheets.