

Foreword

The Government of Liberia, supported by its development and donor partners, has initiated a substantial effort in rehabilitating and revitalizing the tree crops sector. The Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project (STCRSP), funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), a Private-sector Partner (LAADCO) and beneficiaries, is exemplary of this effort. This in turn has precipitated an endeavor to learn from the experience and success stories of the development of the tree crops sector in other countries, and leveraging this learning for added value and benefit. The first such effort has been spearheaded by the STCRSP, with project stakeholders, including beneficiaries, undertaking a learning route and visit to Sao Tome and Principe (STP). It was recognized that sustainability of the project requires access to new models and best practices in cocoa and coffee production, as well as in its marketing, for actors at every level of the value chain. Furthermore, the importance of establishing a functioning and effective Public-Private Partnership has also been recognized, as a fundamental and integral element for the successful implementation of the project and its sustainability after project completion.

A nine-member team from eight Implementing Partner institutions under the STCRSP benefitted from a one-week cross learning route in STP. The cross learning event sought to establish a continuous exchange and sharing of best practices, innovations and learning in cocoa and coffee value chain development (production to marketing), and simultaneously to link implementers of the STCRSP with viable growing markets. This is to ensure that the IPs' reap significant benefits from enhanced market participation. There is also need for a common vision and understanding of private sector and cooperative workings and motivations, both at the national and international levels, in order to ensure complementarity and guide the way forward to the benefit of all; building a strong network and partnership can have a significant impact in Liberia and the region.

The first exchange in the learning route was facilitated by the Programme d'appui participatif à l'agriculture familiale et à la pêche artisanale or Participatory Smallholder Agriculture & Artisanal Fisheries Development Project (PAPAFPA), an IFAD funded project based in STP since 2003. This was subsequently followed up with a second exchange by PAPAFPA technicians in Liberia, with the purpose to impart practical knowledge and techniques and technologies to farmers themselves, and that could be adapted to, and replicated on Liberian smallholder farms – these techniques/ technologies were in grafting, traceability, pruning, sanitation, rejuvenation of cocoa/ coffee trees and establishing record systems. This should have very positive influence on, and consequences for the economy of Liberia by: (i) accelerating the rehabilitation process (with the expectation of full production potential already after year two); and (ii) by promoting different varieties that better respond to the market, and allow for better prices and more income for the farmer and the country.

It is especially critical that this truly collaborative effort ensures that farmers will progressively lead the efforts in revitalizing their sector, passing their learning and knowledge further on to more and more farmers. Similarly, cooperative leaders will also continue to mobilize farmers and advocate for more effective commercialization and marketing, contributing to sustainability of the system as a whole.

We extend thanks to the cross learning team for maximizing the opportunity afforded them and the enthusiasm that this brings to the STCRSP project.

Hubert Boirard
Country Portfolio Manager
Liberia



Florence A. Chenoweth
Minister
Ministry of Finance

