



# WAAPP LIBERIA INFO



WEST AFRICA AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY PROGRAM

PROGRAMME DE PRODUCTIVITÉ AGRICOLE EN AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST

NEWSLETTER 004 – April, 2016. *Special Edition: Economic Stabilization & Rapid Recovery Seed Intervention*

[www.waappliberia.org](http://www.waappliberia.org)

## Realizing the Promise to Liberian Farmers

*Post Ebola Seed Intervention Makes Significant Gains After Hardship Endured by Farmers*



Vice President Joseph N. Boakai of Liberia Leading Other Government Officials, Farmers and Partners to Harvest a Rice Field in Gbedin, Nimba County, Northern Liberia



World Bank, WAAPP Liberia, CARI and MOA Officials Inspecting a Rice field in Kpatawee, Bong County, Central Liberia, Over 18 Hectares of Foundation Seeds Multiplied by Africa Rice

### Inside this issue:

- |  |    |
|--|----|
| <i>Realizing the Promise Made to Liberian Farmers, Vice President Joins others to harvest 164 Hectares of</i>  | 4  |
| <i>World Bank/MRU/CORAF- WECARD complete the 2015 Implementation Support Mission, Touring Several Rice Fields Under the Emergency Seed</i>                             | 10 |
| <i>Liberia's Ministry of Agriculture and Partners Launch the Economic Stabilization and Rapid Response Seed Support Initiative, A post Ebola Response for Liberian</i> | 13 |
| <i>Over 30 Hectares of Improved Cassava Harvested in Bomi County Under the Innovation</i>  | 18 |
| <i>World Bank Co Task Team Leader (TTL) Visits Project Interventions Around the Country, Brands Work Being Done as Impressive</i>                                      | 20 |
| <i>Liberia Hosts Meeting on Developing a Strategy to Increase Rain-fed and Upland Rice for Mano River Union Countries</i>  | 23 |
| <i>The Interview...</i>  |    |



AfricaRice  
Rice science at the service of Africa  
La science rizicole au service de l'Afrique



### Editor's Note



**ELVIS H. SIRLEAF**  
EDITOR

After a successful implementation of the Economic Stabilization and Rapid Recovery Seed Intervention, we are here to inform you of gains made, gains we are so proud of.

This *special edition* highlights key achievements of WAAPP

Liberia implementation over a certain period. As previous editions did, we have managed to cover significant gains made. This time, speaking of the sacrifices made by Liberian farmers and stakeholders during the outbreak of the deadly Ebola Virus Disease that affected the West African Region.

Even though several countries were affected, some neighbors still managed to make contributions to smallholder farmers in Liberia after international and national efforts. Their efforts have been hailed in this piece.

It has been 5 years already, since the WAAPP Liberia Project was approved and started up in Liberia. While we will all agree a year of slow start cannot be ignored, there have been tremendous achievements made by the WAAPP Liberia Project Implementation Unit and all others who have been part of the project implementation. The 4 components have been fully covered, the possibility of starting up the 2nd phase (WAAPP 2C) is well underway, and Liberia has been rated Moderately Satisfactory among other WAAPP participating countries.

It is also important to hail the efforts of the smallholder farmers who have adopted from the traditional farming to new methods introduced under the WAAPP Program. Clearly, they have seen how the change has impacted their yields for the better.

On behalf of the team here at WAAPP Liberia, we appreciate all the stakeholders for contributions made thus far. Please continue the engagements so that we can all make our region a hub capable of feeding itself as well as supplying others.

You will be hearing from us again soon

**Elvis H. Sirleaf**  
Communications Specialist  
Mobile: +231 886 529390  
elvis.sirleaf@moaliberia.org  
elsirleaf@hotmail.com  
Skype: liberianfellow

### **WAAPP Liberia National Communication Technical Working Group, (NCTWG)**

**Mr. Edward P. Borloh**  
*Monitoring and Evaluation Officer*  
WAAPP Liberia, World Bank

**Mrs. Gertrude Francis – DeShield**  
*Communications Director*  
Ministry of Agriculture, Liberia

**Mr. Philip N. Wesseh**  
*Publisher, Inquirer*  
Daily Newspaper

**Mr. Victor K. Seah**  
*Communications & Outreach Officer*  
USAID/IBEX

**Mr. Elvis H. Sirleaf**  
*Communications Specialist*  
WAAPP Liberia, World Bank

### External Editors

**Mr. Philip N. Wesseh**  
*Managing Editor,*  
*Inquirer Newspaper*

**Mr. Victor K. Seah**  
*Communications & Outreach Officer*  
USAID/IBEX

### **West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP) Liberia**

**Program Management Unit Complex**  
Ministry of Agriculture Annex  
Fendell, Montserrado County, Republic of Liberia  
[www.waappliberia.org](http://www.waappliberia.org)

Email: [waappliberia@moa.gov.lr](mailto:waappliberia@moa.gov.lr)  
Tel: +231 888096999

Produced and printed by WAAPP Liberia Communications  
© 2016



## Message from the Minister of Agriculture



**DR. MOSES M. ZINNAH**  
Minister of Agriculture

As the first phase of the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program winds down, it is important that we point out the significant gains that have been made through the implementation of the regional project. Having served as the Director of the Program Management Unit of the Minister of Agriculture for several years, I have had the opportunity of evaluating the level of work done by the project in the four

key components. In my opinion, substantive works have been done, lives of the ordinary Liberian farmers have been positively impacted, new ideas brought on board have been absorbed and are currently benefiting the targeted audience and Liberia is well on its way to agricultural transformation.

Let me also speak to the timeliness of the seed intervention. A serious drought of seeds was averted when National Government and International Partners agreed that the country needed to bridge the gap created when farmers consumed seeds that were distributed for subsequent farming seasons. Though there were some difficulties in getting the seeds to Liberia, due to precautionary measures instituted by neighboring governments to avoid the spread of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), the process still went on almost smoothly. Thanks largely to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Africa Rice Center, CORAF/WE CARD and all other actors along the way. The WAAPP Liberia Project Coordinating Unit (PCU) that braved the storm to go across borders to ensure that the seeds were delivered, you have all done our nation well.

I am looking forward to the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of WAAPP, where the project will move more onto that aspect of developing technologies that can be shared with the region. With the return of our scholars who have studied away and are now home, there is enough expertise to tap on now. Our research institutes must now focus on works that will help farmers improve their farming activities, increase productivity as well as create new ideas.

With the existing management structure at the Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI), and a Master Plan fully designed to augment the activities at the institute, I can expect nothing less than wonderful scientific activities.

The drive of our economy has now shifted towards the agriculture sector. It's a huge challenge to make this work, as other industries such as the extractive are yet to produce the expected or desired outcome. But the good news is that we have the right people in the right places, even at the highest national levels as evident by the presence of the Vice President His Excellency Joseph N. Boakai at both the National Launch of the seeds in April 2015, and the Bumper harvest in January 2016. Another reason is, unlike the other industries, this one is a sure business. What we put in is what we are going to get, plus profit. I look forward to the day that we can all agree that investing in agriculture was the best idea. I am confident that this will work because, when you invest into agriculture, it is four times more effective to reduce poverty.

Moses M. Zinnah, PHD  
**MINISTER**

## Message from the National Project Coordinator



**J. CYRUS SAYGBE, SR.**  
NATIONAL PROJECT COORDINATOR

It has been over four years since we launched the Liberia's project of the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program and took office. Well into the fifth year, as National Project Coordinator, I have had the time to sit and reflect on the road traveled thus. From the single office shared by 6 project staff in the beginning to a large office complex outside the capitol city with space in abundance; from

practicing the jargons of the agricultural sector to mastering the terms, language and having full knowledge on how to calculate size of a farm and determine which crop will best work with which group of farmers and on which soil; from getting a mark of unsatisfactory at the first Wrap Up meeting in October of 2012 to being Moderately Satisfactory in 2015; as well as the significant achievements made as evident by success stories of practical improvements in the lives of the small holder farmers. I can only say it has been a good road so far.

This Special Edition comes at the time when we are almost at the completion of the implementation of the Economic Stabilization and Rapid Recovery Seed Intervention, an initiative to support smallholder Liberian farmers that have been greatly affected by the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak in the country, as well as other parts of the region. Farmers had fallen short of planting materials, having consumed the seeds provided them for planting due to the shortage of food during the EVD outbreak. There was a huge shortage created, thus posing serious threat to farming activities in Liberia. This would have led to the shortage of basic food if a solution wasn't formulated in the shortest possible time. Thank God we found one. It is important to note that while trying to achieve one key activity, which was to bring improved planting materials for the farmers, the transfer of seeds from other WAAPP participating countries achieved two major milestones for the WAAPP projects. It promoted regional integration by the transfer of technologies, while at the same time provided the much needed seeds for Liberian farmers after the shortage created by the outbreak.

Let me use this medium to thank all the countries that heeded to our cry for help, as well as all the partners (CORAF/WE CARD and Africa Rice), the donors (World Bank and the Government of Japan), along the way who made this a reality. We are also grateful to the farmers who have adopted the new method of farming introduced under the Innovation Platform, a method introduced by the project. I will also like to thank my great team, I mean the WAAPP PCU for their resilience and dedication since the inception of this project to date. It is my hope that we will all continue on this path, working to make Liberia food secured, as well as our region. As we prepare for the closure of Phase One of the WAAPP, I want to admonish farmers to ensure that all technologies adopted are utilized to its maximum and prepare to embrace WAAPP 2C which will see a new window of opportunities for them all.

J. Cyrus Saygbe, Sr.  
**National Project Coordinator**

## THE ROAD TO MAKING LIBERIA FOOD SECURE LOOKING BRIGHTER...

*As Vice President Joseph Boakai Begins the Harvest of Over 164 Hectares of Certified Seed Rice in Gbedin, Nimba County*

*By: Elvis H. Sirleaf*



**Vice President Leading the Harvest in Gbedin, Nimba County**

**V**ice President Joseph N. Boakai on Saturday January 23, 2016 joined the Ministry of Agriculture and development partners to begin the harvest of 164 hectares of farm, where foundation seeds were multiplied into certified rice seeds under a Ministry of Agriculture, WAAPP Liberia, Africa Rice and Dokodan Farmers Cooperative arrangement. The Harvest took place in Gbedin, Nimba County, Northern Liberia.

The Liberian Vice President expressed his joy over the achievements and gains that were being made in the Agriculture Sector, something he said Liberia will depend on, giving all the shortfalls the other sectors are experiencing.

According to Ambassador Boakai, the government was committed to improving the lives of smallholder farmers. “We are still engaging partners to begin to look into not just supporting our small scale farming, but to help us graduate to mechanized farming that will reduce labor and increase yields”, he said.

“No one should think that we do not support Agriculture. We do spend a lot of money on agriculture, but we do so on foreign agriculture when we go outside to procure things we ourselves can grow and make here in Liberia”, he said.

V.P. Boakai said contrary to beliefs that Liberian farmers do not produce, there were huge productions going on all over the country. “During the Ebola Virus Disease, when all the ports and borders were closed and nothing was coming in nor going out, how did we feed ourselves? It was from what the local farmers produced”, He said. He also pointed out that if we use the over 200 million United States dollars spent on the importation of rice to spread across the country for farmers to benefit, farmers will have support to produce food and the country will not have to look outside.





*Vice President Boakai in Conversation with Agriculture Minister Zinnah*

The developing country's Second In Command noted that the government strongly believes that the new agriculture minister and his team at the Ministry were up to the task of making Liberia an agriculture hub in the region. He said Dr. Moses Zinnah has wealth of knowledge in the sector and was brought on board at a time when the country's economy was turning towards the agriculture sector.

Vice President Boakai who himself is a farmer called on the National Legislature to look at what has been done with the little given the farmers and see reasons to add to the national budget for agriculture if they expect the sector to produce more. He also encouraged the farmers to go beyond crop farming to fishery and animal breeding. This, he said, will expose the smallholder farmers to other forms of income generation. He said it was important for Liberia to learn from the good example of the Ivory Coast, which is the fastest growing economy in the Mano River Union (MRU) due to its concentration on agriculture.

Speaking earlier, Agriculture Minister said he was taking up a job at a time the demand for work was at the highest peak. Dr. Moses Zinnah said it was a challenge he intends to face with the full support of the development partners and National Government.

"We can do it, as long as we have you standing by us. We have less than two years to make this work. We are committed to the task at hand, but it will take a collective effort. And I am happy that the Vice President who himself is a farmer has oversight for agriculture and is leading the process", He said.

Dr. Zinnah who took over from Veteran Agriculturist Florence Chenoweth had served three months before the harvest. And already, there are visible improvements in the agriculture sector ranging from a new management structure at the Central Agriculture Research Institute, (CARI) in Bong County, to the signing of new contracts with foreign governments and other partners that will see Liberia make significant improvements in food production and value addition.

The Chairman of the Dokodan Farmers Cooperative who also spoke during the program highlighted the need for the Executive Branch of Government, specifically the offices of the President and Vice President to pay more attention to farmers who are ready to help push the development agenda of



**Agriculture Minister Zinnah**

“You see the farm we have cultivated, we still have over 990 hectares of farm land to our disposal to farm. We are ready to work once you bring support in forms of planting implements, machines, finance and other things



**Other Participants at the Harvest in Gbedin, Nimba County Display Rice Harvested**

needed to make large farms.

We will not make you shame”; he Said.

Jefferson Togba also used the occasion to call on the local government to help with a resurvey of the land of Gbedin, after it was discovered that other people have began encroaching on it.

The World Bank Co Task Team Leader (ITL) in remarks assured the government of his organization’s continuous support to the agriculture sector and all other forms of support the Bank is currently giving.

Dr. Abimbola Adubi noted that his office was pleased to see the seeds response initiative sponsored by the Bank was making the desired impact not just in Gbedin, but all other areas that the seeds were multiplied. He said the farmers have sent a message that they are qualified, and are prepared to do more.

CORAF/WECARD is the regional body responsible for the running of the WAAPP Projects in 13 West African countries. It was represented by its Head of Programs; Dr. Niéyidouba Lamien, who stressed the need for continuous engagements between WAAPP countries.



**CORAF/WECARD, MRU, World Bank, MOA, CARI, WAAPP, GOL DOKODAN Farmers Association and other officials joined Amb. Boakia in the harvest field**

Dr. Lamien said this will strengthen integration and share lessons, then jointly find solutions to common problems faced by individual countries.

The Japanese Grant Coordinator at the Mano River Union (MRU) who also made remarks at the ceremony congratulated Liberia and Guinea for achieving the “No New Case of Ebola” status.



Madam Kenyeh Barlay said it was the desire of the MRU to see Sierra Leone and the entire region be declared Ebola free soon, something she said will pave the way for fast-forward works in various developing sectors.

The United Nations Agencies World Food Program, (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization, (FAO) as well as parliamentarians and local government officials all participated in the ceremony.

The Dokodan Farmers Association was founded in Nimba county to bring farmers together under one umbrella to farm, a move that is gaining significant success among farming groups that are practicing this. Farmers have been seen speaking of how this collaboration and the project has helped improved their knowledge, skills and competence in rice production, which has eventually improved their livelihood. According to the Dokodan head, there are more than 250 farmers who are members of the group. He also appealed for help in clearing the remaining 990 hectares of land, and the provision of planting materials, something he believes will empower the smallholder farmers of the community and the county on a larger scale.



***Flashback: Liberia's Vice President Joseph Boakai Presents the first bags of certified seeds to Farmers at the Launch in Gbarnga, Bong Count, April, 2015***

It can be recalled that Ambassador Boakai in April of 2015 dedicated over nine hundred metric tons of foundation and certified rice seeds, Maize and cowpea seeds in Gbarnga, Bong County. The seeds were brought under an Economic Stabilization and Rapid Recovery Seeds Intervention, supported by the World Bank, Government of Liberia and other partners. The seeds transfer was facilitated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Africa Rice Center (Africa Rice). Guinea, Ghana, Togo, Nigeria all provided maize, rice and cowpea seeds to Liberia during the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease. Farmers in Liberia were experiencing a huge shortage of planting materials, after they had consumed seeds provided them

Between March and April 2015, the Government of Liberia, World Bank and other partners brought into the country 40 metric tons of foundation seeds from Togo which included varieties such as Narica 8, Narica 14 and Narica L-19. Togo also supplied fertilizers.

Though the Guinean Government was also battling the Ebola Virus Disease, under a heavy Military Escort from the Guinean National Army, Headed by Lieutenant Col. Mohamed Niang of the Infantry Battalion, the country sent to Liberia 231 metric tons of certified seeds produced by WAAPP Guinea. The Republic of Mali supplied 79 metric tons of Maize while Niger gave 100 metric tons of Cowpea Seeds to be multiplied by smallholder Liberian Farmers.



**Convoy Carrying 40 Metric tons of Foundation Rice Seeds and Fertilizers Crossing into Liberia from the Ivory Coast**

Getting trucks and shipments across borders proved difficult as neighboring countries observed precautionary measures, preventing people from freely moving across the border. Thanks to an ECOWAS regulation that was later invoked to allow the smooth passage of some of the supplies that came into Liberia.

With the WAAPP Liberia project, the Country is set to be food secured with committed farmers and continued support, as well as new and improved methods as the Innovation Platform which introduces new ways of planting, supplies improved planting materials and includes several actors along the line, including; farmers, processors, transporters, craft men, financing institutions, local government officials and others.





Image 1: Trucks Crossing from the Ivory Coast to Liberia.

Image 2: WAAPP Liberia Communications Specialist Elvis H. Sirleaf Receives Supplies from Guinean Authorities, Shakes Hands with Lt. Col. Mohamed Niang

Image 3: Partial View of the 7 Trucks that Crossed from the Republic of Guinea to Liberia



**WORLD BANK/MRU/CORAF-WECARD COMMEND WAAPP LIBERIA FOR ACHIEVING THE MILESTONE OF MULTIPLYING FOUNDATION SEEDS BROUGHT INTO THE COUNTRY UNDER THE ECONOMIC STABILIZATION AND RAPID RECOVERY SEED INTERVENTION BEYOND EXPECTATION, AS THE TEAM COMPLETES THE 2015 IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT MISSIONS (ISM) TO WAAPP LIBERIA.**

*Over 200 Hectares of Foundation Seeds cultivated for struggling smallholder farmers...*

Staff Writer



Members of the Mission and the Dokodan Farmers' Cooperative at the 164 hectares of lowland rice in Gbedin, Nimba Co

The Ministry of Agriculture and the World Bank/MRU/CORAF-WECARD joint Implementation Support Mission (ISM) has commended the WAAPP Liberia Project Coordination Unit (PCU), and the Dokodan Farmers Association for what they called an effort beyond expectation.

The Senior Agriculture Specialist at the Liberia office of the World Bank Dr. Abimbola Adubi who led the also delegation named a move to fast-track the establishment of a seed lab at CARI, the establishment of an independent seed board that will be made functional to implement the roadmap for the implementation of the ECOWAS Seed Regulation and address the numerous challenges facing the seed sector and above all, the

cultivation of seeds for the subsequent planting seasons, as leaps forward after the tragic Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) hit the region. He said the Quick Impact Seed Program came at a time when the country needed it the most. "It is good to see that what we spent significant amount of money on is being put to use beyond what we expected; He said.

He spoke in late October 2015, when he along with others toured the over 164 hectares of seeds multiplied by Africa Rice Center and the Dokodan Farmers Association in Gbedin, Nimba County, Northern Liberia.

Dr. Adubi said the bank supported project has built the capacity of farmers and their organizations, as well as other relevant actors in the agricultural sector.





**Some Female Farmers working in the Rice Field in Gbedin, Nimba Co.**

Some of the farmers who spoke to journalists that also formed part of the tour said the project has helped improved their knowledge, skills and competence in rice production, which has eventually improved their livelihood.

The head of the Cooperative said the over 250 farmers who are members are very grateful for the initiatives by the various partners.

Mr. Jefferson Togbah was however quick to point out that the 164 hectares of rice field was just the beginning of what the group is ready to do. He said more support in the forms of training, provision of implements and financing will take the group a long way in empowering the struggling farmers of Nimba County.

He disclosed that over 990 hectares of land was still available to the group for cultivation, and it was their hope to see these partners support them in that light. He appealed for the clearing of the land, the provision of seed rice, fertilizers and other technical support that will enable them put the land to use. “There is a huge population in the towns and villages around here, and most of us are engaged with farming activities, so if the government and partners help us, they will be providing jobs for us and at the same time food for several people.

Africa Rice Center was contracted by the WAAPP Liberia Project to lead the seed multiplication activities in Liberia along with other Non Governmental Organizations such as the USAID Food and Enterprise Development, (FED), BRAC, etc.

Speaking ahead of the tour, Liberia’s Agriculture Minister praised the World Bank, Government of Japan, CORAF/WECARD, MRU and other partners for the level of contribution made to what he called a very challenging sector at the moment.

He was speaking when the team paid a courtesy call to his Gardnersville office, Dr. Moses Zinnah said it will be important if all efforts currently being put into agriculture are time bound, noting that there is a Project Implementation Unit in the office of the Liberian President that is presently involved with evaluating projects, and the WAAPP project is at the top of the list for review.



**Dr. Moses M. Zinnah**

Commenting on the gains made by the Project, the Agro Scientist noted that though there have been challenges along the way, the 1<sup>st</sup> phase could so far be called a success. He named the scholarships awarded to post graduate students, the strategic and master plans of the Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI), the empowerment of local farmers through capacity building among other things as accomplishments.

The tour also took the mission to Bong County, where Africa Rice Center (AfricaRice) was contracted to cultivated 18.5 hectares of foundation seeds into certified seeds under the same WAAPP Liberia arrangement. Dr. Innoussa Akintayo, head of the ARC Liberia office took members of the delegation on a tour of the facility where the ‘soon to be famous “Aromatic Rice” is being produced. He said the production was a start of what he knows will work out well and be welcomed by the locals. He named a proper packaging method and good publicity as tools that can be used to promote and market the new variety of rice.

The Coordinator of the Japanese Grant to the Mano River Union (MRU) Countries Madam Kenyeh Barlay who championed the issue of gender inclusion and promotion, was a part of the mission’s delegation.



L-R: Dr. Africa Rice Innoussa Akintayo, Assistant Agriculture Minister Hon. Patrick Worzie, MRU PHRD Coordinator Madam Kenya Barley, World Bank Co TTL (Liberia) Dr. Abimbola Adubi, WAAPP Liberia Coordinator J. Cyrus Saygbe, Sr. and World Bank Nigeria Co TTL. Dr..Sheu Salau

Also, the Co Task Team Leader (TTL) of WAAPP Nigeria Dr. Sheu Salau formed part of the mission to share WAAPP Nigeria’s experience, especially in the area of Monitoring and Evaluation. He talked about ways that Liberia can improve its M&E. CORAF/WECARD Chief of Party on Rice Dr. Ernest Asiedu represented his organization.

There were also meetings hosted with BRAC, a leading rice producing organization, AEDE, the implementing partner leading the Innovation Platform (IP) in Sinoe County, the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning which approves most of the project loan and grant financing on behalf of the Government of Liberia (GOL), among others.



## *The Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and Partners launch the Economic Stabilization and Rapid Recovery Seed Intervention, a Post Ebola Initiative for Liberian Farmers*

*As Vice President Joseph N. Boakai calls on farmers to begin showing appreciations to the donors by engaging in committed farming activities, while the MOA provides training to the benefiting farmers on the new technologies.*

*By Elvis H. Sirleaf*



**Liberia's Vice President Joseph Boakai Presents the first bags of certified seeds to Farmers at the Launch of the Economic Stabilization and Rapid Recovery Seed Initiative Program in Gbarnga, Bong County**

Liberia's Vice President Joseph N. Boakai has stressed the need for Liberian farmers to begin showing appreciation to donors by engaging in committed farming activities that will help alleviate the food insecurity situation in Liberia. Ambassador Boakai said while development partners were making strenuous efforts to see Liberia improve in several key areas, as evident by the numerous forms of support and aids that come into the country, it was the responsibility of the beneficiaries to deliver on what is expected of them. He said farmers should not always call for help from people, but engage in activities such as multiplying the seeds given them to ensure the availability of more seeds for subsequent planting seasons.

Speaking when he officially launched the Economic Stabilization and Rapid Recovery Seed Intervention in Gbarnga, Bong County on Friday April 17, 2015, the Liberian Vice President called on the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) to go beyond just providing seeds to ensuring that the benefiting farmers are knowledgeable of the improved and certified materials they are receiving.

V.P. Boakai said there are several smallholder farmers that are trying on their own, but the MOA will need to develop more forms of training and other programs that work best in the interest of improving production, as well as ensuring follow up by extension agents.



**Vice President Joseph Boakai**

He stressed the need to include Micro Loans in some of the agricultural programs, something he believes will greatly empower farmers and

improve

farming activities and production in Liberia. “Empowering our own people will go a long way as foreign aids will not always be around. Donors and supporters will have to go elsewhere to others that have bigger needs”, he said.

Ambassador Boakai who himself is a farmer thanked the World Bank, ECOWAS and other development partners for ensuring that the seeds were delivered on time, as timeliness is a major concern in agriculture. He said the seeds will bridge the gap created in the agricultural sector by the outbreak of the Ebola Virus in 2014.

The Liberian farmer also stressed the importance of the kinds of seeds that were being brought into the country. “We might be bringing in seeds that will compete with what we have here and destroy them. The foundation seeds we are receiving should be properly managed, so we can have a reliable source of seed production, ensuring that they are unadulterated and are proper seeds for planting”. He pointed out.

In remarks, the Senior Country Economist at the World Bank Monrovia office Timothy

Bulman said



**Timothy Bulman**

the success story should be the raising of productivity of Liberian farmers to ensure that they can compete with the best in the world. Bulman said before the Ebola outbreak, some key challenges existed in the agricultural sector. But it was now the challenge of the MOA and extension workers to work along with farmers to bring the best technologies and techniques to the farmers and raise their productivity to measure up to global competitors.

According to the World Bank official, the seeds are part of a chain of solutions to see farmers do better. The sharing of seeds from other WAAPP participating countries under ECOWAS also promotes regional transfer of technologies. The arrival of the certified and foundation seeds from across the region demonstrated what the regional project [WAAPP] has been trying to achieve; which is to make it easier to transfer technologies among West African countries. He also disclosed that the World Bank is supporting recovery projects through the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP) as well as direct financial contributions of a million dollars grant to the Ebola Fund.



Mr. Bulman congratulated the government of Liberia for passing into law and printing into hand bill, the ECOWAS protocols on seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, something he said has reduced the legal barriers on the movement of these items between countries.

He said reducing the cost on transportation by fixing the roads, hoping farmers will operate as productively and efficiently as possible, and lowering the cost of production so that they can get a better price for their labor are examples of how the World Bank is supporting farmers in rural Liberia.



**Hon. Fofi Bimba**

For his part, the then Agriculture Committee Chairman at the Liberian House of Representatives Hon. Fofi Bimba called on the government of Liberia to create

agricultural villages around the country to take what he called “the angry people to work and make them more productive to society”. Commenting on a recent incident in Paynesville City, Montserrado County that saw a police station being burned down by angry bike riders protesting the alleged killing of a colleague by a police officer, Representative Bimba said the incident could have been avoided if government had a programs that incorporated people into vast agriculture activities somewhere in remote counties. He named the provision of attractive packages as stimulus such a plan.

Noting that this is an idea also shared by he Vice President, he said now was the time to engage our donors and partners to support us in creating farming villages in the various counties. He also stressed the importance of seeds to agricultural transformation and its distribution. “Maintaining the seeds will require a good and functional research and development drive, as well as a strong and functional multiplication program which will best be implemented on farm trials by the farmers themselves; he said. He also called on the MOA to use the cooperatives available in the counties for the distribution of these seeds that have been made available.

The Lofa County District #2 Representative said he believes the Ministry of Agriculture is already on the right path of implementing the Post Ebola Economic Revitalization Program with the existence of several key projects of the Ministry’s Program Management Unit that are in the various counties. He called on the MOA to be the monitor and evaluator, while the farmers be the major players.

The Assistant Minister for Expenditure at the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP) who represented his office emphasized the involvement of the Liberian government in bringing the certified and foundation seeds into the country. Aliou Nyei disclosed that a portion of the seeds was bought by the government of Liberia, despite the Ebola challenges.



**Hon. Aliou F. Nyei**

The Youthful Minister thanked Africa Rice Center and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for facilitating what later became the smooth transfer of the seeds to Liberia. He further admonished the partners, especially the World Bank, to fast track its support in this intervention to ensure that all of the seeds brought in are utilized in a timely manner.

Minister Nyei noted a concern of the government was how to get the seeds to the end users in time. According to him, if the seeds didn't get to the farmers in time for the planting season, the entire exercise will be a waste. "The MOA has to look for an efficient way to implement this, so that our efforts will not go in vain", he said.

Dr. Ernest Asiedu who represented the regional coordinating body of WAAPP Projects CORAF/WECARD expressed his organization's appreciation for the level of cooperation received from various ECOWAS countries and governments.



**Dr. Ernest Asiedu**

Dr. Asiedu recounted the several hours of planning and preparation it took to get to what he called the "end line of launching the seeds". "ECOWAS has asked that we host a formal program of this kind in every country that we deliver these seeds, I am so happy that Liberia has set a good example", he said.

Also speaking at the launching program in Bong County was the head of the Farmers Union Network (FUN) who called on Liberians to begin to see agriculture as a business. "Graduating from farming with shovels and hoes to machines is a way to go", she said.



**Representative Josephine George-Francis**

Representative Josephine George-Francis named the creation of loan schemes, good road networks among other things as important parts of the chain that we should create if we want to eat and export Liberian produce.

The Lawmaker congratulated the government for ensuring that an act to make the Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI) an autonomous agency was followed through. According to her, we can talk about, and get all we need, but if we do not have an independent research institute, we are wasting our time as it is very vital to agriculture. She said restoring CARI to get the relevant actors including scientists in the soonest possible time will greatly improve things and avoid farmers going to internet and other sources for solutions to difficulties faced on their farms.



The Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak posed huge social, economic and political challenges on the country's development pathway especially farmers in the rural areas where the epidemic was high. This situation became more complicated as a result of government instituted regulations to combat the disease.

The outbreak also disrupted rural rice farming activity in Liberia, cause a significant declining trend in Inland valley swamp cultivation due to the fear of catching fever as being one of the obvious symptoms of Ebola virus and caused the disappearance of extension experts from the farming communities. Transportation of agricultural inputs and implements was also affected as a result of the restrictions on movement. The Outbreak in Liberia forced the government, in the containment effort of the disease, to impose restrictive measures on travelling within the country. The borders with neighbouring countries were also closed as a result of the outbreak

The EVD created hunger amongst Liberians and farmers in all parts of the country. Due to this hunger, seeds distributed to farmers were consumed thus creating a huge gap in seeds availability for farmers for the next planting season. This gave rise to the strong need for intervention in the agricultural sector to prevent drastic decline in the gains made by the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP) project in strengthening smallholder farmers through various interventions of the World Bank, donor partners and the government.

It was against this backdrop that the World Bank as one of its many Ebola response support to the agriculture sector, supported the provision of planting seeds to ensure the availability of seeds in the coming years. The Republic of Guinea which was greatly affected by the Ebola Virus send 231 Metric tons of certified rice seeds and Mali send 79 Metric tons of Maize. The republic of Niger send in 100 metric tons of Cowpea seeds, and the Republic of Togo supplied 40 Metric tons of Foundation Seeds.

Beneficiaries of the seeds distribution included WAAPP Farmers Based Organizations (FBOs) that are currently being supported by the project in the 8 project counties, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) that are leading Innovation Platforms in the various counties as well as other FBOs supported under other Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) Program Management Unit (PMU).

Excluding the WAAPP, there are six other projects of the PMU with which the WAAPP has created synergies to ensure complementarity, instead of duplication of activities. These projects go beyond WAAPP project counties and have their own client base.

Distribution of seeds through these projects ensured that farmers across the country had access to improved technologies distributed under the WAAPP. Individual medium and large scale Farmers that are not members of any FBO and have been engaged in rice production for at least two years also benefited along with Universities and Community Colleges with agriculture departments.

## Over 30 Hectares of Improved Cassava Harvested in Bomi County under the Ministry of Agriculture / WAAPP Liberia Supported Bomi County Innovation Platform

### THE ROAD TO MAKING LIBERIA FOOD SECURED LOOKING BRIGHT

*By Elvis H. Sirleaf*



**Ministry of Agriculture, Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI), and Program Management Unit Staff with Bomi Farmers and Prominent Citizens Harvesting Cassava at the Youth for Positive Change Farm in Wilson Town, Sengh District, Bomi Co.**

Farmers in the Western part of Liberia in Mid December of 2015 gathered in a farming village in Bomi County to begin the harvest of over 30 hectares of improved cassava cultivated under the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) and the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP) supported initiative.

Wilson Town on the outskirts of Tubmanburg was the scene of joy when several farmers, were joined by senior staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and its Program Management Unit (PMU), the Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI), local government officials of Bomi County among others, to begin the process of harvesting the improved cassava cultivated under the Bomi County Innovation Platform.

The small farming village and its inhabitants have been benefiting from different forms of support

including financing, training, implements, etc. from the World Bank funded WAAPP Liberia Project to improve their farming activities. The Youth for Positive Change, (YPC), producer of the Famous Bomi Gari has been the lead group within the Innovation Platform in Bomi County.

The new planting materials or technologies, as they are referred to among WAAPP participating countries, were brought in from an agriculture research institute in Nigeria, multiplied at CARI, and subsequently divided in country for smallholder farmers to begin planting and multiplying. There are over 150 individual farmers and farming groups that are currently using the new and improved planting materials in Bomi County.

In remarks, Deputy Minister for Extension and Research at the MOA said; this was just the





**Deputy Agriculture Minister Gbokie**

The beginning of what the Agriculture Ministry intends to do before the current government's

time in office is over. Thomas Gbokie disclosed that the Liberian leader has put together a team of experts from different sectors of government to begin the process of shifting Liberia's economic drive away from the extractive industry to agriculture, something that is very well working in other developing countries.

Gbokie noted that it was important to also graduate from our current way of farming manually to mechanize, something that will reduce labor and produce more. "If Liberia is to feed itself, and begin exporting the surplus to others in need, we will need to cultivate larger farms, and to do that, we will need machines", he said.

He also said he was pleased to see the YPC producing up to standard, even with the little help given. "We took the packaged Bomi Gari to the regional meeting in Senegal and it was competing with products from Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal and other countries that are way ahead of us in agriculture", he disclosed.

The Acting Director of the Program Management Unit who also spoke at the ceremony said there were positive plans to continue to engage the farmers to produce more food.

William Kawalawu said he was pleased to see that the yields of the current material being planted was several times more than the traditional cassava we plant. Kawalawu who is also the National Coordinator of the SAPEC project at the PMU said, there were countries he worked in that didn't have the advantaged soil and weather as Liberia, but they still grew food. "Why do we have very rich soil and good weather in Liberia but still wonder if we can feed ourselves? We can with the commitment of all the partners on board", He said. He also disclosed that SAPEC was learning from WAAPP successes it has had with farmers, and was building on it to sustain the support provided farmers after the WAAPP project.

For his part, WAAPP Liberia National Project Coordinator said it was a good feeling to see what has been put into the soil come out so well. J. Cyrus Saygbe, Sr. said getting the farmers to adopt was the hardest part, as they had to abandon their traditional cassava and planting methods for a strange cassava and a labor demanding method of planting. "Once they realized the yields were 3 to 4 times more than their traditional cassava, they began to do larger farms, one of which we are harvesting today", he said.

The Innovation Platform is a new method of farming introduced under the WAAPP Liberia project, and introduces new ways of planting, supplies improved planting materials and includes several actors along the line, including; farmers, processors, transporters, craft men, financing institutions, local government officials and others.

## World Bank Co Task Team Leader (TTL) Visits Bank Funded Projects in Bomi, Bong Margibi and Montserrado Counties.

*Brands work being done by local farmers and processors under the Agriculture and Infrastructure Development Project, (AIDP) Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project (STCRSP) and West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP) Liberia as impressive.*

*By Elvis H. Sirleaf*



**World Bank Co TTL (4<sup>th</sup> from Right) With Africa Rice, AIDP, CARI STCRSP and WAPP Liberia Staff**

The Co Task Team Leader of the World Bank Projects in Liberia has labeled works being carried out by smallholder Liberian farmers as impressive. He made the assertion when he visited several project sites as well as processing centers in Bomi, Bong Margibi and Montserrado Counties.

Dr. Abimbola Adubi along with the World Food Program (WFP) Deputy Country Representative to Liberia Wurie Alghassim and several National Coordinators of bank funded projects at the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) carried out the tour between September 10 and 13, 2015

In Zelekai, a farming community in Bomi County, residents praised the level of support the World Bank and World Food Program were giving the farmers who had struggled for the kind of aid being provided

through the AIDP and WAAPP projects, that are working with the local farmers to improve their capacity in growing more food with the provision of improved materials as well as financing.

The local town official who is also a farmer said, the manner in which they planted before the coming of the projects required a lot of time and resources, and yet, they got very low yields.

He named the provision of improved planting materials, the construction of storage and processing facilities as important aspects of the AIDP/World Bank/WFP initiatives that have contributed to the high yields the farmers are presently getting from their farms, as well as the improvement in their livelihood.



“This has helped us save up some money, and currently, the group has over \$400,000 Liberian Dollars in saving, and we can do more”, he said. According to him, during the peak of the Ebola Outbreak in Liberia, a pandemic that greatly affected the entire county including Bomi county, the community had enough food stored up from their previous harvest, and helped provided food to other communities that were in need. This, he said, was so because the new way they are farming enables them to have food all year round. “After every three months now, we have newly harvested rice to eat and replant”; he said.

The World Food Program (WFP) Deputy Country Representative said working with the farmers has been a wonderful experience. According to Mr. Wurie Alghassim, coming from a neighboring country [Sierra Leone], he understood fully, all that was involved in farming in a country like Liberia.

The WFP boss said there were always shortages or gaps in food availability in Liberia before the coming of the project. But the intervention has created a new planting or farming schedule that enables the farmers to have food all year round. He said the World Food Program was willing to work with the AIDP and the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as the World Bank to keep the farmers in the new path of moving up.

He praised the collaboration that have existed between all partners working on the Zelekai project, as well as other projects on which the United Nations food program is working with the World Bank and the Ministry of Agriculture.



**Zelekai Town Chief and WFP Alghassim**

The Visiting team also toured several hectares of fields of both upland

and lowland rice currently being cultivated under the AIDP and WAAPP projects of the Program Management Unit (PMU) of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), as well as the processing center of the famous Bomi Gari in Banana Farm. Including improved planting materials, training and financing, the center has also received a processing machine from the WAAPP Liberia project as part of its support in improving processing and packaging of locally produced products.

In Bong County, Africa Rice Center (Africa Rice) had a field day to showcase the demonstration and multiplication sites, where several varieties of rice were being cultivated at the Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI) in Suakoko. Several farmers from communities far and near were seen lined up waiting to choose from several varieties, the rice that will best work on their individual and group farms. Commenting when the delegation toured the processing and packaging center of the Aromatic Rice, a rice variety or technology developed by Africa Rice with support from AIDP and expected to be taken over by WAAPP, Africa Rice Head Dr. Inoussa Akintayo said, a greater attention should be given the packaging and marketing of the new rice being develop.



**Farmers in Bong County at Africa Rice/CARI Field Day Waiting to Receive the Improved Rice Seeds**

“An attractive face will be inviting and a good quality inside a fine bag will work the magic of creating a huge demand” he said. But he warned that the producers will have to be ready to meet the demand once Liberians begin to appreciate their own

locally produced rice, which he believes can compete with imported rice once produced and packaged well.

Africa Rice is one of the several organizations implementing the WAAPP Liberia project at practical field demonstration levels. It is currently working on the mass production of the Aromatic Rice, after breeding it at the Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI) in Bong County.

Several project sites of the Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project (STCRSP) of the World Bank were also visited by the team. One of such is the STCRSP/SOCODEVI Cocoa/Coffee Revitalization Cooperative Capacity Building and Strengthening project in Yeakai, Bong County where several acres of cocoa is being cultivated under the program.

The National Project Coordinator of STCRSP/WB Nyada Yoba Baldeh said the Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project (STCRSP) of the World Bank was pleased to be a part of the process of helping to improve the production of smallholder farmers in coaco, oil palm and rubber. According to Mr. Baldeh, the project was also providing education and other forms of support to other farmers that will help improve their individual farms.

At the Fabra Liberia Rice Processing Center in Kakata, Margibi County, where a privately owned company is procession rice on a very high scale, Dr. Adubi spoke of how impressed he was with the level of work the local company was doing. He said the World Bank was already engaged in talks over how it can provide funding to Fabra, which will serve as a direct contribution to local farmers



**Rice Being parboiled at the Fabra Liberian Rice Processing**

who are faced with the issue of processing and marketing the rice they produce. Fabra is presently being supported by individual partners with some funding also coming from USAID.



## **WAAPP LIBERIA HOSTS MRU COUNTRIES CONSULTATIVE MEETING TO DEVELOP A STRATEGY TO INCREASE RAIN-FED AND UPLAND RICE PRODUCTION IN MANO RIVER UNION COUNTRIES.**

*Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone Agreed on a Way Forward*

*Staff Writer*



**Participants and Delegates Lined up for a Group Photo at the MRU Consultation Meeting in Monrovia, Liberia.**

A Sub-Regional consultation towards developing a strategy to increase the production of Rain-fed and Upland Rice in Mano River Union countries was held in Monrovia Liberia, with participating countries agreeing to adopt several proactive measures that will see the republics of Guinea, Ivory Coast, Liberia and Sierra Leone increase rice production.

The meeting which was held at the Bella Casa Hotel and Suits in Monrovia between August 31 and September 1, 2015, brought together over sixty delegates from the four MRU counties, and included Senior and Junior Government Ministers, Senior staff of WAAPP Project Coordination Units (PCUs) in the various countries, MRU officials as well as donor partners.

At the opening ceremony on August 31, 2015, the newly confirmed Agriculture Minister Dr. Moses Zinnah called on the delegates to develop a plan and

come up with a resolution on how together, MRU countries can move the agriculture sector forward and reduce the over dependency on the importation of rice. He noted that Liberia will take all positive recommendations coming out of the meeting seriously.

According to Dr. Zinnah, his taking over at the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) was marred by serious concerns as the activities at the ministry are very critical to national development and the Agriculture Ministry was going through a serious transition.

He said he was delighted to see that the Mano River Union (MRU) has shifted its gear from solely looking at political issues to now look at food security. This, he noted this was a good move, because when you get agriculture right, it is four times more effective to reduce poverty.



**Agriculture Minister Dr. Moses Zinnah (2nd from left) Making Remarks**

The Agriculture Minister said he was also pleasantly touched to know that most of the funds in the MRU Ebola affected countries plan was directed at agriculture recovery.

He called on the participants of the consultative meeting to be keen on increasing rice production, but focusing on value addition, as well as increasing the role of the private sector and ensuring that we broaden the markets.

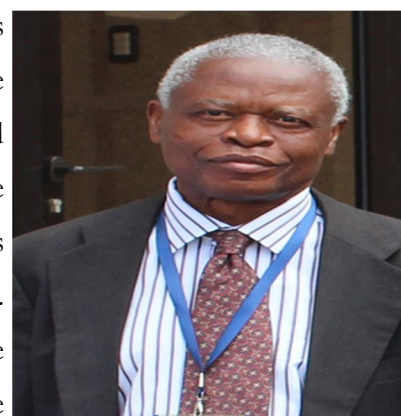
Dr. Zinnah noted that food security is not just a national concern, but a cross-border issue. He said this is so because if we [Liberians] can produce more then we can consume as a country, it means we will be moving into other sub-regional or regional markets.

On behalf of the Government of Liberia, he thanked the Japanese Government and the World Bank, as well as other donor partners for supporting this initiative that also involves improving the capacity of the Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI) in central Liberia.

“Government is bringing to the table, its commitment to work with Africa Rice and others so that we do not plan beyond two years. There is a commitment to deliver within the remaining months the current government has in office”, he said.

For his part, the Deputy Secretary General of the Mano River Union (MRU) noted that the meeting was in response to an assignment given to the secretariat in relations to the challenge in the agriculture sector, with focus on rice production. Dr. Simeon Moribah said we cannot over emphasize the need to improve rice production in the Mano River Union countries because not only does it have social, political and security implications, it is also the stable food of all member countries.

The MRU boss noted that the meeting should address three important questions or concerns. Namely; why are we still faced with these challenges in spite of



**MRU Deputy Secretary General**

all the efforts that have been made; What have we done, and what needs to be done to ensure that we achieve our objectives as far as the productivity of rice is concerned; And how are we going to do this? Dr. Moribah noted that this may require a strategy shift, which may give rise to policy shift that may have institutional and financial implications, but with the expertise and support of the partners, he was confident that the meeting will address the concerns.

On Behalf of the donor partners, the Senior Agriculture Specialist at the World Bank and Co Task Team Leader (TTL) for the WAAPP Liberia project noted that the forum came at a very opportuned time. A time that MRU countries need to take charge of what he called ‘their destiny’.



Dr. Abimbola Adubi said it was clear now that the only way Africa can be really developed is through agriculture. “Over the years, it has been proven that if we follow through value chain approach in handling the issues of agriculture, we will have a win-win situation for all sectors. It will increase food security and at the same time ensure there is job creation”. He said. Pointing out that we import rice from countries that have the same ecology and weather as the MRU countries, he wondered why we still import rice when we can grow our own food here.

Dr. Adubi said the World Bank was glad that the consultation meeting was taking place, and expected very strong resolutions to come out of the deliberations. He then challenged the meeting delegates to develop strategies on enhancing productivity of yields from the current 0.8 to 1.8 tons and upwards. He also named strengthening the existing seed systems, supporting smallholder farmers, the inclusion of value addition which is a pull factor and the creation of market as well as the provision of a good pricing system, something national governments may have to get involved with and lead, as key areas the meeting should address. “Timeliness is another issue. Let the action plan be within the next two years, innovative and target production”, he concluded.

The National Project Coordinator of WAAPP J. Cyrus Saygbe, MRU Japanese Grant Coordinator Madam Kenyeh Barlay, Director of the National Center of Specialization in Mali Dr. Gaoussou Traoré who facilitated the



**L-R: MRU Resident Rep. Lawrence Morriss, WAAPP Liberia Coordinator J. Cyrus Saygbe, Sr., Agriculture Minister Dr. Moses M. Zinnah, MRU Deputy Secretary General Simeon Moribah, Africa Rice Head Dr. Inoussa Akintayo, MRU Japanese Grant Coordinator Kenyeh Barlay, World Bank Co Task Team Leader Dr. Abimbola A. Adubi and CNS-Riz Mali Coordinator Dr. Gaoussa Traoré**

meetings and other dignitaries were all in attendance.

Since the inception of the WAAPP-1C interventions in the MRU countries, and particularly those supported by the Japanese PHRD Grant interventions, significant progress have been made in strengthening rice production and seed systems, as well as other interventions along the value chain. The project has been able to reach and surpass its target of 330,000 beneficiaries from inception to April 2015 and has reached 538,269 persons of whom 44.75 % are women. Land under cultivation utilizing new technologies in the sub-region totaled 217, 104 hectares, falling short of the targeted 270,000 hectares. The consultation meetings were held to contribute to the



**WAAPP / PPAAO**

WEST AFRICA AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY PROGRAMME  
PROGRAMME DE PRODUCTIVITE AGRICOLE EN AFRIQUE DE L'OUEST