

**REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA
MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**

**REGIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE FOOD AND NUTRITIONAL SITUATION
IN THE SAHEL AND IN WEST AFRICA – LOME/TOGO 30 MARCH– 01 APRIL
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Country Presentation

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PRESENTATION

INTRODUCTION

Liberia is an agricultural country. Although underutilized, the country is endowed with abundant natural resources such as arable land, evergreen forest, lakes and watercourse, sunshine and high rainfall. Agricultural sector is the largest economic sector in the country; approximately 70 percent of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood, most of these are smallholders farming households totaling approximately 331,695 and averaging 6 persons per household.

Traditionally, agriculture in Liberia is characterized by subsistence food crop production, livestock rearing and small-scale commercial cash crop production. Farmers are both males and females, each responsible for their own crops and for different stages of production activities. The major food crops include rice and cassava; and the dominant cash crops include cocoa, coffee, oil palm, and sugarcane.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION 2008/2009

Area under Cultivation

The total area cultivated to major food crops (rice and cassava) in Liberia for the 2008/2009 season is estimated at 381,340 hectares an increase of 74.6 percent on the total area of 218,410 hectares in 2001 and of 32.4 percent on the total area for pre-war (1988).

Table 1: **Area Cultivated in major food crop in hectare**

CROPS	YEAR			% CHANGE	
	2008	2001	1988	2001	1988
Paddy rice(HA)	296,950	170,480	235,760	74.2	26.0
Cassava(HA)	84,390	47,930	52,160	76.1	61.8
TOTAL (HA)	381,340	218,410	287,920	74.6	32.4

Rice and Cassava Production

The total production for both rice and cassava in Liberia for 2008/2009 was estimated at 775,280 metric tons with an increase of 30.9 percent on the total of 592,430 metric tons in 2001 and of 9.4 percent on the total of 708,470 metric tons during the pre-war (1988).

The production of rice was estimated at 279,000 Metric tons (paddy) during the 2008/2009 crop season in Liberia. This estimate was 6.6 percent less than pre-war (1988) when 298,630 metric tons were produced; and 27.4 percent more than 2001 when 219,040 metric tons were produced.

The production of cassava was estimated at 496,280 metric tons during the 2008/2009 crops season. This estimate was 21.1 percent and 32.9 percent more than pre-war (1988) and 2001 when 409,840 metric tons and 373,390 metric tons were produced respectively.

Table 2: **Rice and Cassava Production**

CROPS	YEAR			% CHANGE	
	2008	2001	1988	2001	1988
Paddy rice (MT)	279,000	219,040	298,630	27.4	(6.6)
Cassava (MT)	496,280	373,390	409,840	32.9	21.1
TOTAL	775,280	592,430	708,470	30.9	9.4

2008/2009 EXPOST FOOD (RICE) BALANCE SHEET

Rice comprises the bulk of the diet for nearly every Liberian. It is considered the most important food commodity in the country. Achieving an acceptable balance between food and people is the most difficult problem facing almost every nation in the world. Rice in Liberia offers exciting possibilities for investment since it is the staple diet of the country and is consumed in quantities so large that domestic supplies are inadequate to satisfy the demand.

Of the total rice consumption in 2008, Liberian farmers supplied 36.2 percent and the balance 63.8 percent was imported

Table 3: **Expost Cereal (Rice) Balance Sheet**

ITEMS	UNIT	2008/2009
Population	Number	3,476,608
DISPOSITION		
Total Production (Paddy)	Metric tons	279,000
Losses (10%)	Metric tons	27,900
Seed Rice Retention (2 %)	Metric tons	5,580
Paddy available for consumption	Metric tons	245,520
Local rice milled (65%)	Metric tons	159,590
Per Capita Consumption	Kilograms	127
Needs - Requirement	Metric tons	441,530
Deficit (63.8 %)	Metric tons	281,940
IMPORTATION		
Commercial	Metric tons	335,090.35
Non-commercial	Metric tons	6,194.15
Balance stock	Metric tons	59,514.5

2009/2010 PROVISIONAL FOOD BALANCE SHEET

The Elements of Provisional Food (rice) Balance Sheet

Population

According to the 2008 National Housing and Population Census, the population of Liberia is 3,476,608 with an annual growth rate of 2.1 percent. Using the growth rate, the population of Liberia for the year 2009 is calculated at 3,549,617.

Available Production

Domestic rice production (paddy) in 2009 is estimated at 292,950 metric tons. This estimate is 98.1 percent of its pre-war (1988) level (or 1.9 percent less) when 298,630 metric tons were produced and 5.0 percent more than 2008 when 279,000 metric tons were also produced.

Rice Importation

The volume of rice imported for the period from January to December is estimated at 260,924.92 metric tons. Of this quantity, 6,319.15 metric tons were non-commercial, and the balance 254,605.77 metric tons were commercial.

Stocks

The opening stock as of January 1st 2009 was 59,514.5 metric tons. All of this quantity was kept by business traders.

Table 4: **Provisional Cereal (rice) Balance Sheet, 2009/2010**

ITEMS	UNIT	2009/2010
Population	Number	3, 549,617
DISPOSITION		
Total Production (Paddy)	Metric tons	292,950
Losses (10%)	Metric tons	29,290
Seed Rice Retention (2 %)	Metric tons	5.860
Paddy available for consumption	Metric tons	257,800
Local rice milled (65%)	Metric tons	167570
Per Capita Consumption	Kilograms	127
Needs - Requirement	Metric tons	450.800
Deficit (62.8 %)	Metric tons	283,230
IMPORTATION		
Opening stock	Metric tons	59,514.5
Commercial	Metric tons	254,605.77
Non-commercial	Metric tons	6,319.15
Closing stock	Metric tons	37,209.42

Situation of Livestock

Animal rearing in Liberia is not well institutionalized. Most of the livestock is produced by households through the free range system in the backyards. The results of the 2008/2009 survey conducted showed that there 8,600 heads of cattle, 63,200 heads of goats, 43,490 sheep, 96,800 pigs, 785,000 chickens and 43,670 heads of ducks. There was a significant increase as compared to pre-war (1988) in the number of pigs by 84.6 percent; and in the number of poultry by 19.9 percent.

Poultry is raised by most farm families in backyards on a free range basis. It is the most common domestic birds reared in the country mainly for household consumption and for cash. The most common poultry are chickens and ducks.

Food Risk Zone

Unlike some other countries that suffer from drought and flood, Liberia is relatively blessed. However, the results of the first sets of market data collected in September 2009 suggest that counties with markets that are less integrated with the rest of the country particularly Monrovia which is the main entry port for all imports are at risk in terms of food security. The counties that are at most risk are Grand Kru, Maryland, Gbarpolu and River Gee.

No.	Most Risk County	Population	Percent of Tot. Country
1	Grand Kru	57,913	1.7
2	Maryland	135,938	3.9
3	Gbarpolu	83,388	2.4
4	River Gee	66,789	1.9
	LIBERIA	3,476,608	9.9

Nutritional Situation

The Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey (CFSNS) conducted in 2008 revealed that food utilization in Liberia is undermined by malnutrition, particularly among women and young children. Malnutrition was reported to be widespread due to food insecurity, inadequate health services, poor water sanitation, high illiteracy rates among women and adolescent mothers. Acute malnutrition among children five years was reported to be 4.9% while prevalence of stunting was put at 36.1% in eight out of the fifteen counties. An estimated 44% of childhood deaths were said to be attributed to malnutrition thus making it the single most important cause of death for Liberian.

WFP is working with Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in collaboration with UNICEF and some NGOs to provide nutritious food for pregnant and nursing mothers and children under five years of age who are at risk of malnutrition