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# FOOD AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (FED) PROGRAM FOR LIBERIA

**MONTHLY REPORT: APRIL 2014**



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**Photo Caption:** The President of Liberia, Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, and the Minister of Commerce and Industry, Axel Addy, visit the FED exhibition at the 2014 MSME Conference held at City Hall in Monrovia on April 29 and 30, 2014.

## **DISCLAIMER**

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

## Acronyms

ACE	Africa Cost to Europe
AEDE	Agency for Economic Development and Empowerment
APDRA	Association Pisciculture et Development Rural en Afrique
AU IBAR	African Union's Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources
AYP	Advancing Youth Project
AWEP	African Women Entrepreneurship Program
BSTVSE	Bureau of Science, Technical, Vocational and Special Education
BWI	Booker Washington Institute
CARI	Center of Agriculture Research Institute
CBF	County Based Facilitator
CoE	Center of Excellence
CYNP	Community Youth Network Program
DAI	Development Alternatives Inc.
DCOP	Deputy Chief of Party
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ED	Enterprise Development
EMMP	Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan
EO	Extension Officer
FED	Food and Enterprise Development
FTF	Farmer to Farmer
FtF	Feed the Future
FUN	Farmer Union Network
GBCCC	Grand Bassa County Community College
GCAP	Green Coast Agricultural Program
GPS	Global Positioning Systems
IFDC	International Fertilizer Developmental Center
IITA	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
IP	Implementing Partner
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract
LABEE IPG	Liberia Agriculture Business Enabling Environment Inter-Agency Policy Group
LAUNCH	Liberia Agriculture, Upgrading Nutrition & Child Health
LCCC	Lofa County Community College
LIFE	Livelihood Improvement for Farming Enterprises

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LMEP	Liberia Monitoring and Evaluation Program
LREC	Liberia Renaissance Education Complex
MFI	Micro Finance Institution
MIS	Market Information Systems
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoCI	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
NDA	National Diploma in Agriculture
NCCC	Nimba County Community College
NGW	New General Women
NIC	National Investment Commission
NV	National Volunteer
PIDS	Performance Indicator Database System
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PUA	Peri-Urban Agriculture
R&RF	Rights & Rice Foundation
RFTOP	Requests for task order proposals
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistant
SWAT	Supporting West Africa Trading
TAMIS	Technical Administrative Management Information System
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
UDP	Urea Deep Placement
UL	University of Liberia
UMU	United Methodist University
USADF	United States African Development Foundation
VET GOV	Veterinary Governance in Africa
WAAPP	West Africa Agriculture Productivity Program
WAFP	West Africa Fertilizer Project
WASP	West Africa Seed Project
WFP	World Food Program

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## Background

The USAID Food and Enterprise Development (FED) Program for Liberia is a USAID-funded development program that was launched in September 2011. USAID FED uses an all-inclusive strategy incorporating MSME farmers, processors, suppliers, women and youth while partnering with the government of Liberia and local civil societies to achieve food security.

The goal of USAID FED is to increase food availability, utilization, and accessibility by building an indigenous incentive structure that assists agricultural stakeholders in adopting commercial approaches.

This incentive structure is built upon:

- Improved technology for productivity and profitability
- Expanded and modernized input supply and extension systems
- Commercial production, marketing, and processing
- Enterprise services
- Workforce development

USAID FED works with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), civil societies and the private sector in providing communities access to agricultural inputs—including improved seed varieties—extension services, nutrition messages, processing services, market information, transportation, credit, agro-business education, training, and enterprise services.

In five years, USAID FED's thrust to expand market linkages is expected to lead to substantial increases in income and job opportunities. USAID FED aims to significantly boost the production, processing, marketing and nutritional utilization of rice, cassava and vegetables, and to enhance the productivity of goat farming in the counties covered by the program.

These initiatives are being carried out in Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Bassa, Montserrado, and Margibi counties. USAID FED focuses on these counties because they are situated along regional development corridors that are crucial in promoting intra and inter-county commerce. These growth corridors are expected to improve food availability and access for all Liberians.

USAID FED's methodology is market-led and value chain-driven; it is committed to developing indigenous capacity building, with a specific focus on Liberia's women and youth.

USAID FED is implemented by five partners: Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), Winrock International, International Fertilizer Developmental Center (IFDC), Louisiana State University (LSU), and The Cadmus Group.

## Executive Summary

During the reporting period USAID FED supported the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) to hold the National M/SME Conference 2014, April 29 and 30 at Monrovia's City Hall. This year's conference put a spotlight on agri-business and youth, and USAID FED supported the event by providing human resource, logistical and technical support. USAID FED showcased its activities in the trade fair and produced a rice video documentary which was aired at the conference during the USAID FED sponsored policy forum as well as at the awards dinner.

The President of Liberia signed Executive Order #64, suspending import tariffs on "essential equipment, agricultural seeds, live animals for breeding, and other goods directly related to agricultural development" on April 25, 2014. USAID FED began to lobby for this in November 2013 and put together the list of agro-inputs and corresponding HS codes for MoCI to use to lobby for the measure. The LABEE IPG (Liberia Agriculture Business Enabling Environment Inter-agency Policy Group), an executive level policy group that will focus on improving the BEE for agriculture that was conceptualized by FED, was launched at the MSME Conference.

USAID FED surveyed farmers in Lofa County to ascertain the quantities of surplus rice available, and facilitated an agreement on rice prices for the potential sale to FABRAR Rice Liberia. Farmers accepted FABRAR's offer of \$19 USD per 50kg bag of paddy rice. FABRAR will provide a 25% up front deposit and begin transporting the rice from Lofa to Kakata in May.

CARI received the first batch of improved cassava cuttings from the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). USAID FED is supporting CARI in importing 11 improved varieties. The first batch received from the IITA consists of 24,000 cuttings of six improved varieties. The cuttings were planted in control sites for monitoring of adaptability to local climate, pests and diseases. An additional 20,000 cuttings are expected from IITA in May.

USAID FED and CARI inaugurated the CARI Livestock Quarantine Facility in Suakoko, Bong County. US Ambassador to Liberia, Ms. Deborah Malac, cut the ribbon at the inauguration attended by Deputy Minister of Agriculture Ms. Seklau Wiles, the Head of Livestock Research at CARI, Dr. Arthur Karnuah, Land O Lakes Acting Chief of Party, Ms. Allison Williams and USAID FED staff. Land O Lakes is expected to import the first 100 goats that will form part of the nucleus breeding herd for CARI by end of June 2014.



## Component One: Increase agricultural productivity and profitability

### Task 1A: Increased production and profitability of the rice value chain

#### Rice Production and Sales

During the month of April, no additional rice was harvested from the FY13 crop. The cumulative rice harvested from both upland and lowland areas between October 2013 and April 2014 was 5,525 MT across the four counties.

During the month of April, a total of 50.75 MT of FY13 rice crop was sold for US \$20,225. To date, farmers have sold 846 MT of paddy rice for US \$347,931 during FY14 (Table 1).

Table 1: April rice harvest and sales.

County	April Sales Volume (MT)	FY14 YTD* Total Sales Volume (MT)	April Sales (US\$)	FY14 YTD Total Sales (US\$)
Lofa	50	56.1	\$20,000	\$23,757
Nimba	0.75	69	\$225	\$35,669
Bong	-	720.6	-	\$288,245
Gr. Bassa	-	0.65	-	\$260
	<b>50.75</b>	<b>846.35</b>	<b>\$20,225</b>	<b>\$347,931</b>

\* From October 2013 to April 2014

#### FY14 Lowland Rice Production Expansion

##### Farmer mobilization and recruitment:

By the end of the April reporting period, USAID FED mobilized and recruited a total of 10,681 lowland farmers from 188 groups across the four counties. Of the total, 5,602 are male and 5,079 are female.

##### Lowland site selection and land preparation:

USAID FED selected a total of 188 lowland sites across the four counties, 30 more sites than the anticipated 158 sites for FY14. During the month of April, 17 additional sites were selected bringing the total number of sites to 205. A total of 479.5 ha of the 1,356 targeted hectares have been cleared and measured (Table 2). Completion of all land preparation activities is expected to be concluded during the month of May.

Table 2: FY14 Lowland site selection and land preparation by county.

County	Target Sites for FY14	Sites Identified in April 2014	Total Sites Identified YTD	Ha Targeted for FY14	Ha cleared in April 2014	Total Ha Cleared YTD

Lofa	40	3	44	150	65.5	103.5
Nimba	72	0	75	405	21.5	95.5
Bong	32	0	58	757	20.5	270.5
Grand Bassa	14	14	28	44	5	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>1,356</b>	<b>112.5</b>	<b>479.5</b>

## FY14 Upland Rice Productivity

### Farmer mobilization and recruitment

USAID FED mobilized and recruited a total of 8,431 upland farmers from 206 groups across the four counties. Of the total, 5,258 are male and 3,173 are female (Table 3).

Table 3: Upland rice production groups FY14.

County	Groups Recruited for FY14 Production	Total # Farmers FY14 Targets	Farmers Recruited during April 2014	Total # of Farmers Recruited	# of Male Farmers	# of Female Farmers
Lofa	33	3,600	483	2,478	1,137	1,341
Nimba	37	2,385	0	2,385	1,432	953
Bong	85	3,667	0	3,207	2,337	870
Grand Bassa	51	525	192	361	352	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>206</b>	<b>10,177</b>	<b>675</b>	<b>8,431</b>	<b>5,258</b>	<b>3,173</b>

### Upland site selection and land preparation

A total of 206 upland sites were selected across the 4 counties against a target of 184 anticipated sites for FY14. During the month of April, 13 additional sites were selected. A total of 1,742.5 ha of a targeted 1,863.2 have been cleared and measured in the four counties (Table 4). Completion of all land preparation activities is expected to be concluded in May.

Table 4: FY14 Upland site selection and land preparation by county.

County	Target sites for FY14	Sites Identified in April 2014	Total Sites Identified YTD	Ha Targeted for FY14	Ha Cleared in April 2014	Total Ha Cleared YTD
Lofa	65	13	46	129	43.6	68
Nimba	43	0	37	90.2	8	51.5
Bong	66	0	85	1,600	20	1,300
Grand Bassa	10	0	51	44	154	323
<b>Total</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>1,863.2</b>	<b>225.6</b>	<b>1,742.5</b>

## Increasing Productivity and Building Capacity



Figure 1: A FY13 UDP plot evaluated in Sarkonedu, Lofa County.

### Workshop on production practices for upland rice

USAID FED conducted a Trainers of Trainers (ToT) for four youth agriculture NGOs on strategies for cassava and upland rice production. Community Youth Network Program (CYNP), Green Coast Agriculture Program (G-CAP), Liberia Integrated Professional Agriculture Service (LIPAS), Evangelical Children Rehabilitation Program (ECREP) and 36 technical and extension staff (32 male, 4 female) participated in the ToT in Bong County.

### Urea Deep Placement (UDP), System Rice Intensification (SRI) Implementation

Dr. Upendra Singh, USAID FED STTA from IFDC, conducted the evaluation of potential sites for the UDP & SRI field trials that will be conducted this FY14. One of the sites he evaluated was Quardu Gbondi, Voinjama and Foya districts in Lofa County (Figure 1), which was also one of the FY13 UDP trial sites.

As a result of Dr. Singh's evaluation, two sites from Nimba and two sites from Bong have been selected for the UDP-SRI field trials.

### Advanced Water Management Infrastructure

During the month of April, FED and farmers prepared eight sites in Bong and Nimba counties in preparation for irrigation structure construction.



Figure 2: Completed spillway irrigation structure in Kaheniala, Lofa County.

The four pilot sites in Lofa were completed and a completion report was submitted by the contractor in April (Figure 2). It is anticipated that all pending spillways will be completed and operational by the end of May.

### Enterprise Development: Rice Business Hubs

Contractors finished the construction of the three rice business hubs in Nimba. The rice milling equipment installation and the inauguration of the centers is scheduled for May.

Construction work in Lofa, Bong and Bassa is also ongoing with 75% of the work completed.

Construction of these rice business hubs is expected to be completed by the end of June 2014 (Figure 3).



Figure 3: The Doumpa Rice Business Hub.

### **Market access for rice producers**

USAID FED surveyed farmers in Lofa County to ascertain the quantities of surplus rice available and negotiated an agreement on the price of rice for the potential sale of paddy rice to Fabrar Rice. Farmers accepted the Fabrar Rice Liberia Inc. offer of \$19 USD per 50Kg bag of paddy rice. Fabrar will commence procurement of rice from rice producers in Lofa in May.

The construction the Fabrar Rice mill in Kakata has progressed significantly during the reporting period. Completion of the facility is expected to take place during the last week of May, while operations are anticipated to begin by the end of June 2014 when all the processing equipment is fully installed (Figure 4). Fabrar Rice has allocated funds to procure an estimated 2,000 MT of rice from Liberian rice producers during FY14 period.



Figure 4: Fabrar Rice Liberia milling factory under construction in Kakata, Margibi County.

## **Task 1B: Increased production and profitability of the cassava value chain**

### **Establishment of Cassava Nurseries**

CARI received the first batch of improved cassava cuttings from the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA). USAID-FED is supporting CARI in the screening of these varieties. A total of 24,000

cuttings consisting of six varieties: TME419, IMS IBA90/0581, TMS IBA011/412, TMS IBA011/371, TMS IBA01/0040 and TMS IBA95/0289 have so far been received.

An additional 20,000 cuttings are expected from IITA in May.



Figure 5: Cassava cuttings ready for planting in the nursery.

In Q2, USAID FED finished the selection process for 40 sites towards establishing a network of commercial nursery farms. In April, 53.5 ha of a targeted 60 ha were brushed and cleared (Table 5). The nurseries are expected to boost availability of improved planting material for an estimated 10,455 cassava farmers.

Table 5: FY14 cassava nursery land preparation.

County	FY14 Targets, # ha	# ha brushed and cleared in April	Total # ha brushed and cleared YTD
Nimba	24ha	0	24ha
Gr. Bassa	18ha	0	18ha
Bong	12ha	4.5ha	12ha
Lofa	6ha	6ha	6ha
<b>Total</b>	<b>60ha</b>	<b>10.5ha</b>	<b>60ha</b>

### FY13 Cassava Crop Production and Sales

By April 2014, a total of 1.64 MT of raw cassava tubers from the FY13 crop were harvested in Grand Bassa county (Table 6). During the reporting period, 39 bags (50kg bags) of processed tuber—gari—were sold for \$220 USD (Table 9) bringing FY14 total cassava sales to \$416 USD. Increased harvesting and sales of cassava planted during FY13 will begin in June and continue through September 2014. The program expects sales to reach \$196,000 USD by end of the harvest season.

Table 6: Cassava (raw tuber) production in April 2014.

County	FY14 Production Targets, Raw Tuber (MT)	Volume of Raw Tuber Harvest, April 2014 (MT)	Total Volume of Raw Tuber Harvested (MT) YTD
Nimba	2130	-	-
Gr. Bassa	1598	1.64	12.14
Bong	1065	-	39
Lofa	532	-	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>5325</b>	<b>1.64</b>	<b>60.44</b>

### Cassava Production Clusters:

In Q2, USAID FED completed the site selection and recruitment of the targeted 12,000 cassava farmers across four counties. In April, a total of 1396ha were cleared and brushed and are ready for planting bringing the total to 1843.5ha (Table 7).

Table 7: FY13 Cassava production and sales

County	FY14 Targets, Land Preparation (ha)	Land Prepared in April, 2014	Total # of Farmers so far, 2014
Nimba	840	478.1	556.5
Gr. Bassa	630	918	1201
Bong	420	-	75
Lofa	210	-	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>2100</b>	<b>1396.1</b>	<b>1843.5</b>

## Task 1C: Increased production and profitability of the goat value chain

### Farmer recruitment

As of April, a total of 2,060 farmers (1,260 male, 800 female) in 84 goat groups were recruited for FY14 activities. All 84 groups have signed MoUs with USAID FED, and some have begun the construction of goat shelters. These farmers have a cumulative animal stock of 4,219 goats (Table 8).

Table 8: FY14 Goat farmer recruitment and goat stocks.

County	FY14 Farmer Target	# of Farmers Recruited by April	# of Male Farmers	# of Female Farmers	# of Goats April 2014	Total # of Goats YTD	# Does	# Bucks	# Kids
Nimba	600	693	341	296	59	667	527	140	59
Grand Bassa	180	275	166	111	146	636	452	184	146
Bong	500	596	493	179	38	1,685	1,297	388	38
Lofa	400	496	260	214	350	1,231	1083	148	350
<b>Total</b>	<b>1680</b>	<b>2060</b>	<b>1,260</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>593</b>	<b>4,219</b>	<b>3,359</b>	<b>860</b>	<b>593</b>

### Goat Sales

In the month of April, goat farmers across the four counties reported a total of 255 goats sold for \$13,838 USD. April sales bring the FY14 total to 551 goats sold for \$29,933 USD (Table 9).

Table 9: Goat sales for April and FY14.

County	# of Goat Farmer Groups	# of Goats Sold in April 2014	# of Goats Sold FY14 YTD	Value of Goats Sold in April (US\$)	Total Value of Goats Sold (US\$) YTD
Nimba	30	-	52	-	2,985
Gr. Bassa	9	21	50	1,390	3,210
Bong	25	41	108	3,505.00	8,885
Lofa	20	193	341	8,943.00	14,853
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>551</b>	<b>13,838</b>	<b>29,933</b>

### Goat shelters

The 23 sawyer groups contracted to saw wood into customized sizes for construction of goat shelters completed sawing operations for 26 of 84 sites. Carpenters will begin construction on these sites in May and are expected to complete construction on an estimated 15 sites by the end of May.

USAID FED trained 28 contracted carpenters (all male) from Bong, Nimba and Lofa counties on goat shelter design and construction. The training exercises were conducted in Lofa and Nimba counties and the carpenters are expected to begin shelter construction in May.





Figure 6: Farmer being trained on deworming in Nimba County.

### Goat Deworming

USAID FED dewormed 852 goats in Lofa and Nimba counties in the period (Figure 6). The project aims to deworm all goats in the FY14 goat production intensification groups across the four counties, and inform farmers on the benefits of deworming in goat production and goat business.

The deworming exercise in Lofa and Nimba counties benefitted 406 farmers. Deworming will reduce both external and internal parasites and as a result improve the health and increase growth rate of animals. Deworming exercises will continue in Bong and Grand Bassa counties during May 2014.

### CARI Livestock Quarantine Facility

US Ambassador Deborah Malac inaugurated the CARI Livestock Quarantine Facility located in Suakoko, Bong county (Figure 7). The Deputy Minister of Agriculture Ms. Seklau Wiles, the Head of Livestock Research at CARI Dr. Arthur Karnuah and Land O Lakes Chief of Party, Ms. Allison Williams were in attendance. Land O Lakes is expected to import the 100 goats that form part of the nucleus breeding herd for CARI during May - June 2014.



Figure 7: Allison Williams (LOL), Arthur Karnuah (CARI), Ambassador Malac, Deputy Minister Seklau Wiles, FED COP Agnes Luz and CARI staffer.

### Task 1D: Increased productivity and profitability of the vegetable value chain Production, Harvest and Sales



During the reporting period, a total of 354 farmers (249 male, 105 female) in 20 clusters in Montserrado, Margibi, Grand Bassa and Nimba counties carried out land preparation, field layout and nursery construction for the first dry season vegetable production. USAID FED provided each cluster with tools, seeds and fertilizer for the production of high value vegetables for targeted markets.

During the month of April, a total of 10.68 MT of vegetables were sold at a value of \$6,720 USD. In FY14, a total of 21.48 MT of vegetables have been harvested and sold for \$18,136 USD (Table 10).

In addition, 13 vegetable farmers participated in the MoCI small business trade fair, where they sold 400kg of vegetables for an estimated \$288 USD.

Table 10: Vegetable production and sales by farming clusters as of April 2014.

Cluster	Ha FY14	Ha Harvested April 2014	April Harvest (kg)	YTD Total Harvest (kg)	April Sales (USD)	YTD Total Sales FY14 (USD)
(Mo) Bokays Town	4.5	0.07	167.5	1,011.3	\$131.76	\$859.76
(Mo) CGCWEP Vegetables	4.5	0.17	627.0	2,447.5	\$297.76	\$1,823.76
(Mo) Central White plane	4.5	0.26	222.0	1,560.0	\$100	\$621.50
(Mo) Low Cost village	4.5	0.42	1,063.5	1,773.5	\$866.18	\$1,849.18
(Mo) Kollieman Town	4.5	-	-	246.0	-	-
(Mo) Mawah Farmers Association	4.5	0.61	910.0	4,373.0	\$905.88	\$6,268.88
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1.53</b>	<b>2990</b>	<b>11411.3</b>	<b>\$2301.59</b>	<b>\$1,1423</b>
(N) Yekepa	4.5	0.99	822.5	1,402.5	\$2,012.55	\$2,543.55
(N) Sanniquelleh	4.5	0.56	3,841.0	3,841.0	\$478	\$477.94
(N) Ganta	4.5	0.62	796.0	796.0	\$624.53	\$624.53
(N) Gbedin	4.5	0.08	68.0	68.0	\$71.65	\$71.65
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2.25</b>	<b>5527.517</b>	<b>6107.52</b>	<b>\$3186.73</b>	<b>\$3717.6706</b>
(Mar) Francis Lewis	4.5	0.17	1,038.0	1,038.0	\$343	\$343
(Mar) Weala	4.5	0.05	285.0	1,667.5	\$197.65	\$1,518.65
(Mar) Gbofellah	4.5	-	-	16.0	-	0
(Mar) Horton Farm	4.5	0.12	685.0	1,086.0	\$532.94	\$978

<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>3807.5</b>	<b>\$1,073.59</b>	<b>\$2,839.59</b>
(GB) New Buchanan	1.75	2.8	155.0	155.0	\$158.12	\$158.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>87.25</b>	<b>6.92</b>	<b>10680.52</b>	<b>21481.32</b>	<b>\$6,720</b>	<b>\$18,138.46</b>

### **Dry season voucher program**

USAID FED began implementation of the dry season vegetable voucher exercise through agro-dealers supplied by Wienco. In total, 351 vouchers were distributed. By the end of April, 81 vouchers were redeemed across four counties (Figure 8).

The redemption period will continue until the end of May. USAID FED will carry out an evaluation of the program together with the agro-dealers and the farmers to determine the suitability of the approach in stimulating demand for agricultural inputs.

### **Drip Irrigation Kits**

In April, USAID FED distributed a total of 345 drip irrigation kits and installed 221 drip irrigation kits in the four counties. USAID FED demonstrated the effectiveness of irrigation technology in vegetable production that could help farmers with yields in the dry season.

### **Community Collection Centers**

A total of 10 collection centers out of 20 have been established across the vegetable clusters for the aggregation and sorting of vegetables. The 10 collection centers are based in Montserrado, Margibi and Nimba counties, and the remaining 10 collection centers are expected to be completed in the month of May.



Figure 9: Participants at solar drying training, Grand Bassa County.



Figure 8: Zoe Koiler of Low Cost Village receives inputs through the voucher scheme.

### **Solar Dryer Construction and Training**

In Grand Bassa County, USAID FED trained four carpenters and six farmers (all male) from the New Buchanan and Tubmanville clusters on how to use and construct solar dryers. The training took place in Buchanan City Grand Bassa County (Figure 9).

### **Monrovia Vegetable Sellers Association Trader Support**

USAID FED facilitated a follow up meeting between the Monrovia Vegetable Sellers Association and the vegetable traders to formalize contractual engagements towards the sale and supply of vegetables. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss purchase agreements and share information on the location of clusters with traders. A total of 12

traders (5 male, 7 female) expressed interest and will begin purchasing vegetables in May.

### **Subtask 1.1: Special Studies and MoA Data Collection Systems Development**

In April, M&E started the Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), a study meant to help the program make informed decisions on geographic focus, delivery of improved technologies and enterprise support to program beneficiaries. The study spans all four value chains and is geographically focused on the four main counties: Bong, Grand Bassa, Lofa and Nimba.

The RRA will categorize lowland rice fields and, at the same time, place emphasis on mapping and measuring lowland rice fields. Through better mapping, the study will also identify the major production areas for each of the value chains complete with mapping of major markets and estimated inventory maps for buyers. The RRA will also identify location and capacity of processing and storage facilities for each value chain in each county as well as other support services. Results from this study are expected end of Q3.

### **Subtask 1.2: Improve Access to Agriculture Inputs**

#### **Rice Seed Multiplication**

USAID FED distributed 4.2 MT of fertilizer (2.4 MT NPK and 1.8 MT urea granules) to Bong, Nimba, Lofa and Grand Bassa counties. The fertilizer will benefit 22 rice seed multiplication sites in these areas. In addition, transportation of 8 MT of rice seed donated by the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program will be undertaken by CARI in May 2014.

#### **Rice Voucher Program**

Two agro-input supply companies expressed interest in participating in the rice voucher program expected to be implemented in May/June. USAID FED has completed the rice voucher program design. In May, USAID FED will complete the roster of beneficiaries for the voucher program. The program is expected to benefit 5,000 farmers, and the package includes one 50kg bag of NPK fertilizer.

#### **Rice Seed Marketing Program**

USAID FED identified two firms: Wienio and Arjay Farms to participate in the rice seed marketing activity, which aims to develop business plans for the commercialization of the seed supply, including rice seed brand and distribution system development, in Liberia.

USAID FED has vetted eight seed companies for possible future aggregation, processing, distribution and marketing of good, branded rice seed of improved varieties adapted to conditions in Liberia. The rice seed marketing program will commence with Wienio in May and with Arjay Farms in June.

#### **Goat Voucher Program**

In April, the design of the goat voucher was completed and will be going to print in May 2014. Each package is worth approximately \$107 USD and includes broad spectrum anti-parasitic drugs covering worms and mange as well as antibiotics, multivitamins and syringes and needles. In FY14, a total of 206 trained Community Animal Health Workers (CAHW)—including the 38 trained CAHW from FY13—will receive the voucher package and provide the services for the goats in their communities. The

training of CAHW and linkage to Agro Pharmacists will commence in May and be completed six to eight weeks later.

### Subtask 1.3: Agricultural Extension Support

#### Value Chain Documentary

USAID FED produced a rice video which was aired during the MSME Conference's USAID FED Policy Forum and the MSME Awards Dinner at the Monrovia City Hall. USAID FED continues to gather contents on other value chain activities. During this period, USAID FED's video specialist visited Nimba County to capture goat deworming and the building of head dikes in lowland rice fields for irrigation purposes. Initially, these short films will be used to promote USAID FED. Depending on the quality and usefulness of the films, the program will decide whether or not to use videos as extension tools.

#### Nutritional Messaging

USAID FED produced and tested three nutrition jingles in Bong and Grand Bassa Counties. The jingles have been sent to a vendor for translation into two local languages, Bassa and Kpelle, as well as simple Liberian English. The jingles are expected to be ready to air on the radio in May.

## Component Two: Stimulate Private Sector Growth and Investment

### Task 2: Enabling Policy Environment for Private Sector Growth

#### Policy Reform

USAID FED held a multi-stakeholder consultative meeting at the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) to determine the next steps in the process of creating legislation and implementing the National Seed and Crop Protection Chemical policies.

USAID FED moved forward with hiring a legal consultant to translate the policies into legal language to be submitted to the National Legislature for ratification. However, in February and March, USAID FED was informed by the MoA's Deputy Minister for Technical Services, Dr. Sizi Subah and other stakeholders that policies existing at the ECOWAS level can be adopted simply through publication and promulgation in the National Gazette.

In May, FED met with Minister Chenoweth, other high-level MoA Officials, USAID, World Bank representatives, Liberia Law Reform Commission (LLRC), and WAAPP Officials to clarify on the procedures in implementing ECOWAS-wide policies. Minister Chenoweth informed the attendees that they can move forward with the implementation of the policies without passing them into legislation through the National Legislature. The LLRC



Figure 10: USAID FED display at the MSME Conference, Monrovia, Montserrado County.



Figure 11: A USAID FED farmer sells watermelons at the conference trade fair.

representative validated that the Minister has the authority to issue a policy that doesn't contravene with existing legislations. The attendees agreed to reconvene in May at the USAID FED office to go over the policies in order to identify these regulations and fast track implementation at the same time that the policy is being pushed through the Legislature in order for it to be ratified as law.

### 2014 National MSME Conference

To facilitate the communication and adoption of policies promoted by the project, USAID FED supported the MoCI to convene the MSME Conference 2014, April 29, 30. This year's conference put a spotlight on agri-business and youth. USAID FED supported the event by doing the following:

- Supported planning and implementation of event;
- Procured a live radio show, catering, public announcement systems, conference banner, and conference hall rental;
- Promoted the event through county-based radio announcements as well as staff participation in a live radio show on the national radio station, ELBC;
- Exhibited all four value chains from input supply to consumer at the conference trade fair (Figure 10). The exhibition also included new value chain marketing material and value chain infographic posters;
- Produced a documentary style video explaining the rice value chain, constraints, implementation strategies, and policy initiatives.
- Transported and lodged 18 USAID FED farmers (Figure 11), agri-businesses, and county-based radio journalists to attend the conference;
- Promoted local agri-business through the participation of major input suppliers such as Wienco, Gro Green, Price Trading, Arjay Farms, and Arise and Shine and Fabrar Rice Liberia Inc., who exhibited their products in the trade fair exhibition.

### USAID FED Breakout Sessions

*The Other Side of Agriculture: Opportunities for Business* showcased youth and women engaged in profitable agricultural activities and moderated by Livelihoods Development Coordinator from Advancing Youth Project, Mathew Ndote.

USAID FED presented the major constraints facing the development of the food crop sector in Liberia and the rationale behind engaging youth, and exemplified various options for youth to engage in entrepreneurship such as youth extension workers, equipment operators, and community animal health workers. In addition, Founder of the Community Youth Network Program (CYNP), Junior Toe, also



presented his organization's successful school garden program and self-sustaining young farmers resource center.

A member of the audience recommended that training programs be developed for youth so that they have the skills to engage in the entrepreneurship activities suggested by USAID FED.

*Value Chain Financing: Solutions for Liberia* presented embedded financing schemes that enable formal financing to reach marginalized farmers that involve more bankable downstream value chain stakeholders, such as agro-input suppliers, aggregators, and buyers, and was moderated by Javier Betancourt from Building Market.

USAID FED introduced and defined the concept of value chain financing. IFC consultant, Robert Hommans, presented the benefits of equipment leasing in agriculture. Wienco Liberia presented the company's business model that provides credit to client farmers in the form of inputs and extension services while guaranteeing them a market for their produce. The company's model is an example of how value chain actors can provide embedded services and financing to each other while maintaining equitable profit distribution.

The presenters then answered audience questions about cold storage, improved use of agro-chemicals, and the possibility of using warehouse receipts as a financing tool for farmers. Wienco also provided information about future partnerships with farmers and agribusinesses.

*Market Intelligence* presented the topic within the Liberia context among donors, ICT providers, private sector investors, and MoCI to find solutions and was moderated by Robert Nymbaka, USAID FED Agri-Business Specialist. USAID FED introduced the constraints in the market systems, while a representative of the GROW project, Hilary David, presented the definition of market intelligence and market information systems and discussed the successes and failures of previous attempts to initiate advanced systems in Liberia

The panel determined that the private sector needs information, especially on prices, and they would be willing to pay for it. In addition the systems should be owned by the private sector. The solution should focus on using media such as radio and pricing boards at markets. The audience suggested a pilot program to determine effectiveness and sustainability.

*Policy Dialogue Session* focused on a small number of strategic policies that will encourage private sector investment and support for overall growth of the agriculture sector, particularly rice, cassava, goats and vegetables value chains.

MoCI and USAID FED created the Liberian Agriculture Business Enabling Environment Inter-Agency Policy Group (LABEE IPG) consisting of key decision makers from each line Ministry, donor organization, key private sector entities, and champions from the Legislature to facilitate moving forward with these initiatives. The LABEE IPG will assign key technical personnel from their institutions and organizations to be a part of a smaller technical working group (TWG) that will then carry out the mandate of the LABEE IPG.

In the session, participants decided the following: (1) USAID FED, MoCI and MoF will work together to validate the information on revenue lost through waivers; (2) All parties agreed that prices (e.g. paddy rice), should be established by the market. The TWG will work on a strategy for announcing to the farming community that the GoL does not set these prices; (3) The private sector requested that while the blanket waiver is necessary to help them become more competitive with cheap imports, a more deliberate effort should be made by GoL to establish long-term policies in support of the agriculture sector; (4) MoCI suggested that, in addition to working through the government agencies, the private sector must work to lobby the national legislature; (5) Partners suggested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Governance Commission will be included in the TWG, however on an as-needed basis.

Overall, the MSME Conference was a success for USAID FED's work based on the following results:

- The 25% local procurement regulation (Small Business Empowerment Act) is expected to be ratified as law by July. The law will require the GoL to procure at least 25% of their goods and services from locally registered businesses. USAID FED facilitated an initial meeting between Fabrar Rice and MoCI to discuss future opportunities.
- The President of Liberia signed Executive Order #64, suspending import tariffs on “essential equipment, agricultural seeds, live animals for breeding, and other goods directly related to agricultural development” on April 25, 2014. USAID FED began to lobby for this in November 2013 and put together the list of agro-inputs and corresponding HS codes for MoCI to use to lobby for the measure. The LABEE TWG plans to discuss the possibility of the legislature passing this initiative as medium-term incentive
- Deputy Minister for Industry, Ameh Bah, agreed to champion the effort to recruit members for the TWG for LABEE. Deputy Minister Bah also committed his team to lead the TWG in partnership with USAID FED. The next meeting will be held in early May to establish a terms and reference.

## Subtask 2.1: Access to Credit and Business Development Services

### Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA)

The VSLA program includes mentorship in group leadership, gender mainstreaming, managing conflicts, and record keeping over a nine month period until the groups' final payout (disbursement of savings and accrued interest) in June/July 2014. USAID FED estimates that the 26 groups will generate at total of \$185,000 USD in ag-related loans for the farmers at a 15.65% annual return for the savings group over a three year period. The work plan estimate for agriculture-related loans in year one of the pilot was \$26,000 USD, which has already been exceeded.

Through the month of April 2014, the 26 VSLA groups have achieved the following (Tables 11-12):

*Table 11: VSLA group results as of April 2014.*

<b>Date (FY14)</b>	<b># of Groups</b>	<b># of Active Members*</b>	<b>Shares Purchased (USD)</b>	<b>Total Loans (USD)</b>	<b>Interest Recorded (USD)</b>	<b># of Members with Loans</b>
Oct-Dec	26	627	\$18,516	\$16,966	\$1,547	443
Jan	26	642	\$6,789	\$9,331	\$933	243
Feb	26	701	\$10,111	\$17,742	\$1,725	286
Mar	26	705	\$10,972	\$12,048	\$1,453	259
Apr	26	654	\$8,443	\$9,321	\$1,822	115
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>654</b>	<b>\$54,832</b>	<b>\$65,407</b>	<b>\$7,480</b>	<b>1,346</b>
*Total # of registered members is currently 711. Active members are counted when they regularly attend meetings and add to savings pool.						

Table 12: VSLA ag-loans versus non ag-loans as of April 2014.

<b>Date (FY14)</b>	<b>Ag-Loans (USD)</b>	<b>Non-Ag Loans (USD)</b>	<b>Total Loans (USD)</b>	<b># Members with Ag-Loans</b>	<b># Members with Non-Ag Loans</b>	<b># of Members with Loans</b>
Oct-Dec	\$10,542	\$6,192	\$16,966	279	164	443
Jan	\$5,826	\$3,421	\$9,331	153	90	243
Feb	\$11,375	\$6,682	\$17,742	180	106	286
Mar	\$8,908	\$3,140	\$12,048	196	63	259
Apr	\$7,625	\$1,809	\$9,321	97	21	115
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$44,276</b>	<b>\$21,244</b>	<b>\$65,407</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>444</b>	<b>1,346</b>

VSLA members reported utilizing loan funds for agriculture activities such as hiring labor to brush and maintain fields, purchasing seeds, agro-chemicals and tools, and for transporting goods to the market.

In Q2, USAID FED launched the expansion of the VSLA pilot program to an additional 98 groups (approximately 2,940 youth and women). Loan extension officers have finished signing the MoUs with all 98 groups.

VSLA training for the new groups started April 21. Each training session covers 1. Group Leadership, 2. Social funds, Share Purchase and Credit Policies, 3. Development of the Association Constitution, 4. First Share Purchase Meeting, 5. First Loan Disbursement Meeting, 6. First Loan Repayment Meeting, and 7. Share Out, Action Audit, and Graduation. The training will continue until May 21.

### **Micro Finance Institution (MFI) Loans**

USAID FED farmers did not receive loans from MFIs in April.



## Component Three: Build local technical and managerial human resource capability

USAID FED prepared scopes of work for Vocational Agriculture Education Development Specialist, Vocational Agriculture Education Development Specialist and Vocational Agriculture Education Officers so as to better reflect the projects' current work-plan. USAID FED recruited a Training Program and Administrative Coordinator who will commence work in May. Recruitment for the Sr. Vocational Agriculture Education Officer (VAEO) got underway in April with 11 candidates applying for the position and five short-listed for interviews scheduled during the second week of May.

The Sr. VAEO will provide the technical leadership and guidance to the four Vocational Agriculture Education Officers assigned to the Centers of Excellence (CoE) in the implementation of the work plan, especially with regards to assessing and aligning teachers' training needs with the National Diploma in Agriculture (NDA) curriculum objectives; evaluating the effectiveness of the teacher instruction delivery and the application of learning to student performance in practical field experience; maintaining an up-to-date database of CoE teachers assigned to the NDA courses; and documenting USAID FED's CoE capacity-building activities and their effectiveness in achieving the work plan objectives. In addition, the Sr. VAEO will take the lead in formatting instructional materials in FlashWeb or similar e-Library format and distributing digitalized materials to CoE instructors.

Filling the position of the Vocational Agriculture Education Officer at Grand Bassa Community College has been postponed until May, but the process to mobilize the candidate has begun.



Figure 12: Gathering at US Ambassador to Liberia's visit to NCCC

### U.S. Ambassador Malac's NCCC Visit

Nimba County Community College (NCCC) had an opportunity to put into action what they learned during the previous Strategic Planning Workshop about fundraising and stewardship of funders when they organized an event to host the U.S. Ambassador, Debora Malac, on her visit to NCCC on April 2. More than 1,000 students and guests gathered to greet and show their gratitude to the Ambassador and USAID (Figure 12).

## Task 3.0 Develop Existing Vocational Centers into Centers of Excellence in Vocational Agriculture Education (CoE)

### Lofa County Community College

In April, USAID FED delivered the following materials to LCCC to complete the renovations and furnish the COEVAE facilities:

- 81 cartons of ceramic tile (ivory color)
- 19 four-drawer metal filing cabinets
- 17 office chairs with high backs/arm rests
- 17 office desks (120cm) with drawers
- 30 visitor chairs

By April 18, the laying of the tiles in the Career and Internship Center, the Computer Lab, and the Agriculture Dean's Office was completed, and LCCC staff started assembling the office furniture which will soon be distributed according to the plans made with USAID FED. The LCCC contributed 38 days of labor towards the renovations.

### **Nimba County Community College**

In April, NCCC reported that 37.6 labor days for the renovation of the Center of Excellence facilities for the following works:

- Partitioning the space in the agriculture department
- Installation of the window glass
- Installation of six air conditioners
- Installing the overhead fans
- Installation of the security window bars and doors
- Assembling the office furniture
- Setting-up the computers
- Installing the electrical wiring

### **National Diploma in Agriculture (NDA) Curriculum**

USAID FED assessed the capacity and background of 60 individual instructors from the departments of Agriculture, Business, IT and English at the four institutions to identify those most suited to teach the following seven of the eight<sup>1</sup> NDA courses which will be taught during Semester I for the 2014/15 academic year:

1. Principles of Animal Production
2. Communication in English (I)
3. Principles of Crop Production
4. Intro to Farm Woodland Management
5. Intro to Soil Science
6. Agricultural Math (I)
7. Computer Applications (I)

The numbers of faculty from each institution who were assessed were:

- Booker T. Washington Institute – Advanced Vocational Training Program (BWI-AVTP): 27

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<sup>1</sup> Principles of Agriculture Economics is postponed for later development.

- Grand Bassa Community College: 22
- Lofa County Community College: 8
- Nimba County Community College: 3

Dr. Bradley A. Leger started a three week assignment to use the above mentioned assessment to find ways to address deficiencies in the training timeline; to work with individual instructors to develop the syllabus and lesson plans for each course; and identify the course textbooks and other instructional materials and resources needed for proper delivery of each course.

To support Dr. Leger's work, USAID FED prepared a SOW and a performance-based incentive program and implementation plan for the individual faculty at each institution to develop the courses. Twenty instructors were selected from the following institutions for this activity:

- Math: NCCC and GBCC, 1 instructor from each
- Communications: LCCC, 1 instructor
- Computer Applications: BWI, 1 instructor
- Agriculture courses: GBCC, 3 instructors; NCCC, 3 instructors; LCCC, 5 instructors; BWI, 5 instructors.

In addition to working with the teachers on the development of the courses, USAID FED is double-checking the presence of textbooks at each CoE which are to be used for the courses. These are the books which USAID FED has provided along with others at the teacher's request. Gaps with regard to needed teaching materials are also being identified.

## ICT Support in Library and Agriculture Departments

### Lofa County Community College

The following materials for the installation of the VSAT were delivered and installed at LCCC by Electro Shack (Figure 13):

1. 1.8m VSAT C-Band antenna
2. Feed Horn C-band
3. LNB Norsat 3115 PLL (SN19N133603116)
4. BUC 5 watt mBLC-5-f (SN1075212618)
5. Modem X3 Evolution (SN 146515)
6. Line conditioner kebo1000 (SN2011230885)
7. APC650 UPC BX650CI (SN3B242X27058)
8. Power Surge protector, Huntkey (SMZ604)
9. Cisco Linksys router high performance E3200 dual band (SN10B10C6B215571)
10. 2 Roll RG11 Coaxial cable 30 meters
11. Pedestal Mount
12. Concrete foundation kit



Figure 13: VSAT installation inspection at LCCC.

A team of contractors are presently running internet cable in all of the designated areas of the Center of Excellence in Vocational Agriculture Education, starting with the agriculture faculty and the library which are now completed. The administration building should be cabled by May.

### **Nimba County Community College**

USAID FED worked with NCCC's president to develop an operational strategy for the fee-based Internet and photocopying/printing services, including the preparation of a daily service activity log and sales record template with training provided to the NCCC VAEO on how to complete the log.

The VAEO will, in turn, work with NCCC's librarian to help institute the daily recordkeeping. Additionally, campus-wide policies regarding internet access will need to be instituted once the server and the cyber management software have been installed. In the coming months, USAID FED will support NCCC to formulate the policy and procedures and procure the cyber management software and teach the relevant staff to use it.

### **Agriculture Science Laboratories**

USAID FED has engaged a local science laboratory specialist and a construction needs specialist to review the equipment list for the agriculture science labs and assess the facilities to ensure that these can accommodate science laboratories, especially in reference to electrical and clean water supply. Additionally, with the assistance of LSU, a rough layout of the lab with major pieces of equipment and fixtures has been prepared. The assessment team is expected to complete the assignment before the end of May. In April, USAID FED commenced procurement of the equipment for the Agriculture Science Labs.

USAID FED prepared reporting templates to capture information on the usage of the agriculture science lab by faculty and students for teaching/learning activities as well as for providing fee-based services to community farmers. Once the labs are established, the VAEOs will be expected to help train the faculty and lab technicians to utilize this recordkeeping system.

### **Demonstration Sites**

USAID FED turned over complete operation and management of organic vegetable production and the bucket drip irrigation demonstration farms to the agriculture faculty of at BWI and NCCC in April.

### **Career, Resource and Internship Centers at CoEs**

In April, USAID FED commenced work related to the Career Resource and Internship Centers (CRIC). Originally, Dr. Leger's was going to create a job description for the CRIC staff person needed to operate the CRICs, however, USAID FED decided to develop a Career Resource Program instead of creating new staff in order to not put additional financial pressure on the CoEs.

USAID FED began work to compile updated lists of stakeholders for each CoE who can serve as resources for in-kind and monetary resources, internships, and career awareness/recruiting. These stakeholders are being identified for NDA specific courses as well as generally for each CoE.

### **Agriculture Student Census**

USAID FED commenced work on the development of a comprehensive record of all students currently enrolled in the agriculture faculties at each CoE. The number of enrollees fluctuates from semester to semester since many of the students await scholarships from the GoL and other organizations before completing the registration process. A completed census of enrollees will be completed by the end of this current semester.

### **Agriculture Scholarship Fund Established at NCCC**

With fundraising assistance from USAID FED, the Agnes Nenah Teakpah Scholarship Fund was established at Nimba County Community College during April. Agnes Teakpah (Figure 14) will be the first scholarship recipient for the first semester of the 2014-15 academic year.



*Figure 14: Agnes Teakpah, scholarship recipient for the first semester for the Nenah Teakpah Scholarship Fund.*

The scholarships are for adults, like Agnes, who have gone back to school to get an education in agriculture and who best embody the values of the NCCC Center of Excellence in Vocational Agriculture Education: hard work, teamwork, integrity, service, commitment to excellence, and a welcoming hospitality. To date, \$200 USD has been collected and another \$200 USD pledged. Each credit hour costs \$3 USD, and the CoE expects to award four scholarships next semester.

### **Agricultural Extension Curriculum and Community Outreach Program**

USAID FED organized the “Planning a Commercial Farm or Agribusiness” workshop at BWI for five members of the Green Coast Agricultural Program (GCAP). During the workshop, the G-CAP team designed and planned a production system to start-up a social enterprise to collect and compost organic waste in Kakata. The compost will be used in G-CAP’s school garden programs and marketed to local farmers.

In addition to the business planning training, USAID FED worked with the GCAP team to prepare a market research questionnaire to enable G-CAP staff to conduct a survey of farmers around Kakata to gather information about their current practices for maintaining or improving the fertility of their soils and their familiarity with the benefits of using compost.

USAID FED also held the same workshop for 25 participants at BWI and NCCC in April. The participants included eight from BWI faculty, eight from NCCC faculty, five from GCAP, three from the Vocational Agribusiness Education Student Leadership Association at NCCC and one lead farmer from Sanniquellie attended the two-day sessions.

In addition to working on production seasonal calendars for the on-campus enterprises, workshop participants developed questionnaires for conducting market research to identify buyers for their demonstration farm products.

### **Agriculture Student Leadership Organizations**

Two agriculture student leadership organizations are currently active. The Future Farmers Association (FFA) of BWI has 125 members, and the NCCC Agriculture Students Association currently has 23 members. The VAEO in Lofa has begun work to organize a similar organization at LCCC.

### **Production and Sales Recordkeeping**

USAID FED prepared reporting templates to capture production, labor, inventory and sales information for the following on-campus demonstration enterprises: lowland rice, fish nursery and production, cassava, vegetable nursery and production, oil palm nursery and production, goat production, compost production, and canteen services. Once the labs are established, the VAEOs will be expected to help train the faculty and lab technicians to utilize this recordkeeping system.

### **Reducing Energy Costs**

USAID FED engaged a local electrical engineer to assess the generators and their fuel consumption at each CoE in order to develop a cost-benefit analysis for potentially switching to a renewable energy source to provide electrical power. The engineer is expected to complete his assignment before the end of May.

### **Support Agriculture Graduates in Post-Graduate Studies**

Mr. Wooiklee S. Payne commenced his graduate studies in soil science at Louisiana State University (LSU) in January and is now making plans for his research work in Liberia. USAID FED is working with the CoE at BWI to identify a 40m x 40m plot for soil research.

Mr. Payne will be conducting rice biomass and grain analysis to assess the inorganic nitrogen and protein quality of the grain. Until the agriculture science labs are established, Mr. Payne will need to take plant and soil samples to LSU to conduct the analysis.

Mr. Payne will analyze the soil on three levels: before planting, during the vegetative growth stage of rice, and after harvesting. Together, the analyses will provide data on the advantages of UDP over urea broadcast and the traditional farmer practice with respect to the individual contribution of each practice to rice fertility and their impact on the environment.

Mr. Randolph Kolleh, a graduate of Cuttington University has applied to the University of Arkansas to study plant pathology, focusing on rice which he has studied extensively during his undergraduate work. Additionally, USAID FED staff member, Gonyeyee Bartuah, who is working on the rice value chain also applied to the University of Arkansas. The candidates took the Graduate Records Examination (GRE) in March, and are waiting to hear the outcome of their respective applications.

### Task 3.1 Enterprise Service Centers

In April, a total of 56 potential investors attended information workshops held in Nimba, Bong, Lofa and Grand Bassa counties to learn more about fee-based enterprise development services for farmers and rural entrepreneurs and USAID FED's request for expressions of interest (Figure 15). The three-hour information sessions were led by USAID FED staff.

Of the 56 participants in the information sessions, 47 (84%) completed the pre-training self-assessment questionnaire, while nearly all (95%) completed the post-training self-assessment questionnaire.

The participants were asked to assess their level of knowledge about the needs of farmers and rural entrepreneurs for knowledge and information services, marketing services, and mechanization services as well as the strategies for delivering these services on a cost-recovery basis.

In the pre workshop evaluation on participants' knowledge and need for marketing services, 28% participants said they were confident compared to 73% at the end of the workshop. While at the end of the workshop, 60% of participants considered themselves knowledgeable about farmer and rural residents' need for information and services, compared to 29% at the beginning of the workshop.



*Figure 15: Participants at fee-based enterprise development services workshop.*

## Component Four: Cross-cutting Activities

### Task 4.1 Gender

#### Leadership and Business Incubation for Women Entrepreneurs



USAID FED published an expression of interest in the four main counties to recruit 20 women from each county for the program. The deadline for submission was April 25. The first training session will take place in Margibi county in May.

The Leadership and Business Incubation program for Women Entrepreneurs aims to address two critical constraints facing women: lower human capital (leadership and business skills) and less access to networks and information. The project will use a combined capacity development approach through basic leadership and business skills training followed by mentorship and a virtual business incubation. The program will be rolled out in two phases:

### **Phase I: Initial training**

- Introduction to Leadership
- Effective Communication and Negotiation
- Public Speaking
- Project Management and Strategic Planning
- Basic Business Skills: Record Keeping and Business, Association, Cooperative Registration

### **Phase II - Mentorship and Virtual incubation**

- Mentorship and virtual incubation implies mentoring women both on a scheduled and on an as needed basis.
- Locate other successful women entrepreneurs in each county who can help mentor the participants.
- Support a minimum of 50 women already engaged in USAID FED activities across the four value chains in the six counties in order to strengthen their skills as well as the organizations in which they operate. However, USAID FED will not exclude women who are not currently beneficiaries if they meet the criteria and are engaged in the value chains.

## **Task 4.2 Youth**

### **Back to School Garden Program**

USAID FED conducted a ToT for four youth agriculture NGOs on strategies for cassava and upland rice production. CYNP, G-CAP, Liberia Integrated Professional Agriculture Service (LIPAS), and Evangelical Children Rehabilitation Program (ECREP) and 36 technical and extension staff (32 male, 4 female) participated in the ToT in Bong County.

Land preparation at some schools is underway and will continue in May. USAID FED extension staff will supervise the extension aides in the day-to-day activity implementation in the counties.

## **Task 4.3: Nutrition**

In April, a total of 36 (32 male, 4 female) individuals received nutrition messages promoting diet diversification during the Local Youth Agriculture ToT extension workshop. It is assumed that the participants will include nutrition awareness in their action plans and pass on the messages to cassava



and rice value chain beneficiaries in the back to school garden program. To date, a total of 404 (360 male, 44 female) individuals have received nutrition messaging.

#### **Task 4.4. Coordination with Partners**

USAID FED consolidated and recommended a list of 35 farming groups to United States African Development Foundation for capacity building grants. USAID FED will continue to support USADF in the selection process.

#### **Task 4.5 Environmental Compliance**

USAID FED recruited an Environmental Monitoring Assistant to support the Monrovia based Environmental Compliance Officer and report on the Environmental Monitoring and Mitigation Plan. The Environmental Monitoring Assistant will be based in Bong County to be closer to the ongoing work in Nimba and Lofa counties.

#### **Task 4.6 Communications**

##### **April News Stories**

USAID FED was featured in local and online media at least 25 times in the month (Table 13). Note the difficulty in tracking news that appears on radio stations throughout Liberia.

*Table 13: USAID FED in the news in April.*

<b>USAID FED news</b>	<b>Local Newspapers</b>	<b>Online News Outlets</b>	<b>Radio and Other media</b>
CARI Livestock Facility Inauguration	3	3	3
National Diploma in Agriculture	5	4	-
Rice Seed Inspector Training	4	2	1

##### **April Success Stories**

USAID approved two Success Stories (attached) in the month of April.

- 1) Small Amounts of Financing Earn Big Rewards for Vegetable Farmers
- 2) Vegetable Farmers Strike a Deal

Attached are three press releases and two success stories.