



# FOOD AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (FED) PROGRAM FOR LIBERIA

MONTHLY REPORT: JANUARY 2014



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**Authors:** Marit Woods and Nicholas Parkinson

**Photo Caption:** Etta Briggs, 30, is a Level Three learner at the Gorblee Public School and she and her colleagues won the FED supported Back to School Garden competition and were honored in January in Grand Bassa county. She exhibited an impressive harvest of pepper, eggplant and gari. The group took home prize money donated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports worth 50,000 Liberian dollars (\$625 USD) to put towards the expansion of their site.

## Acronyms

ACE	Africa Cost to Europe
AEDE	Agency for Economic Development and Empowerment
APDRA	Association Pisciculture et Development Rural en Afrique
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
CYNP	Community Youth Network Program
CVC	Cassava Value Chain
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
ENA	Essential Nutrition Actions
EO	Extension Officer
FED	Food and Enterprise Development
FTF	Farmer to Farmer
FtF	Feed the Future
FUN	Farmer Union Network
GBCC	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
ISFM	Integrated Soil Fertility Management
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract
LAUNCH	Liberia Agriculture, Upgrading Nutrition & Child Health
LCCC	Lofa County Community College
LIFE	Livelihood Improvement for Farming Enterprises
LMEP	Liberia Monitoring and Evaluation Program
LREC	Liberia Renaissance Education Complex
MDF	Market Development Fund

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
NAD	National Diploma in Agriculture
NCCC	Nimba County Community College
NGW	New General Women
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
STTA	Short Term Technical Assistant
TAMIS	Technical Administrative Management Information System
TVET	Technical, Vocational Education and Training
UDP	Urea Deep Placement
UL	University of Liberia
UMU	United Methodist University
WAAPP	West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program
ZOA	Dutch Aid Organization

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## Background

The 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 will be 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

FED works with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), civil societies and the private sector in providing communities access to agricultural inputs (including improved seeds), extension services, nutritious food products, processing services, market information, transportation, credit, agro-business education, training, and enterprise services.

In five years, FED's thrust to expand market linkages is expected to lead to substantial increases in income and job opportunities. 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 the counties of Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Bassa, Montserrado, and Margibi. FED focused 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.

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

FED's approach is collaborative and catalytic. It is driven by the goals and objectives of our partner clients. It aims to increase incomes of rural households and create new employment and livelihood opportunities for Liberians; to improve access to food and household dietary diversity scores of food-insecure Liberians; and to promote the use of improved inputs, better farming practices, and technologies that boost agricultural productivity.

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

## Executive Summary

FED continues to select rice farmer groups in Nimba, Lofa, Grand Bassa and Bong counties. By the end of the reporting period, FED registered 19,071 lowland and upland rice farmers to be assisted during the FY14 rice planting season. These farmers expect to plant over 5,715 hectares of lowland and upland rice.

To stimulate enterprise growth in the rice value chain, FED advanced construction of six rice processing facilities in Bong and Nimba counties. The rice processing centers are located in FED's rice business hubs, which are areas with large numbers of rice farmers who can benefit from a rice mill as well as from mechanized services to be offered in these hubs.

FED began cluster mapping exercises in Bong, Grand Bassa, Nimba and Lofa counties and to date, FED has recruited a total of 8,493 of the targeted 12,000 cassava farmers for assistance in FY14. In addition, FED completed verification of all 84 goat farmer groups for FED assistance in FY14 under the goat value chain.

FED carried out meetings with 20 vegetable farming clusters in four counties to explain the cost sharing strategy for motorized water pumps and to help the cluster design a more effective approach for its use. FED will pay 50 percent of the cost of the pumps. As a result of the campaign, 7 clusters invested a total of 97,750 Liberian Dollars in order to pay their portion of the price of the water pumps. FED also presented the groups with information on sun solar dryers for which FED will also cost share with the cluster.

FED has signed a MoU with the University of Arkansas' Department of Agriculture to assist two Liberian candidates for graduate studies in Plant Pathology focusing on rice and horticultural crops. The students have to fulfill the qualifications required by the University in order to be awarded the assistantships. The Master of Science is a two-year degree program. Following a one year course work, the students will return to Liberia to carry out research for up to 12 months. Research topics will be jointly identified by FED, the student and her/his thesis advisor. Finally, students will defend their theses and complete coursework in order to receive their degrees. The students will be mandated to come back to Liberia to provide technical services to help build the agriculture sector.



## Component One: Increase agricultural productivity and profitability

### Task 1: Value Chain Development

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

##### Production, Harvests and Sales

###### Lowland rice:

A total of 164 rice farmers groups (51 FY13 and 113 newly recruited) received orientation on FED's FY14 rice value chain strategy and training for lead farmers on best practices and implementation strategies for the coming planting season. The total number of farmers in these groups has reached 9,413 (5,411 men and 4,002 women) to plant 3164.3 new hectares of lowland rice in FY14 (Table 1).

FY13 lowland rice farmers harvested an additional 12.08 ha yielding 16.75 MT of dry weight rice in January. FED did not register any sales of rice in the reporting period.

###### Upland rice:

A total of 43 rice farmers groups (13 continuing and 30 newly recruited) were recruited across the four counties. The total number of farmers in these groups has reached 9,658 (6,189 men and 3469 women) to plant 2,551.50 new hectares of upland rice in FY14 (Table 1).

FY13 upland rice farmers harvested a total of 0.822 ha yielding 0.475MT of rice in January. FED did not register any sales of rice in the reporting period.

Table 1: Year to date upland and lowland rice statistics for FY14.

Lowland Rice								
County	Continuing FGs	New FGs	Total FGs	M	F	Total # farmers	Existing Ha	New Ha
Lofa	24	14	38	1,235	823	2058	40	45.32
Nimba	8	64	72	2,660	1774	4434	62	2474
Bong	12	28	40	1,306	1,265	2,571	328	470.00
Grand Bassa	7	7	14	210	140	350	9	175
	51	113	164	5,411	4,002	9,413	439	3164.32
Upland Rice								
County	Continuing FGs	New FGs	Total FGs	M	F	Total # farmers	Existing Ha	New Ha
Lofa	11	22	33	2160	1440	3600	14	115
Nimba	2	8	10	1431	954	2385	14.2	76
Bong			0	2,283	865	3,148	911	1,573.00
Grand Bassa			0	315	210	525	1.9	787.50
	13	30	43	6,189	3469	9,658	941	2551.50

##### Building Farmers' Capacity

###### Lowland Rice Production (ToT)

In preparation for the FY14 production season, 72 selected lead farmers (64 men, 8 women) participated in a four-day ToT on Lowland Rice Production Best Practices and Water Management in Ganta, Nimba County. The training aims to disseminate best practices of rice production through theoretical and audio-visual presentations.

### *Upland Rice Production Best Practices and Water Management (ToT)*

51 MoA and newly recruited FED extension officers and extension aides (47 men, 4 women) participated in a four day ToT on Upland Rice Production Best Practices and Water Management in the reporting period. The participants will support FED upland rice farmers in both improved rice production practices and improved water management systems in order to increase productivity and contribute to increase in local rice production.



*Figure 1: Construction of a rice milling facility in Payee, Nimba county.*

### **Rice Processing Centers**

FED started the construction of three rice mill facilities in the Totota and Garmue communities in Bong county in addition to the three facilities in Nimba county. The processing centers are being built to support aggregation and value addition to rice grown in the two counties. The cost of the equipment and construction of the shelters is shared between FED and the beneficiary enterprises. Four more centers will be built in Lofa (3) and Grand Bassa (1) counties starting in the final week of February.

#### *Bong*

The construction of rice mill facilities in Bong Mines, Totota and Garmue communities is ongoing. In Bong Mines, the foundation construction has started, while at Garmue # 2 the wall for the drying slab has been built and filled. The foundation for the warehouse/machine and store is being built and waiting for casting. The septic tank was dug and the masons are inserting the blocks. The toilet walls are built up to the roof level. In Totota, the group has dug the foundation.

#### *Nimba*

The three rice processing centers in Nimba were roofed in the period while construction continues in Boweh, Dounpa and Payee communities (Figure 1). The structures being constructed in each community cluster are made of three compartments to include a warehouse, milling room and a mini-store for milled rice. Each site also has a drying floor, a parboiling tank and a latrine.



*Figure 2: Women farmers from Arise and Shine in the harvest.*

### **Rice Harvest and Field Fair Event**

A harvest ceremony and field fair marketing event was held at the Arise and Shine farm near Totota on January 18 (Figure 2). The event marked the group's rice harvest on 10 acres of land managed by the Arise and Shine women's farming association, a FED-supported group from FY13. Production numbers are forthcoming, and the rice will be sold at the group's store in Totota. Important stakeholders in the rice value chain were present including local leaders, agro input dealers, and civil service societies.

### **Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) Rice Symposium**

FED delivered a presentation on its FY13 accomplishments and FY14 plans for rice production expansion and value chain upgrading at the MOA sponsored lowland rice symposium at Center of Agriculture Research Institute (CARI) in Suakoko, Bong county. The objective of the Integrated Lowland Rice Farming in Liberia symposium was to harmonize national strategies for lowland rice production and to provide stakeholders a roadmap for the future. There were over 100 including the MOA, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Program (WFP), Swiss Development, German International Development Organization (GIZ), and FED among others.

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

### **Cluster Mapping**

FED began cluster mapping exercises in Bong, Grand Bassa, Nimba and Lofa counties (Table 2). To date, FED has recruited a total of 8,493 of the targeted 12,000 cassava farmers for FY14 assistance. At already selected sites, land preparation is currently in progress for the FY14 planting season. Outstanding.

*Table 2: Year to date FY14 Cassava Farming Group Mobilization.*

<b>County</b>	<b># of Kuus Selected</b>	<b># of Farmers Selected</b>	<b># of Farmers Targeted for FY14</b>	<b># of Farmers to be recruited</b>
<b>Nimba</b>	76	2,000	4,800	2,800
<b>Bassa</b>	180	3,600	3,600	0
<b>Bong</b>	83	1,693	2,400	707
<b>Lofa</b>	35	1,200	1,200	0
<b>Total</b>	374	8,493	12,000	3,507

### **Improving Access to Markets**

FED and partner Dutch NGO ZOA received the final draft of the National Cassava Market Assessment Study from Agri-Impact for review. The partners will meet in mid-February at a joint review meeting to consolidate feedback to the document.

### **Partnerships**

FED participated in the National Cassava Sector Coordination Committee's (NCSCC) annual stakeholder congress. The objective of the meeting was to validate the NCSCC FY14 Workplan. FED delivered a presentation on the constraints faced by Liberia's cassava sector and elaborated on FED's intervention in the cassava value chain.

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

FED completed verification of all 84 goat farmer groups (20 Lofa, 25 Bong, 30 Nimba, and 9 Grand Bassa) for the 2014 goat value chain activities (Table 3). MOUs between FED and the 84 goat producers will be signed in February and March 2014.

Table 3: Year to date FY14 Goat Farming Results.

County	Present #of farmers	Male farmers	Female farmers	Total Goats	Does	Bucks
Nimba	563	305	258	766	623	143
Grand Bassa	162	106	57	404	317	87
Lofa	400	224	176	1,331	949	382
Bong	598	457	141	1,781	1329	389
Total	<b>1,723</b>	<b>1,092</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>4,219</b>	<b>3,218</b>	<b>1,001</b>

### Goat Shelters

FED met with Liberian sawyers to agree upon purchase orders for their services to saw timber for the construction of goat shelters in Bong, Lofa, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties for FY14 goat farmers. FED expects to sign contracts with the sawyers in February and begin shelter construction shortly after.

### CARI Livestock Quarantine Facility

The construction of the quarantine facility continued throughout the month of January, while FED conducted several site monitoring visits to provide technical oversight to the contractor. Areas that were consulted on included watering troughs and feeding bunks most appropriate for goats as well as larger livestock. A feed storage room has been added to the original design in order for supplementary feed to be available for animals upon arrival. The facility will be complete and ready to receive livestock in February. Partner USDA Land O'Lakes (LOL) project has planned the first shipment of goats to arrive in March. FED will complete a Quarantine Facility Management Guide for CARI to provide strategic guidance on the management needs of such a facility.

## Task 1D: Increased productivity and profitability of the vegetable value chain

### Production

In the reporting period, 16 of 20 clusters (6 in Montserrado, 8 in Margibi and 2 in Nimba) have carried out land preparation, field layout and nursery construction for FY14's first vegetable season. FED provided each cluster with tools, seeds and fertilizer for the production of vegetables (Table 4).

Table 4: Year to date vegetable farming results.

County	#of clusters	Male	Female	Total	# of hectares prepared
Montserrado	6	79	33	112	28
Margibi	8	110	34	144	36
Nimba	4	45	28	73	18.25
Bassa	2	15	10	25	6.25
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>88.5</b>

In addition, four clusters in Margibi (Nyankai Ta, Gborfella, Weala and Cinta) completed land preparation and planted 42 plots (10m<sup>2</sup> each) of watermelons, lettuce and pepper.

### Improving Access to Inputs

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FED visited 20 vegetable farming clusters in the four counties to explain to the members the cost sharing strategy for motorized water pumps and to help the cluster design a more effective approach for its use. FED provided each cluster with information on the types of water pumps available and will pay 50 percent of the cost of the pump. As a result of the campaign, seven clusters invested a total of 97,750 Liberian Dollars in order to pay their portion of the price of the water pumps.

FED also made presentations about sun solar dryers for which FED will also cost share with the cluster. Each cluster has selected two carpenters to be trained on building the solar dryer and its use.

FED will provide each member in the cluster with four plastic crates for better handling of their produce during harvesting.

Collection centers will be established in each cluster for bulking of produce. Cluster members have been informed that they are responsible for building collection centers. Each cluster has selected two females to serve as the collection center managers, and each manager is tasked with coordinating collections and pickups at the center. Cluster members are responsible for creating a work schedule for the center managers as well as for deciding if the managers will receive a salary.

FED finalized the 354 vegetable farmers who will benefit from FED's voucher program (See *Subtask 1.2*). The extension officers are providing orientation to these farmers on the voucher program for the upcoming training planned for mid-February.

FED held a meeting with CARE International to discuss the European Union-funded CARE protected cultivation project. FED visited two of the project's protected agriculture shelters and obtained CARE's lessons learned to improve the FY14 strategy to implement similar shelters.

### **Impact Story: Farmer Turns Vegetables into Big Business**



*Figure 3: Ester Peters on one of five blots near her home in Buchanan.*

Ester Peters (Figure 3) and her family walked three days through the forest to escape the Liberian civil war to a neighboring county. They lived in the jungle for two years surviving on okra, rice, sweet potato and palm while the civil war raged in her hometown of Buchanan.

Thanks to Ester's successful vegetable farming, she had saved nearly \$5,000 Liberian dollars before the war started. That money was critical to survival as the family adjusted to their new life of displacement. In 2003, they returned to a house full of squatters.

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Ester Peters jumped right back into the soil and planted vegetables, rice and corn on the little plot of land around her home for the next nine years. Her hard work brought in an estimated 10,000 Liberian dollars during the growing season, January to June, barely enough money to keep all their children in grade school.

In 2012, the USAID Food and Enterprise Development (FED) Program for Liberia recognized her talents for farming and began supporting her and neighboring farmers.

Ester mobilized the community and created a vegetable farming group of 15 people, mostly women. With USAID FED's support, the Superintendent of Grand Bassa County donated 1.2 hectares of land to the women. Every woman farms two or three plots. USAID FED extension officers provided seeds, tools and agricultural training to the women, and even experienced farmers like Ester learned new techniques that make a difference in yields.

"FED gave me better plant spacing skills and made me realize that my plants were too close."

At the end of the 2012 growing season, she sold her vegetables at an estimated 20,000 Liberian dollars (\$250 USD) essentially doubling her income from the year before. Thanks to her reputation as a quality grower, Ester doesn't even have to go to the Friday market in Buchanan; buyers come to her house.

The following year, Ester increased her income to 25,000 Liberian dollars. She and her husband renovated their house and began building a new house for their children on the same compound. Both homes are made from cement, a stark contrast to the wood thatched huts they were living in a decade ago.

In 2013, USAID FED provided Ester and some of the other farmers with training in financial management skills, leadership and organizational management. Using Ester Peters as a vector of hard work and best practices, USAID FED could reach the other group members.

"The key to leadership is patience," explains Ester. "Our farmers want to learn and can easily follow instructions, but if you can't provide motivation, it is hard to make them see the long term investment."

In December 2013, Ester and her husband traveled to Monrovia to witness their oldest son, Albert, graduate from University of Liberia with a degree in criminal justice. He is the first member of their family to obtain a university degree.

### **Subtask 1.1: Special Studies, and MoA data collection system**

There is nothing to report for January 2014.

### **Subtask 1.2: Improve access to agriculture inputs**

#### **Seed Multiplication**

FED started the selection process of 10 Lowland and 12 Upland seed multiplication sites in January (Figure 4). During the selection process, the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAP) has made a verbal commitment to donate 8MT of rice seed to FED's seed multiplication activity on 160 ha.



Figure 4: Establishment of a rice seed multiplication site in Kolahun district, Nimba county.

### Urea Deep Placement (UDP)

FED also started the selection process of 100 new Urea Deep Placement (UDP) adaptive research and best practices sites where FED will scale up UDP activities in FY14.

FED began the process of procuring 150 applicators for the UDP process at both UDP and seed multiplication sites. FED expects to receive and distribute the applicators by early March.

FED negotiated with Gro-green to reduce the price of urea briquettes from \$120/50kg to \$60/50kg. With the reduced price and the yield levels from UDP trials, participating farmers could realize a 32 percent higher net income by using urea briquettes instead of urea granules.

### Voucher Program

The PUA dry season voucher program is set to roll-out in February. FED identified producer organizations targeted for linkages with agro input suppliers, printed voucher materials and selected the business service provider for the business skills training.

In mid-February, FED will 1) provide business skills training for participating agro dealers; 2) provide a voucher program briefing/training session with the agro input suppliers, agro dealers, lead farmers and FED extension officers; and 3) distribute the vouchers to the 354 selected vegetable farmers.

## Subtask 1.3: Agricultural Extension Support

### Knowledge Assessment and Training of Trainers for Extension Staff

FED led two four-day trainings to upgrade the knowledge and skills of extension officers who will then train lead farmers on best practices within the rice and cassava clusters in FED counties of operation. The training included both theoretical and practical field sessions. In order to determine the baseline level of knowledge of the participants FED conducted a closed book examination prior to each training session.



Figure 5: ToT Trainees on rice demo plot in Bong county.

At the end of the training, a similar examination was conducted to monitor absorption of technical knowledge by the trainees. As part of the training, participants were also asked to complete evaluation forms meant to rate the effectiveness of the different methods and modules of the training as well as the instructors who presented them.

## Rice

FED trained 55 Extension officers (50 men and 5 women) from the MOA, ZOA and FED on extension services delivery for the Rice Value Chain (Figure 5). The topics covered under the rice training include an introduction to rice production in Liberia, rice value chain and markets, morphology of the rice plant, growth stages, site selection for upland and lowland rice production, cultivar selection, nursery establishment, land preparation, planting techniques, soil nutrient management, fertilizer use and Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM), weed and pests control (birds, rodents, humans and insects), harvesting methods and calendar and yield calculations among others.

## Cassava

FED trained 70 extension officers (61 men and 9 women) from the MOA, ZOA and FED. Topics covered under the cassava training include an introduction to cassava cultivation in Liberia, production constraints, cultural practices, site selection, land preparation, ridge and mound construction, planting methods, crop management and maintenance, and harvest and post-harvest activities among others.



Figure 6: ToT for extension officers on improved cassava farming.

ZOA currently works in cassava value chain activities in six counties in Liberia including Bong, Nimba and Lofa counties and sponsored the travel cost of the nine MOA extension officers and six ZOA extension officers, all of whom are working in FED's counties of operation. A total of 10 MOA extension officers were trained in improved practices in cassava farming (Figure 6).

## Video Extension Activities

The USAID-funded Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS) project at the University of Illinois partnered with FED to host a capacity building workshop on dubbing and utilizing extension videos in local languages as a tool for agricultural extension and advisory services in Liberia.

The workshop enhanced the capacity of public, private and civil society institutions currently working in agricultural extension and advisory services in Liberia. Workshop participants included the MOA, FED, National Farmers Union Network (FUN) of Liberia, Bureau of National Fisheries and Walapolo Farmers Association. The training was facilitated by Dr. Suiyigbeh Joyous Tata from the MEAS Project, and Francis Chepyegon and Phil Malone from Access to Agriculture, a Kenyan based International NGO.

The training provided participants the necessary skills to translate and edit agriculture videos into local Liberian languages. Two local languages—Bassa and Kpelleh—were selected for the hands on activities. At the end of the workshop, four rice value chain videos including Transplanting, Soil Fertility Management, Effective Weed Management and Parboiling were translated into the two languages.



## Component Two: Stimulate Private Sector Growth and Investment

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

In December 2013, FED sponsored a Policy Forum with key stakeholders from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI), the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the National Investment Commission (NIC), WFP, rice processor Fabrar Rice, agro-input supplier Weinco Liberia. The purpose of the forum was to discuss strategies whereby policy initiatives would complement donor initiatives to incentivize investment and improve competitiveness in the food crop sector, particularly rice. Executive Orders #30 (duty exemption for agri-inputs) and #45 (duty exemption for rice) were discussed at length.

During the reporting period, FED hired rice policy consultant Dr. Eric Wailes to conduct relevant economic analysis in order to 1) develop a plan and timeline on the gradual increase of rice tariff that the GoL can use to support their request for a waiver from the ECOWAS Secretariat; 2) demonstrate the impact of extending EO #30 while supporting a gradual re-instatement of a rice import tariff (the gains and losses for the government); and 3) carry out a study of the price transmission/comparison of imported rice prices to farm-gate level production prices (up country).

During his stay, Dr. Wailes and FED staff met with Hon. Minister Addy of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to gauge government support for incentivizing the private sector in domestic food production. MoCI is prepared to support the agriculture sector through:

- Support for an import license regime that would limit imports of domestically produced food products based on the level of domestic production;
- Support for the Government of Liberia 25 percent local procurement requirement, which would include all food products, especially rice and cassava;
- Support to develop the Liberia Innovation Fund that would provide matching grants for small businesses;
- Commitment to include agriculture as a major focus in the 2014 M/SME Conference to be held April 29-30, 2014.

In addition, the team also met with Mr. Anwar Ezedine, CEO of United Commodities Inc. (UCI), and Mr. George Nehme, CEO of Supporting West Africa Trade (SWAT). These two companies supply 90 percent of the rice imported to Liberia. The purpose of this meeting was to inform these important private sector stakeholders of FED program activities in the rice sector, gauge their interest in investing into the domestic rice value chain, and obtain feedback on the rice policy initiatives FED has been working on. Both companies showed enthusiasm for working with FED and investing in rice (and cassava) processing and marketing schemes.

The results of Dr. Wailes' findings will be presented at a second Policy Forum to be held on February 6th. FED expects participation from high level officials from the MoA, MoF, MoCI, NIC, WFP, Weinco Liberia, Fabrar Rice, major rice importers such as UCI and SWAT, USAID and other USAID implementing partners.

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

#### Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA)

FED and partners Liberia Initiative for Development Services (LIDS) and Educare continue to work with 26 Village Savings and Loan Associations in FED farming groups in all six counties (Table 5).

Table 5: VSLA group results in January 2014 and Q1.

Date	# of Groups	# of Members	Shares Purchased (USD)	Loans (USD)	Interest Earned (USD)	# of Members with Loans
Q1 FY14	26	627	\$18,516	\$16,966	\$1,547	443
January 2014	-	15	\$6,789	\$9,331	\$933	243
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>\$25,306</b>	<b>\$26,297</b>	<b>\$2,480</b>	<b>686</b>

The program includes mentorship in group leadership, managing conflicts and issues, and record keeping over a nine month period until the groups' final payout (disbursement of savings and accrued interest) in July 2014. FED estimates that the 26 groups will generate over \$185,000 in ag-related loans for the farmers at a 15.65 percent annual return for the savings group over a three year period (estimate for year one is \$26K).

During the reporting period, FED hired five temporary county-based Access to Finance extension officers who will assist in the development of a FED-specific VSLA curriculum and will facilitate the roll-out of the VSLA program for an additional 98 groups (approximately 2,940 women). In addition, the Access to Finance extension officers will assist county-based stakeholders, such as traders, processors, and agro-input dealers with their financing needs by linking them to MFIs and where appropriate, to banks.

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

### Task 3.0: Develop Existing Vocational Centers into Centers of Excellence

#### National Diploma Curriculum

FED and the Ministry of Education (MOE) have selected National Diploma Agriculture (NDA) Curriculum statisticians to develop the mathematics and statistics courses for the vocational syllabus. The statistician team is expected to present FED with the new courses in February 2014.

All of FED's CoEs will have reviewed the NDA curriculum and FED will meet with the CoEs in Lofa county at the end of February to compile feedback and make final amendments.

#### Centers of Excellence

##### Grand Bassa County Community College (GBCCC)

FED conducted a meeting with Dr. Zachariah Gaye, Vice President for academic affairs and Provost of Grand Bassa County Community College, Sokowuah K. Subah, Director of the Agriculture Department and Morris Zorbah Assistant Director of the Agriculture Department to discuss GBCC's readiness to become a Center of Excellence (CoE) in FY14. FY14 activities to be carried out include: agriculture demonstration site development, community outreach and extension services program, internship and career counseling and the National Diploma Agriculture Curriculum adoption.

GBCC is expected to officially inform the superintendent of Grand Bassa County of the college's need to acquire 20 acres of land near the college for student demonstration practices and income generation purposes.

#### Lofa County Community College (LCCC)

FED staff visited Lofa County Community College to assess the commencement of renovations on key areas identified in the college's needs assessment. The primary areas of focus include: the library, soils laboratory, internship office, enterprise office, IT office/room and other essential components of the institution tied to the Agriculture Department (Figure 7). To complete renovations, LCCC has requested additional cement, square rods, ceramic tiles and receptacles. FED will procure these items in the following month and renovations are expected to be finished by the end of February.

#### Agriculture Demonstration Sites

##### Booker T. Washington Institute (BWI)

FED held a meeting with the BWI administration and Agriculture Department's technical staff concerning the farm development program at BWI. FED and BWI agreed that BWI will cultivate 0.6 ha of lowland swamp for student demonstration purposes in FY14. This is lower than expected due to budget constraints. In addition, BWI's agriculture department will cultivate one hectare of vegetables and three hectares of cassava in partnership with FED. All the sites for these activities have already been selected.



Figure 7: A classroom at LCCC before and after renovations.



Figure 8: Drip kit demonstration site at BWI Center of Excellence.

Ten students from BWI's agriculture department started demonstration exercises at the drip irrigation demonstration site (Figure 8). Agriculture students are assigned weekly to the drip irrigation site to perform best practices applied to vegetable cultivation.

The students, who were trained by BWI professors, are responsible for the installation of the system, irrigation control, pest and diseases control, compost application, non-chemicals application, and data recording.

In mid-January, BWI students began producing compost as an income generation activity. The first batch of compost is expected to be

available in the next month. Students have met with farmers who will be purchasing the compost for their fields and rice paddies.

## Lofa County Community College

FED has advertised and shortlisted candidates for the LCCC Vocational Agribusiness Education Officer position to support Component Three activities in Lofa county. The new position will be a vital link between FED and the community college administration.

The agriculture department of LCCC, with guidance from FED, produced its farm development proposal budget, which includes three hectares of lowland rice, three hectares of cassava, one hectare of vegetable and three hectares for raising goats. FED is currently reviewing the proposal and will provide feedback at the Strategic Business Plan meeting in Lofa county next month.

### **Capacity Building**

FED has signed a MoU with the University of Arkansas' Department of Agriculture that will send two Liberian candidates for a two year graduate studies program in Plant Pathology. Following one year of course work, the students will return to Liberia to carry out research for up to 12 months.

Under the MoU, FED will help advertise the opportunity and provide the selected students with \$10,000 USD each to help cover travel and moving expenses. Tuition, accommodation and other relevant expenses will be covered through assistantships from the University. FED has begun advertising for the activity at universities in Liberia.

### **Subtask 3.1: Enterprise Service Centers**

In January, FED finalized the hiring of Ms. June Lavelle, an expert in business incubation and business development services. She will commence work in February on the establishment of the Enterprise Service Centers in FED's four core counties. FED is continuing discussions with the USAID IBEX project on the establishment of the Monrovia-based National Business and Development Advisory Center, which is very similar to the Enterprise Service Centers that FED is establishing.

## **Component Four: Cross-cutting Activities**

### **Task 4.1: Gender**

FED facilitated a Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop on Gender Awareness in Bong, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties for MoA and FED Extension officers. The workshop provided the Extension officers with the knowledge and skills to ensure gender equality in all agriculture extension activities. Participants included:

- Bong, 19 Extension officers (15 males, 4 females)
- Nimba, 9 Extension officers (all male)
- Grand Bassa, 7 Extension officers (6 males, 1 female)

### **Task 4.2: Youth**

FED and partners participated in The Back to School Garden Program Awards Ceremony (Figure 9) to honor over 2500 youth farmers from 20 schools in Grand Bassa county. The ceremony also awarded the top three school garden groups with cash prizes to be used towards expanding their gardens.

Participating youth clubs included 10 conventional school and 10 Alternative Basic Education sites in Grand Bassa county. Over the last nine months, the youth farmers have applied the acquired skills and knowledge to

their own gardens by focusing on cassava and vegetables. The Back to School program aims to generate youth interest in agriculture and other businesses supporting agriculture.

The activity illustrates FED's rich network of partners ranging from government ministries and other USAID programs to Liberian civil societies and schools. The partners plan to replicate the activity in other counties.



Figure 9: From L to R Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports, Advancing Youth Project, FED, USAID Deputy Mission Director, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Student Gardener.

### Task 4.3: Nutrition

FED held a two-day Nutrition Mainstreaming ToT workshop for 53 (5 females, 48 males) MoA and FED extension officers. The workshop provided participants with the skills to help farmers improve diet diversification practices as well as information on feeding for infants and young children.

Nutrition messages were incorporated into the Rice Production Best Practices ToT Workshop with lead farmers in Nimba County, and a total of 75 participants (8 females, 67 males) received the information centered on dietary diversity from the Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) package via a one hour presentation.

### Task 4.4 Coordination with Partners

#### USAID field visit at Arise and Shine Farmer Group Site

A delegation from USAID's Washington DC office, led by USAID Global Water Coordinator and Deputy Administrator Chris Holmes, visited the rice farming group and seed multiplication site Arise and Shine Farmer Group in Totota, Salala District, Bong County in the reporting period. The purpose of the visit was to understand FED's interventions to improve water management and rice productivity. The USAID delegation also included Tony Kolb (Urban Health Advisor), Sophie Parwon (Deputy Team Leader, USAID Liberia Health Team), and Ken Hasson (Agriculture Officer USAID Liberia Economic Growth Team). The delegation was accompanied by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture for Administration, Seklau Wiles and Agnes Luz, FED Chief of Party. The visit resulted in a meeting between FED and IWASH to discuss potential collaboration to leverage each other's work to better improve health and nutrition in FED-assisted communities. A MoU is being drafted to outline the collaboration and is expected to be signed in February or March.

### Task 4.5: Monitoring and Evaluation

#### Improving Data Collection Systems

FED's M&E team modified the M&E manual to reflect improved procedures for internally acquiring, managing, and distributing data. The M&E county staff continues to work with the extension officers in gathering and updating farmer group information in order to create a database and to better map FED sites across all the value chains.

The M&E team held a series of meetings with value chain leads to review the FY14 workplan, indicator definitions, and reporting in general. As a result of the discussions, monitoring and reporting templates will be developed and used by field staff to gather timely and accurate data for reporting. M&E expects to complete the reporting templates in February.

### **Monitoring Activities**

M&E staff participated in the rice and cassava ToT in preparation for the FY14 farmer groups. M&E explained the monitoring system, what might be expected of the trainers for data collection, surveys and follow-up activities from M&E. The trainers utilized GPS devices for field measurements.

In addition, the M&E Monrovia office conducted an initial analysis of the rice farmer household survey that was carried out in November 2013. A draft report will be ready by the end data of February 2014.

In the period M&E collected data on:

- Nutrition Training for FED Extension and Ministry of Agriculture Staff
- Lowland rice best practices, water management and nutrition training for Lead Farmers
- Vegetable Seedling Training for seedling producers
- Construction of rice processing centers
- Rice and Cassava Training of Trainers for FED Extension officers and partners.

END OF REPORT