

**THE GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA
(MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE)**



**THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION
AND ADVISORY SERVICES POLICY (2023-2030)**

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FOREWORD

It is an established fact that agriculture is the biggest sector of our economy and provides livelihood for most people. Improvement in this sector is therefore especially important for the development of the whole country. The 14-year civil war has devastated the agriculture economy of the country. The government of Liberia under President George Weah is however committed to the rebuilding of this vital sector as a necessary condition for the general growth of the country's economy as reflected in the Rising Vision 2030 and the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD).

The PAPD recognizes agriculture as one of the critical cogs in the wheel in the socio-economic transformation of Liberia. These policies have the objective a market-led agriculture development through the promotion of sustainable intensive agricultural production and value addition for food security, increased incomes, employment generation and poverty reduction. It is a clarion call for the transformation of the small holder subsistence agriculture into a more sustainable, modern and to a market oriented one.

The Ministry of Agriculture prepared an Agriculture Extension and Advisory Policy in 2012 with the objective of establishing a demand driven and pluralistic extension. However, an assessment of our agricultural extension and advisory services of Liberia is also being faced with challenges including weak linkages between research and extension, inadequate collaboration between the public and private sector extension providers and weak coordination of the private sector extension providers. This policy document has addressed these challenges and have made provision for effective participation by all stakeholder in the extension and advisory services delivery.

The Government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Agriculture, with support from FAO and the EU has therefore assisted the Ministry to review the previous policy, which was prepared 10 years ago, the result of which is this new one that will harmonize, direct and guide the delivery of extension services to farmers, and actors along the various agriculture value chains. The Policy provides for the establishment, strengthening and operation of a pluralistic, demand driven, market oriented, participatory and inclusive agricultural extension and advisory service. The Ministry of Agriculture will also adopt the Agriculture Innovation System approach to extension services

delivery to ensure effective and efficient participation of all the stakeholders in the research and extension system of Liberia.

This policy is in tandem with Government’s agricultural economic development policy of transforming agriculture through market led interventions. We are sure that, the implementation of this policy will bring all stakeholders together to learn and take actions that are necessary and sufficient to move the agriculture sector of Liberia forward. Our deepest appreciation goes to the National Agricultural Extension and Advisory Policy Committee for a good job done. The Ministry also commends FAO and the European Union for facilitating the preparation of the National Agricultural Extension and Advisory.


Hon. Jeanie Milly Cooper
Honorable Minister of Agriculture



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of Liberia is implementing a market-led agricultural development strategy, the success of which, among other things, depends on the ability of research and extension systems to deliver on their mandates of galvanizing stakeholders to use best practices in their operations along the various agricultural value chains. FAO, with financial support from the EU, is therefore implementing the "Linking Extension Research to Farmers for Sustainable Agriculture Food Security and Nutrition" Project, in collaboration with MOA and the Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI) to improve the capacity of the research and the Extension services. The objective of the project is to strengthen Liberia's agriculture Research and Extension Systems to support government's agricultural development goals.

An assessment of the extension and advisory services of the country identified various challenges including; the various departments of the Ministry of Agriculture work independent of each other. MOA/DRDRE field staff strength and capacity is low and as a result the overall agricultural extension coverage is therefore low. In line with the said policy, MOA/DRDRE has also adopted the pluralistic, participatory, and inclusive, demand-driven extension approach to ensure effective services delivery.

FAO, through the project supported by EU funding has therefore provided technical support to the Ministry of Agriculture to develop the National Extension and Advisory Services Policy to guide the establishment and implementation of a pluralistic, demand driven, market oriented, participatory and inclusive extension and advisory service which is capable of providing services to farmers and value chain actors to enable the agriculture sector achieve government's market-led agriculture development policy.

The Policy envisions a pluralistic, market-oriented, demand-driven, and inclusive agricultural extension and advisory service that empowers value chain actors to engage in an innovative and participatory learning to take informed decisions and actions to create wealth and improve their standards of living. Its Mission is delivering an effective, efficient and responsive extension and advisory service for sustainable intensive agricultural production and productivity, increased

household income and improved food and nutrition security through human and institutional resources development, environmental management and mechanism for resource mobilization.

The overall and specific objectives of the National Extension and Advisory Services Policy to provide the legal framework and the enabling environment for the transformation of the existing extension and advisory service into a pluralistic, decentralized, demand-driven, and market-oriented system that effectively contributes to food and nutrition security, employment generation, wealth creation and contribute to the overall socio-economic development of Liberia. The specific Policy Objectives are to;

- a. Improve the organizational and managerial capacity for managing the public sector agricultural extension and advisory services delivery.
- b. To establish and strengthen research-extension-farmer/stakeholder linkages
- c. Promote and co-ordinate private sector participation in extension and advisory services delivery.
- d. Establish and strengthen linkages and coordination between the public and private sector extension and advisory services providers.
- e. Develop and strengthen Farmer Based Organizations for increased quality production and agri-business along the agriculture value chain.
- f. Develop and strengthen human resource capacity for extension and advisory services delivery.
- g. Improve the financial resources allocation for services delivery.
- h. Develop the technical and agribusiness capacity of value chain operators to enable them effectively use best practices to produce and add value to their products in responds to market demands.

In order to effectively implement the policy, National and county-wide workshops will be organized to familiarize stakeholders with the policy, operational plans will be drawn for its implementation and relevant bodies will be establish at both the national and county levels to coordinate the implementation of the policy.

ACRONYMS

ACC	Agricultural Coordinating Committee
AEAS	Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services
AfDB	African Development Bank
AIS	Agricultural Innovation System
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program
CARI	Central Agriculture Research Institute
DRDRE	Department of Regional Development, Research and Extension
DTS	Department of Technical Services
ECOWAP	ECOWAS Agricultural Policy
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FBO	Farmer-based Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
AfT	Agenda for Transformation
LATA	Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda.
LASIP	Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Plan
LIFAAS	Liberia Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
NCCC	National Cassava Cooperative Committee
NCEAS	National Coordinating Committee on Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services
NRFL	National Rice Federation of Liberia
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
RELCS	Research-Extension-Farmer-Liaison Committees
TOT	Training of Trainers
USAID	The United States Agency for International Development

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Agriculture in Liberia

Liberia is a coastal state in West Africa, bordered to the east by Côte d'Ivoire and the west by Sierra Leone. Liberia has a population of about 4.1 million people, 45% of which is below 18 years and about 33% of the population lives around the city of Monrovia (Sigma and Davis 2017). An estimated 51 per cent of the population lives in rural areas with lack of access to basic infrastructure and social services. Poor roads leave many areas inaccessible. According to USAID (2017) Liberia can be classified as a Least Developed Country and a Low-Income Food-Deficit Country and relies heavily on foreign assistance and imports more than 60% of its main staple rice from Asian countries.

The economy depends heavily on exports of minerals (iron ore, gold, diamonds) as a major source of revenue however, agriculture, including forestry, is the primary livelihood for more than 60 percent of Liberia's population and accounted for 31 percent of Liberia's 2020 real gross domestic product (GDP). Liberia's agriculture sector is dominated by subsistence farming systems on uplands that are characterized by slash and burn agriculture, labor intensive- shifting cultivation, low technologies, and use of rudimentary inputs, resulting in low productivity. Small acreages of tree crops are maintained for generating cash income while the major portion of cultivated land (about 87%) is planted with rice, intercropped with vegetables and other food crops. Commercial agricultural activities are exclusively plantation estates of rubber, and to a lesser extent oil palm. Farmers also raise some goats, sheep, chickens, pigs, and ducks. However, the livestock sub-sector was decimated because of years of civil conflicts. Current livestock population is below 10% of national requirements.

The 14 years of the Liberian civil war devastated the agriculture economy of the country, erased years of development, and crippled the whole Liberian economy. Presently Liberia agriculture is faced with various challenges including poor infrastructure, lack of machinery to reduce the drudgery of farming, high post-harvest losses due to unsuitable processing and storage practices (Sigma and Davis, 2017). The demography of agriculture labor force has changed as the youth now shuns farming with the result that the farmers are aged and there is an increase in the number

of women headed households (MOA, 2010). According to MOA (2018) agriculture development is further constrained by low level of productivity due to incomplete knowledge and limited use of technologies and innovations by farmers. This situation is aggravated by the myriad of challenges that confront the research and extension systems including lack of capacity and weak research and extension linkages. There is therefore the need for improvement in the organizational and operational capacity of research and extension to enable them support farmers and value chain actors with knowledge and information about good agricultural practices.

The government of Liberia policies and strategic plans including the Pro poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PADP) the Liberian Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (LASIP II) signal government intension of adopting a market led agriculture development approach to achieve food and nutrition security as well as increase employment and incomes by adopting a market led agriculture development initiative. These policies and strategic plans also identify the need to revamp the research and extension systems to have the capacity to assist government achieve its market-led agriculture development agenda. This National Extension and Advisory Services Policy is therefore being developed to guide the establishment and implementation of a pluralistic demand-driven participatory, and inclusive extension service in Liberia which will be capable of providing the required extension and advisory services to support the production, processing, and marketing of agriculture products by value chain actors.

1.2. The Policy Environment

1.2.1 The International Policy Context

Liberia agricultural development policies are aligned with the socio-economic development frameworks of the United Nations 2030 Agenda, Africa Union's CAADP Strategy and ECOWAS agricultural development as stated below. These international strategic directions are consistent with the policies and strategies being adopted by Liberia achieve food and nutrition security, increase employment and household incomes through improve agriculture production.

A. The UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that, calls for the member countries to enact policies and taken actions to (i) end poverty in all its forms, (ii) ending hunger

(goal 2) ensure food and nutrition security, (iii) build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation per goal 9 (iv) ensure responsible consumption and production (goal 12) and (v) take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact (goal 13)..

b. The AU NEPAD/CAAP Results Framework (2015-2025)

The economic development Policy of Liberia is also aligned to the African Union’s CAADP Strategy and Roadmap to accelerate Africa's Agricultural growth and transformation. One of the key actions to be taken under CAADP's Strategy for increased Agriculture Production and Productivity under its 2015-2025 Results Framework is the need to support agricultural research and development (R&D) and advisory services for the development, dissemination and adoption of technologies and innovations.

C. The ECOWAS Regional Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP 2016-2025).

ECOWAS Agricultural Policy (ECOWAP 2016-2025) which was adopted in 2015 has a vision of “a modern and sustainable agriculture, based on the effectiveness and efficiency of family farms and the promotion of agricultural enterprises through the involvement of the private sector. The Regional Agricultural Investment Program (RAIP) developed based on the ECOWAP include strategies for (i) strengthening support services to producers and the dissemination/use of improved technologies; and (ii) development of agricultural value chains as its focus.

1.2.2 National Policies and Strategies

The National Extension and Advisory Policy is aligned to various Liberia national policies and strategies on agriculture development by focusing on the establishment and operation of a pluralistic and market-oriented extension and advisory services which will support government's market led agriculture development policy.

(A) National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (MOA, 2008)

This is a policy strategy aimed at ensuring food and nutrition security in the country. The strategy recognizes the need to strengthen research and extension systems to enhance their capacities to enable them to provide the needed services for the development of the agriculture sector.

B. National Gender Policy (Ministry of Gender & Development, 2009).

The aim of this policy is to mainstream gender in national development agenda. This policy is linked to agriculture development with its focus on improving women and vulnerable groups access to extension, training, and other agriculture production inputs.

C. Liberia Rising Vision 2030 (Government of Liberia, 2012)

The National Vision is to achieve middle-income country status by the year 2030. It recognizes increase agriculture productivity and incomes as critical to the achievement of this goal. The first phase of this agenda was to be achieved through Liberia's Agenda for Transformation (2012-2017) which recognizes the critical role of extension and advisory services in the transformation process.

D. Liberia's Agenda for Transformation-LAFT (2012-2017)-Steps Towards Liberia Rising 2030.

LAFT is committed to working towards moving Liberia into a middle-income country by 2030 with its focus on inclusive wealth creation. It emphasizes small-holder productivity increases through the provision of effective research and extension services.

E. Liberian Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (LASIP I MOA, 2008)

LASIP I was prepared in partial fulfilment of the requirements of CAADP compact and targets achieving food security and nutrition by improving the small-holder farmers (especially the women) access to extension services and other inputs as well as ensuring the development of competitive value chains and market linkages. Its implementation has been incorporated into LASIP II.

F. Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2018 to 2023 PADP).

The Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PADP) is the second in the series of 5-year National Development Plans (NDP) anticipated under the Liberia Vision 2030 framework. It follows the Liberia's Agenda for Transformation 2012-2017 (LAFT). Pillar 4 of PADP on "the Economy and Jobs", identifies the agriculture sector as the driving force for the socio-economic transformation agenda which are to be implemented using provisions in LASIP II. The

strengthening of research and extension for effective extension and advisory services delivery to farmers and value chain actors is enshrined in the PADP

G. LASIP II (MOA, 2018-2022)

LASIP II aims at promoting an inclusive and sustainable agricultural transformation through catalytic investment in agriculture value chains and industrialization to ensure food and nutrition security, environmental health, jobs, and wealth creation. LASIP II also make provision for the strengthening of agricultural research and extension as well as the development of agricultural value chains and markets as critical to the achievement of governments agriculture development agenda.

2. AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IN LIBERIA

2.1 Historical Perspective

The Agriculture Extension Service was established in 1960 within the Department of Agriculture. At the time it was only the Extension service that was the only government agency that have been interacting with the rural community and thus became an interface between government and the rural dwellers. Agriculture extension was therefore used by government as a tool for promoting agricultural growth and rural development. The Department of Agriculture also established an agricultural experimental station at Sukkot, Bong County, where improve farming practices were tested and demonstrated. This station was letter converted into the Central Research Institute (CARI).

In the pre-war era the extension system of Liberia adopted the traditional linear of Technology (TOT) approach to enhance adoption of recommended practices by farmers (MOA, 2012). Under this approach Agriculture Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) see the technologies developed by the researchers as the only means by which famers can increase their productivity. The extension agents were therefore engaged in teaching and persuading farmers to use modern inputs, new seed varieties, fertilizers, pesticides and farming methods.

In addition to the general extension delivered by the Department of Agriculture, a rubber-extension service was also organized and carried out by the Firestone Rubber Corporation. Firestone leased

200 square miles of lands land for its rubber from the Liberian government since 1926. Individual farmers also produce rubber for sale to firestone. Firestone therefore organizes extension services for members of the Rubber Planters Association to teach and educate them on the best way to manage the rubber tress to produce quality latex.

2.2 Current Status of Extension Services in Liberia

The agricultural extension and advisory system completely collapsed during the 14 years Civil War (1989-2003). Following the Civil War, the International Community provided extension assistance, largely through non-governmental organizations (NGO) and United Nations Agencies. Sigma and Davies (2017) stated that as much as 60 international NGOs were involved in agriculture extension and advisory services in post-war Liberia. However, following the re-establishment of a democratic government in Liberia, most of these NGOs has ceased operations in the country.

The rebuilding of extension services is currently in process. Within the current structure of the MOA, it is the Department of Regional Development, Research and Extension (DRDRE) which have the responsibility for public sector agricultural extension and advisory services delivery. DRDRE is committed to improving services delivery by recruiting and training field staff as well as the decentralization of staff to the county and district levels.

In an effort to develop agriculture, the Ministry of Agriculture has been implementing various donor-supported agriculture development projects. Within the last 10 years, nine (9) agricultural development project have been implemented with funding from the Africa Development Bank (AfDB), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Bank (WB). These projects have extension component which are being executed by the Project Management Unit (PMU) independent MOA structures and programming. The extension efforts of these projects are localized in the designated project areas. The field staff are recruited from outside the ministry, and they maintain close contact with the project beneficiaries only. The focus of their extension delivery is on the developing the capacity of the beneficiary to produce, process and market the chosen agricultural commodity. Some of the projects are also involved in the distribution of farm inputs (seed and fertilizer) to the beneficiaries.

A study carried out by the Project in 2021 to assess the status of Research and Extension in Liberia found out among others that, AEAS are carried out in the main the Department of Regional Development, Research and Extension (DRDRE) of the Ministry of Agriculture. Some private sectors actors, including local and international non-governmental organizations, civil societies, cooperatives, and input dealers also provide services to some stakeholders along the agricultural value chain. The activities of these services providers are however not being coordinated, monitored, or evaluated effectively.

An Assessment of the organizational and managerial capacity of the extension and advisory services in Liberia carried out by the project in 2021 find out that (a) the number of field staff is low leading to low extension: farmer ratio, (b) planning, monitoring and evaluation of extension activities have not been carried out as expected, (c) the private sector extension efforts have not been effectively coordinated, and (d) there is inadequate funding for extension and advisory services activities.

3. PROBLEMS OF THE EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES

FAO, in 2021, undertook a comprehensive assessment of the research and extension systems of Liberia, as part of the implementation of implementing the "Linking Extension Research to Farmers for Sustainable Agriculture Food Security and Nutrition" Project and identified some critical problems which needed government intervention as follows.

3.1 Coordination, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

There is inadequate planning, monitoring, evaluation and coordination of the agriculture extension and advisory services in the country as discussed below.

3.1.1 Synergy among MOA Technical Departments.

The technical departments of Planning, DRDRE (Department of Regional Development Research and Extension (DRDRE) and Department of Technical Services (DTS) works independent of each

other with the result in the lack of the expected synergy for planning, technical backstopping, monitoring and evaluation of extension and advisory services delivery.

3.1.2 Coordination of Public Sector Extension and Advisory Services Providers.

Although MOA, acting through DRDRE, has the mandate for public sector extension and advisory services delivery, other public sector institutions, such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) also deliver some extension and advisory services. The Liberia Forum for Agricultural Advisory Service (LIFAAS) has also been established with the mandate to coordinate agriculture extension and advisory service. However, no mechanism has been put in place to coordinate agriculture extension and advisory services in the country.

3.1.3 Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

In 2012, MOA prepared a National Extension and Advisory Policy document. No strategic Plan however prepared for its implementation and no systematic planning, monitoring and evaluation of the extension and advisory delivery efforts have been carried out.

3.2 Subject Matter and Approaches Adopted for Services Delivery

3.2.1 The Subject Matter

The messages delivered by the public sector AEAS are mainly on the best agronomic practices for the major agricultural commodities including rice, cassava, oil palm, and Livestock. However, the market-oriented-pluralistic extension services being adopted by MOA requires stakeholders to be competent in value addition, networking and agri-business. The value chain actors also need to be informed on crosscutting issues such as gender, environmental management, climate change, equity in services delivery and mitigation of the effects of health pandemics on the agri-food system.

3.2.2 Approaches Adopted for Services Delivery

The main extension methods being used by MOA/DRDRE staff in their extension and advisory services delivery efforts include face-to-face meetings, and periodic interactions with farmers. These extension methods are based on the conventional top- down “Transfer of Technology” (TOT) which focusses on productivity quality increases. However, it is observed that AEAS do

not have adequate knowledge and skills for engaging in the market-oriented, pluralistic, participatory and inclusive extension approaches. This pluralistic extension approach also requires AEASs to facilitate the development of Farmer Based Organizations (FBOs) which can then be engaged in adult learning processes to help members boost their production and incomes. However, the level of FBOs development is low and the benefits of using farmer organizations as innovation platforms for facilitating stakeholder learning and sharing of information and agri-business development is yet to be adopted.

3.3 Linkage among Research, Extension and Farmers

There is weak linkage between research, Extension and advisory services and stakeholders. The failure of research and extension to work closely together has resulted in (a) the lack of voice of the value chain actors in the setting of the research and extension agenda, and (b) the detachment of research and extension from the real farmers' needs and demands. This situation leads to lack of effectiveness of the research and extension systems as value chain actors are not being reached with the technology and innovations they require.

3.4 Private Sector participation

Private sector extension and advisory providers in Liberia include NGOs, civil society organizations and Farmer Based Organization along with agri-businesses, such as input suppliers. These private sector operators do not have a countrywide reach and are centralized around Monrovia. The pluralistic extension approach being adopted enjoins MOA to build their capacity and facilitate the active engagement in services delivery. However no formal mechanism is in place to promote and coordinate the services provision of the private sector.

3.5 Relationship between the Public and Private Sector Extension and Advisory Services Providers

A pluralistic extension service implies that MOA and LIFAAS should promote and coordinate the private sector extension activities. However, there is no formal arrangement in place for the purpose. The attempt by MOA in collaboration with the Liberia Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (LIFAAS) to coordinate and rationalize the collaboration between the private and public sector extension and advisory services providers is in its infant stage and needs to be encouraged.

3.6 Human and Financial Resources for Extension Services Delivery

3.6.1 Human Resources Capacity

MOA has only 64 extension field staff to serve the estimated 1,000,000 farmers in the country and most of the field staff of MIA are mainly high school graduates who have no training in extension and agricultural advisory services delivery. Further the private sector extension providers do not have adequate staff in the field. Consequently, the extension farmer ratio is as low as 1:33,000 leading to scanty extension and advisory services coverage. It is also observed that in-services training of staff has not been carried out as expected and there is no scheme of service, within MOA, for staff professional development and promotion resulting in lack of motivation among the staff.

3.6.2 Availability of Financial Resources

There is inadequate government budgetary allocation to the agriculture sector of the economy resulting in lack of operational funds for extension work. The main source of funding to MOA is the donor funded agricultural projects. These projects are planned and implemented independent of the MOA mainstream programming. The MOA extension Department (DRDRE) is therefore unable to benefit from the financial muscle of these projects. The private sector operators also have low capacity in terms of the field staff strength and sustainable sources of financing.

3.7 Adoption of Technologies and Innovations by Value Chain Actors

The comprehensive assessment of research and extension found out that there is low adoption of improved practices for production, value addition and marketing among the farmers and value chain actors in Liberia. The low adoption of these best practices (technology and innovations) can be attributed to lack of access to technology/innovation and high cost of inputs, risk aversion by small holder farmers, high transport cost and the low economies of scale of the operations of small holder operators with it reluctant disincentive to adopt some of these technologies. Further, the low staff numbers of staff in the field together with the inadequate use of alternative methods (participatory methods, engaging FBOs and use of Information Communications Technology-ICT) resulted in the lack of active AEAS-engagement with and learning by stakeholders which have contributed to low adoption of best practices among stakeholders.

4. PROVISIONS OF THE NATIONAL EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES POLICY

4.1 Rationale for the Policy

The Government of Liberia is adopting a market-led agriculture development policy. This policy is therefore elaborated to guide and direct an extension and advisory services delivery system which is participatory and inclusive in nature and having the organizational and managerial capacity, to facilitate grassroots networking, collaboration, and partnership among value chain actors to enable them to co-innovate to produce and sell their products in response to the demands of the market.

4.2 The Goal

The goal is to provide extension and advisory service that can support the government's market-led agricultural development policy.

4.3 Vision

A pluralistic, market oriented and demand-driven and inclusive agricultural extension and advisory service that empowers value chain actors to engage in an innovative and participatory learning to take informed decisions and actions to create wealth and improve their standards of living.

4.4 Mission

To deliver an effective, efficient, and responsive extension and advisory service for sustainable intensive agricultural production and productivity, increased household income and improved food and nutrition security through human and institutional resources development, environmental management and mechanism for resource mobilization.

4.5 The Objectives of the National Extension and Advisory Policy

The overall and specific objectives of the National Extension and Advisory Services Policy are stated below.

4.5.1 The Overall Policy Objective

The agricultural development policy of the Government of Liberia, as enshrined in the Liberia National Development Plan (2018-2021), is to develop a market-led agricultural economy for food and nutrition security, employment generation, increased income, and poverty reduction. There is

therefore the need to establish and operate an effective, efficient and a market-responsive extension and advisory service that is capable of empowering value chain actors and agri-business operators to produce, add value and sell agricultural commodities on a sustainable basis. The overall objective of this policy therefore is to provide the legal framework and the enabling environment for the transformation of the existing extension and advisory service into a pluralistic, decentralized, demand-driven, and market-oriented system that effectively contributes to food and nutrition security, employment generation, wealth creation and contribute to the overall socio-economic development of Liberia.

4.5.2 The Specific Objectives

The specific Policy Objectives are to:

- a. Improve the organizational and managerial capacity for managing the public sector agricultural extension and advisory services delivery.
- b. Develop and strengthen human resource capacity for extension and advisory services delivery.
- c. To established and strengthen research-extension-farmer/stakeholder linkages
- d. Promote and co-ordinate private sector participation in extension and advisory services delivery.
- e. Establish and strengthen linkages and coordination the public and private sector extension and advisory services providers.
- f. Develop and strengthen Farmer Based Organizations for increased quality production and agri-business along the agriculture value chain.
- g. Improve the financial resources allocation for services delivery.
- h. Develop the technical and agribusiness capacity of value chain operators to enable them to develop and use innovative practices to produce and add value to their products in responds to market demands.

5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The National Extension and Advisory Policy is underpinned by various interrelated principles as outlined below:

5.1 Market-Oriented and Demand Driven Extension and Advisory Services

The government of Liberia has adopted a market led economic development agenda. To increase their incomes, farmers and other value chain actors (including collectors, middlemen and processors) will have to produce to meet the demands of the market in terms of quantity, quality and time. This implies that extension and advisory service must "focus on the needs of the people as dictated by market situations". The extension and advisory service must ensure that farmers and other value chain actors have access to market information that will enable them to produce and add value to meet the needs of the market in order to make profit.

5.2 Pluralistic Extension and Advisory Service

In addition to MOA, extension and advisory services is now being provided by a host of private sector entities. The government, therefore, must provide the enabling environment by establishing the necessary institutional structures and providing the needed operational support to motivate and encourage the involvement of the private sector in extension and advisory services. The public extension agencies can also partner with private agencies to fund and deliver extension and advisory services.

5.3 Participatory Approaches

The participation of the value chain actors is of fundamental importance for the success of any extension effort. This will require the active participation of the target group in setting the extension agenda, active learning, innovating, and sharing of information among themselves. The use of participatory approaches and methods such as Agriculture Innovation system and related methods of innovation platforms and farmer field schools has the potential of facilitating stakeholder learning, decision making and adoption of best practices.

5.4 Knowledge Management and Communication

The main responsibility of extension and advisory services is to facilitate effective flow of knowledge and innovation among farmers and other value chain actors. This also involves knowledge management i.e. the creation, storage, and dissemination of knowledge. Knowledge must however be communicated in the form and manner as to be **understood for informed decision making and action**. In Agriculture Innovation System (AIS) effective communication is achieved by involving stakeholders in the learning process initiated through the establishment of innovative platforms. This is similar to the social network or negotiation model of communication

which takes into consideration (a) other simultaneous communications within the wider environment of the sender and receiver and (b) the impact of the wider political and social environment of the sender and receiver on the interpretation and use of messages.

The emphasis of this policy is therefore on the development of an extension and advisory service that ensures effective communication of knowledge and innovation by (a) adopting a participatory learning approach which take on board the views of all stakeholders and (b) considering the socio-economic and political environments of value chain actors to ensure effective use of the information and innovations generated.

5.5 Stakeholder Economic-Interest Groups and Farmer Organization

Viable stakeholder-economic-interest groups and farmer organizations can be used for adult learning and to pursue the economic interest of group members. As a member of the group the value chain member can benefit from the large scale of operation of the group or organization.

5.6 Value Chain Consideration and Agri- Entrepreneur Development

The increase in agricultural incomes of stakeholders depends on their ability to network and operate along the agricultural value chain with the market in mind. It is therefore important that, agriculture extension and advisory services provide opportunities for all actors to learn to take evidence-based and informed decisions that improve their performance in relation to the activities of the other actors along the entire commodity value chain. The extension and advisory service must also facilitate the development of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and practices among the agriculture value chain actors. Value chain considerations will also ensure that value chain actors use technologies that enable them to produce and sell product that are demanded by the market. The profits made by engaging in market-led activities will enable farmers to make profits and subsequently continue to adopt the best and productive technologies and innovations.

5.7 Contextual Relevance

The extension and advisory services providers will be encouraged to work with stakeholders to learn through their problems to arrive at the solutions that are relevant to the context of the value chain actors. The policy therefore advocates for the exploration and use local and experiential knowledge of stakeholders in situations to arrive at context specific interventions.

5.8 Equity in Services Delivery

The policy advocates for equity in services delivery. Extension and advisory services providers have the responsibility of making conscious efforts to serve women, youth, disabled persons, and the hard-to-reach people to ensure that no one is left behind in the development effort.

5.9 Networking and Partnerships

Agriculture value chains work best when their actors develop and maintain healthy relationships to acquire knowledge, cooperate to take decisions and actions that lead to the production and sale of higher-quality services and products. Extension and Advisory Services providers must therefore encourage value chain actors to network and forge partnerships among themselves to facilitate the flow of knowledge, information, products and quality business services for informed decision making and action.

5.10 Environmental Sustainability

The extension and advisory service will promote sustainable practices and facilitate value chain actors to mitigate and adapt to the climate change effects.

6. THE POLICY INTERVENTIONS

The Policy Interventions with their related objectives are grouped into four main categories to address the challenges identified with extension and advisory services namely; (a) building the capacity of farmers and other value chain actors in sustainable production, value addition, and value chain management, (b) improving the institutional and organization capacity for effective management of the extension and advisory services delivery system, (c) ensuring effective participation of the private sector in the delivery of agriculture and advisory services, and (d) making provision for adequate resources for the delivery of extension and advisory services.

6.1 Building the Capacity of Farmers and Other Value Chain Actors in Sustainable Production, Value Addition and Value-Chain Management.

6.1.1. To Develop the Technical and Agri-Business Capability of Value Chain Actors.

There is need to enhance the knowledge and skills of farmers and value chain actors to enable them adopt best practices in production, value addition and agribusiness. Through the

implementation of this intervention the capabilities of farmers and value chain actors to demand for services and to apply appropriate technology and skills to produce in response to market demands will be enhanced.

This objective will be achieved by.

- a. Building the capacity of small and large-scale producers for sustainable agricultural production and intensification. This will be done by engaging extension services providers, farmer associations, individual farmers and research, through the use of appropriate participatory adult learning methods, such as innovation platforms, to facilitate self-directed learning along the agricultural value chain for informed decision making and the use of best practices and for intensive and sustainable production, value addition and marketing.
- b. Providing information and facilitating networking among relevant actors along the agricultural value chain. The extension and advisory services providers will share information about all the relevant actors on the value chain, support stakeholders to learn from each other, broker knowledge and services for informed decision making by value chain actors.
- c. Improving the knowledge base of the farmers and value chain actors on the relationships between production and the markets. Awareness will be created among value chain actors about the demands of the market in terms of the type, quality, quantity, time and price of commodities through the dissemination of market information. This is expected, not only to provide access to information required but it will also help improve value addition, increase investment and enhance trade in key value chains.
- d. Expanding the subject matter of extension and advisory services delivery_incorporating cross cutting and emerging issues such as gender, youth, climate change, natural resource management, HIV/AIDS, and the management of the effects of pandemics on the agrifood system into the adult learning process. Sustainable practices, such as agro-ecology and other nature –based approaches which are respectful of environment will be promoted to help value chain actors to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.
- e. Facilitating value chain actors to develop entrepreneurial and value chain management skills needed for the management the business aspects of the operations and also having information on how best to deal with emerging and cross cutting issues that affects their businesses and livelihoods.

- f. Developing and deploying participatory and other effective extension approaches and methods to enhance the interaction and learning opportunities for value chain actors. The services providers will adopt the agriculture innovative approach by which AEAS will facilitate value chain actors to establish innovative platforms to facilitate their own learning and brokering of knowledge and services along the whole value chain. It will also achieve effective communication through the establishment of a knowledge management process which makes relevant information, technologies, and innovations easily available and accessible to all value chain actors.
- g. Ensure timely access to quality and relevant advisory services to value chain actors by using all stakeholder contacts as innovation platforms to facilitate co-creation of knowledge and innovation.

6.2 Improving the Institutional and Organizations Capacity for Effective Management of the Extension and Advisory Delivery System

6.2.1 to Improve Capacity for Managing the Extension and Advisory Services Delivery

This intervention aims enhancing the capacity of MOA for planning, coordinating, monitoring and evaluation of the public sector extension and advisory services deliver by;

- a. Restructuring MOA for better coordination of the activities of the technical departments of planning, extension, and the department of technical services for the achievement of better planning and technical backstopping of extension and advisory services delivery in the country. This will involve the appointment of a coordinating or principal director to supervise and coordinate the technical activities of the three technical departments of MOA.
- b. Improving performance monitoring and evaluation of agricultural extension and advisory services by both private and public sector operators. MOA will develop a strategic plan and operational plans together with an M&E framework to guide the planning and implementation of extension and advisory services delivery in the country. This will also involve deployment of a participatory M&E system in which the value chain actors will be actively involved in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the extension and advisory services delivery.
- c. Establishment of a Technical Coordination Steering Committee to harmonize and coordinate the extension services delivery being undertaken by public sector institutions. Presently public extension and advisory services is provided by various public extension agencies (MOA, MIA, Youth and Sports, Women Affairs, Ministry of Commerce) in a

much uncoordinated manner. MOA will therefore establish and operationalize a National Coordinating Committee on Agriculture Extension and Advisory Services (NCEAS) for coordinating the various extension activities being undertaken by government agencies in collaboration with LIFAAS.

- d. Enhancing collaboration, partnerships and communication between the public and private Agricultural Extension and Advisory service providers. To enable better coordination, monitoring and partnerships as well as and efficient linkages for increased harmony in the implementation of the country's AEAS agenda, the Government will establish pluralistic extension and advisory services coordinating bodies at the National, County and District levels in collaboration with LIFAAS.

6.2.2. Establish and Strengthen Linkages among Research, Extension and Other Stakeholders

The aim of the policy is to establish and strengthen institutional arrangements and mechanisms that foster coordination, collaboration, partnership and synergy between research, extension, trainers, farmers and other value chain actors by;

- a. Developing and operationalizing mechanisms to promote sustainable linkages among research, extension, and farmer/stakeholders. This will be done by forming National, County and District Research-Extension-Farmer Liaison Committees (RELCs), signing Memorandum of Understanding between research and extension to undertake joint activities to the benefit of farmers and value-chain actors.
- b. Developing and maintaining close working relationship between training institutions, MOA and extension/advisory services providers. This will be done by signing agreements between MOA and the state universities such as University of Liberia and community colleges to ensure that tertiary students in extension are trained in response to the human resource needs of the services providers and for these tertiary training institutions to assume formal responsibility for the in-services training of the staff of extension and advisory services providers.

6.3 Ensuring Effective Participation of the Private Sector in the Delivery of Agriculture Extension and Advisory Services.

6.3.1 To Promote Private Sector Participation in Extension and Advisory Services Delivery

This intervention will be carried out by:

- a. Establishing a unit within DRDRE of MOA tasked with the responsibility of

promoting private sector participation in extension services delivery. The unit will keep a register for all private sector extension services providers, hold periodic meeting with the private sector operators, and make periodic assessment of their performances and make sure that they perform according to set standards. The unit will also collaborate with international NGOs such as LIFAAS to facilitate and coordinate the establishment of services provider's associations and networks.

- b. MOA will develop and implement strategies for private sector (NGOs, FBOs, private firms) participation in agriculture extension and advisory services delivery.
- c. Developing and implementing standard for agricultural extension and advisory services and code of behavior to be adopted by all services providers.
- d. Establishing effective working relationship, the public and private sector extension providers by forming and operationalizing appropriate coordination and linkage mechanisms.
- e. Facilitating the establishment of working relationship among themselves. The private sector providers will be facilitated to form services providers association. The private extension and advisory services providers will also establish a digital platform to facilitate coordination and communication among members.

6.3.2 To Develop and Strengthen Farmer Based Organizations.

This policy intervention aims at encouraging farmers and value chain actors to empower themselves by coming together to form economic-interest groups that will empower them to increase their levels of production, processing and also enable group members benefit from the economy of scale. The strength of social cohesion of the group can be used to demand services and to influence government policies that can benefit farmers and value chain operators. This objective can be achieved by;

- a. Strengthening the capacity of existing farmer-based organizations and transforming them into effective and functional groups through technical and management training as well as encouraging better organization and management of these groups.
- b. Facilitate value chain actors to form and nurture viable farmer organizations and build their capacity and skills to demand and broker production and agribusiness promoting services

which will enable them to operate effectively in their chosen agriculture commodity value chain. The Ministry of Agriculture will collaborate with CDA to convert these Farmer Organizations into limited liability cooperatives and Business Centers to enable them become viable agri-businesses that can create wealth for their member and thereby become sustainable.

- c. Using these groups as "innovative platforms" to facilitate learning among group members and to encourage the use of such groups as business entities to help increase the revenue of group members.

6.4 Making Provision for Adequate Resources for Extension and Advisory Services Delivery

6.4.1 To Develop and Strengthen Human Resource Capacity.

The aim is to improve the effectiveness of the extension services providers by building the capacity of the staff through training, professional development, and adequate motivation. This will be done by;

- a. By ensuring adequate Pre-employment training in agriculture and modern extension methods. MOA will collaborate with the agricultural training institutions for continuous update of the pre-employment training curriculum to ensure that the professional training programs respond to the changing trends in the agricultural industry.
- b. Enhancing regular In-service training for staff in technical areas, functional skills, communication and modern extension methods. MOA and the other services providers will ensure adequacy of well-trained staff to sustain effective extension delivery.
- c. Enhancing Career Development of staff through in-service training, upgrading of professional skills and further academic training in specialized areas of agriculture production and management.
- d. Motivating field staff by operationalizing beneficial conditions of service as well as providing adequate tools and logistics for field work. MOA and other services providing institution will provide required facilities, competitive remuneration, and provide opportunities for personal development of their staff.
- e. Promoting gender equality among extension staff and removing career obstacles for women.

6.4.2 To Improve Financial Resources for Services Delivery

This objective is meant to develop and implement innovative ways of ensuring sustainable financial resources for extension services delivery by

- a. Ensuring that government increase its budgetary allocation for agriculture administration and development. In order to have an enhanced budgetary allocation for agriculture extension and advisory services, MOA will engage in better budgeting and lobbying of government for a fair-share of budgetary allocation to the agricultural sector.
- b. Mainstreaming all donor funded agricultural development projects into MOA's programming mechanism. This entails the use of MOA structures, processes and staff to implement the extension component of the various agricultural development projects to ensure the whole extension and advisory system of the country benefits from donor funds.
- c. Establishing an agricultural development fund by levying all agricultural imports or mobile phone transactions e-levy system to be established for the purpose.
- d. Engaging in Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs) to solicit funds and to achieve efficiency in services provision. Selected extension and advisory programs can be implemented as PPPs with innovative funds arrangement from donors, government and agri-business firms. This will include public sector contracting-out staff and farmer training sessions to the private sector to ensure cost effectiveness.
- e. Encouraging and supporting NGOs and for-profit private sector operators to source for donor funds. Some donors prefer supporting private sector rather than government initiatives. Government will therefore encourage and facilitate financial resource mobilization efforts of NGOs and the private sector to enable the extension system get more resources from donor grant schemes and sponsorships.

7. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Effective implementation is critical to achieving the goals of this investment program

Framework. The implementation of this policy requires the involvement of key organizations including public, NGOs and private sector at various levels and their active participation is required for the success of the process. However, Ministry of Agriculture is responsible for the development and seeking cabinet approval for the policy and will thereafter develop the strategic plan for its implementation. The success of the implementation of the policy further depend on the putting in place some institutional and operational measures to ensure continued focus,

commitment, coordination; accountability of efforts and resources; and outputs at the national, sector, and local levels are as follows:

7.1 National Level Activities.

The following activities will be executed at the national office.

- a. Conduct national workshop to familiarize the policy
- b. Develop Strategic plan for the implementation of the policy.
- c. Ensure national level coordination of policy implementation.
- d. Establish a national coordination body for public sector extension and advisory services providers.
- e. MOA should collaborate with LIFAAS to facilitate private sector extension services delivery and through the formation of private sector coordination mechanisms including the formation of association of private sector operators and relevant platforms for collaboration and communication.
- f. Establish mechanisms to strengthen collaboration between (i) MOA, LIFAAS and other public sector organizations involved in extension and advisory services delivery, and (ii) public and private sector extension and advisory services providers.
- g. Establish Research-Extension-Farmer/Stakeholder Linkage Committee at various levels. This Committee will also coordinate inputs from the county and district levels into MOA annual plans and programs.
- h. Establish mechanisms for collaboration and networking among private sector extension and advisory services providers
- i. Develop and implement strategy for funding of extension and pass relevant laws if required.
- j. Establish a National Agricultural Sector Working group which will meet quarterly for the purposes of discussing government and donor investment programs in agriculture.

7.2 County and District Levels

At the county and district levels the following activities will be carried out;

- a. Conduct county level workshop to familiarize the extension among key stakeholders.
- b. Establish the research, extension, farmer/stakeholder linkage committees at the county and district levels.
- c. MOA to establish County and District Extension and Advisory Steering Committees, in collaboration with LIFAAS and other extension and advisory services providers to facilitate the collaboration, networking and partnership among agricultural extension and advisory services providers at the grassroots.

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