



FOOD AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT (FED) PROGRAM FOR LIBERIA

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Photo Caption: *FED vegetable farmer from the United Farmers Association in Montserrado County was awarded 250,000 LD to finance the expansion of his peri-urban agriculture business.*

DISCLAIMER

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

ACRONYMS

ACE	Africa Cost to Europe
AEDE	Agency for Economic Development and Empowerment
APDRA	Appaloosa Distance Ride Association
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
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
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

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Background

The Food and Enterprise Development (FED) Program for Liberia is a USAID-funded initiative that began implementing a strategy, incorporating women, youth and the government of Liberia to support the agriculture sector in achieving food security—in terms of food availability, utilization, and accessibility — by building an indigenous incentive structure that assists a range of agricultural stakeholders to adopt commercial approaches.

This incentive structure is built upon:

1. Improved technology and management practices for productivity and profitability;
2. Expanded and modernized input supply and extension systems;
3. Commercial production, marketing, and processing;
4. Enterprise Services;
5. Workforce Development.

FED works with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the private sector to link communities to agricultural inputs (including improved seeds), extension services, nutritious food products, processing services, market information, transportation, credit, as well as appropriate education, training, and enterprise services.

Over the life of the five-year FED program, expanded market linkages will lead to substantial income and private enterprise growth along with major increases in the production, processing, marketing, and nutritional utilization of rice, cassava, vegetables, and goats in Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Bassa, Montserrado, and Margibi counties. These counties are being targeted in the context of regional development corridors that foster intra- and inter-county commerce, simultaneously improving food availability and access for all Liberians.

FED's methodology is market-led, value chain-driven, continuously dedicated to indigenous capacity building, and specifically focused on benefiting Liberia's women and youth. FED's approach aims to be collaborative, catalytic, and driven by the goals and objectives of our partner clients. It will lead to increased incomes for rural households, new employment opportunities for Liberians, expanded access to food and improved household dietary diversity scores for food-insecure Liberians, in addition to the adoption of improved inputs, farming practices, and technologies which boost agricultural productivity.

FED is implemented by five partners including: Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), Winrock International, International Fertilizer Developmental Center (IFDC), Louisiana State University and CADMUS.

Executive Summary

FED celebrated a big victory in the first month of the fiscal year after five FED supported vegetable farmer groups in Montserrado and Margibi counties signed loans with local MFI Liberia Entrepreneurial & Asset Development (LEAD) totaling \$880,000 LD (\$11,000 USD). Three groups signed loans worth \$1,875 USD, another for \$2,250 and the fifth group, \$3,125 USD.

Prior to receiving the loans, FED assisted all five groups with opening bank accounts at EcoBank and setting up proper financial record keeping systems in order to qualify for the loans. The loan terms are set at six months with a of 16% interest. Though the loans have been given to qualified individual farmers, LEAD requires that each farmer is involved in a structured group in order to maintain accountability.

FED also furthered its work with the Ministry of Agriculture and other stakeholders in the area of agriculture policy by organizing a policy roundtable discussion to address investment incentives, seed, livestock, rice and land policies.

FED and the Ministry of Education distributed the National Diploma Curriculum for Agriculture to four high schools and the three community colleges for testing during the current academic school year.

Farmers assisted in FY13 continued harvesting rice in lowland and upland sites across the six counties, Lofa, Nimba, Bong, Grand Bassa, Margibi and Montserrado. The majority of the 20 Ultra Deep Placement (UDP) sites have been harvested. Initial results across FED supported rice farms showed very encouraging yields ranging from three to over five metric tons per hectare.

FED and partners judged the participating student gardens of the Back-to-School Garden Competition. The program forms part of FED's initiative to invigorate Liberia's youth with agriculture and give them the tools and knowledge to turn farming activities into a viable profession. Each garden was judged according to gardener's motivation, use of improved methods and creativity used during activities. The Little Bassa Public School Garden was voted number one from the 20 participating schools.

The FED team presented its FY14 Workplan and strategies on October 30, 2013 to officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, BWI, community colleges, USAID projects and USAID Officials.

Implementation of FED's Workplan for FY14 has commenced with county teams focusing recruitment of new farmers for FY14.

Component One: Increase agricultural productivity and profitability

Task 1 Value Chain Development

Task1A. Increased production and profitability of the rice value chain

Production

FED and implementing partner, ODAFARA of Lofa County, conducted field visits to 32 communities to assess potential lowland areas totaling 89 hectares in terms of potential (water and soil resources) for seed rice production for FY14 interventions. FED and partners conducted visits to 194 hectares and 11.02 hectares of lowland areas in Nimba and Bong counties.

The FY13 rice harvest continues with sample measurements of wet and dry weights at each site. A total of 24 sites in Bong, Nimba, Lofa and Grand Bassa were successfully harvested. Rice was harvested from field trial plots to test the difference in yield between Urea De-Placement (UDP), Urea Broadcast (UB), and Farmer Practice (zero urea/control plots.) The number of sites harvested is still too small for a conclusive observation.

Nearly two hectares were harvested at four UDP sites in Lofa County producing an estimated 2,520 kg of rice, which has been threshed and bagged. Rice harvests at five upland sites with an area of 3.91 hectares produced a total of 1,014kg of threshed and bagged rice ready for market.

A total of fifteen lowland and nine upland demonstration sites were harvested in the period. The varieties planted on demonstration sites include: Nerica L-19, FKR-19, Nerica L-2, Suakoko -8 and Wita -4.

The Lofa county team has begun identifying, and engaging partners for possible market linkage to do business with our farmers for 2013 harvest period. Six more upland sites in Lofa county are in the mature and ripening stages and ready for harvest, while threshing and field maintenance are ongoing activities in the various upland sites that have already begun harvesting.

Over 100 farmers in Nimba have received additional seed rice totaling 10,540 kg from FED to plant on their individual land areas, which will increase the number of hectares supported by FED. Over 95% of category B and C groups have completed transplanting and rice is now in a vegetative stage.

Groups (Figure 1, 2) that harvested in Bong during the course of the month planned to keep 30% of their rice to expand their fields for the next farming season while selling the remaining 70%, creating a source of finance and hopefully empowering the group members.



Figures 1 and 2 Janyea, Bong County, Upland Rice Harvest

Processing

FED has started collaboration with Fabrar Liberia Inc, the only industrial rice mill in Liberia, to help the company in its expansion plan to ensure a market for the incremental production coming from the farms of FED beneficiaries. IBEX is collaborating with FED in helping to improve Fabrar's profitability by coming up with relevant analyses. FED and LESSP are collaborating in helping to find appropriate renewable energy power sources to reduce dependence on diesel and improve competitiveness of the company's product.

FED staff and independent contractor, Julius Kieh, conducted a ten-day site assessment for the construction of eight rice processing centers in Bong, Lofa, Nimba and Grand Bassa counties. The assessment included soil observations and technical observations at the sites and communities. MoUs with the community leaders and farming groups were signed in September 2013. Findings from their field trips are below:

- I. Land ownership is not a problem at the communities visited, thus the project could proceed with the construction.

2. FED needs to select flat sites where potential runoff will not lead to land erosion.
3. The sites selected are easily accessed by transport and delivery trucks to facilitate the transport of material on time. However, current conditions along Lofa road indicate that moving materials to and from site would require longer delivery periods due to the deteriorating road.
4. The lack of sand in some locations would require transportation from distant sources.
5. In Grand Bassa County, the Kpelle Town site presented a minor challenge due to a broken bridge. The bridge is supposed to be repaired by the end of November 2013.

Recruiting for FY14

To date, FED has pre-selected 65 rice sites for FY14 demonstration and/or production in Nimba, 28 sites in Lofa, and 106 individual farmers were identified and recruited in Grand Bassa. Additionally, two farmer groups with a proposed land area of four hectares were recruited in Grand Bassa. Site selection and area measurement with GPS is ongoing to obtain the total land area before commencing with land preparation.

Task1B. Increased production and profitability of the cassava value chain

The cassava value chain and extension team have conducted field visits to discuss with the county teams the FY14 strategy and approach for the cassava value chain. Discussions with the technical teams in the field have given the team a clearer understanding of the strategy. The FY14 strategy includes the following strategies:

1. The FY14 approach will be cluster-based aimed at linking production to processing and access to markets.
2. The group farming concept will be replaced by the local *kuu* system to encourage adoption of improved technology on individual farms.
3. The team will discuss with the FY12 and FY13 farming groups a viable exit strategy for those groups that are not located in the districts of focus in FY14.
4. In FY2014, Only *kuu* leaders will be given improved cassava cuttings and peanuts and cowpeas for demonstration purpose. The rest of the farmers will be trained on improved practices that can increase their yields.

To jumpstart FY14 activities, the Grand Bassa and Nimba teams have started the process of selecting priority production communities in select districts. The Grand Bassa team has so far selected 214 individual farmers in District 2 covering a total area of 321 hectares (each farmer will cultivate 1.5 hectares of cassava in the next planting season) and 7 farming groups in District 3 that will cover 14 hectares.

In Nimba County, 14 communities have been selected in Zoe-Geh and grouped in four clusters. A total of 28 communities were selected in Gbelay-Geh and grouped in 5 clusters.

Four FY13 groups in Grand Bassa (Wheagblekon, Kpain, Kpain Gbo) harvested 761kg of cassava tubers in the period and sold the harvest for \$ 2,800 Liberian Dollars (approximately \$35 USD).

All cassava farming groups in Lofa, Bong and Nimba have ensured that demonstration farms were weeded and the decayed cuttings replaced.

Beneficiary selection process is ongoing in Nimba, Bong and Lofa.

Task 1C. Increased production and profitability of goat value chain

FED signed a MoU with USDA's Food for Progress/LOL Project. In the MoU, FED will support the goat importation program of LOL through the construction of a quarantine park at CARI. Meanwhile, LOL will provide FED with 400 improved breed of billy goats coming from the satellite stations of ITC in Senegal. FED has already commenced preparation of the quarantine park construction.

FED completed the selection of new goat demonstration communities and groups for FY14 in the three target Districts of Sanniellie-Mah, Zoe-Geh and Gbehlay-Geh in Nimba County. A total of 30 sites have been identified in 15 communities (two sites per community) in the target districts.

FED purchased six mature bucks—or billy goats—from farmers in nearby communities and placed them in the three goat herds in Bayleglay in order to increase breeding. The addition of billy goats is the response to Extension Staff's recommendation to purchase bucks for the groups in Bayleglay, as well as Woyeanue Farm in Ganta.

FED continued the training of community animal health workers (CAHW) in Blaygbahn from October 4-7, 2013 with 13 participants (10 males and 3 females) representing goat groups from: Blaygbahn, Neorpeh, Duwein, Gonjay, Saturday Judges, Dewor, and Gorgbahn.

During the period, farmers from two Nimba county communities experienced outbreaks of what is referred to as Izilonda Emlonyeni. To curtail the spread of the disease, five kids and 38 adult goats were treated with FED procured oxy-tetracycline.

Two hand pumps have been installed at two of the seven goat communities (Neorpeh and Blaygbahn).

In Grand Bassa county, FED selected nine goat communities for FY14 and submitted the list to M&E. There are four goat communities in each of Districts 2 and 3 and one community in District 4. Also in the period, Grand Bassa goat groups saw their herds deliver 13 kids (six does and seven bucks) and experienced only one mortality in the month. Goat farmers expect to begin selling goats in the month of December for the Christmas holiday.

Subtask 1.2 Improve access to agricultural inputs

FED's Input Supply team commenced the identification and selection process for 50 future seed multiplication sites across all counties (30 upland sites and 20 current UDP sites), by expanding the lowland land area to 125 hectares.

The input supply team met with Aaron Marshall of CARI on Seed Certification Protocol and development of their curriculum and training manuals. CARI agreed to let FED develop and document the protocol they currently have in place and develop a training manual to train future seed inspectors.

In collaboration with the cassava value chain, and International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), FED has begun the process of importing 11 new cassava cutting varieties from Nigeria for genetic screening by CARI. The improved varieties are disease resistant and will be screened by CARI before being considered for distribution to FED farmers.

The Pilot Voucher program targeting rice farmers ended on October 23rd.

- A total of 1,093 vouchers were prepared by FED for distribution; of which 805 vouchers were collected by farmers.
- Of the 805 vouchers distributed, 619 vouchers (76.9%) were redeemed. The number of redeemed vouchers exceeded FED's expectations and shows that if the farmers understand the product and understand their value, they are prepared to pay for inputs (see table below).
- A total of 264 farmers bought 50kg bags, and 246 farmers bought 25kg bags, showing a demand for smaller package sizes.
- A 70% redemption rate is satisfactory according to voucher expert, Allan Mansfield.



Figure 3. Lessons Learned session at the FED office in Bong county.

The FED input supply team held a Lessons Learned Conference (Figure 3) at the FED office in Bong County on 25 October. Participants included 19 people (4 females, 15 males). Lessons learned from the session include:

- There is a lack of communication between farmers and vendors;
- The restriction on the amount of fertilizer a farmer could purchase hindered the farmer's ability to cover large farms;
- The wrong season for fertilizer limited the farmer's ability to use the input;
- Farmers were pleased that the participating vendors were easily accessible;
- The reduction in the price of fertilizer allowed farmers to purchase more; and
- Demonstrations on the application of fertilizer are useful.

In the future, the farmers recommended that FED should designate a demonstration site for farmers to learn proper application tactics before distribution of the vouchers. Farmers prefer that the voucher program run throughout the year, instead of during just one season, to enable other farmers in all sectors to be part of the voucher program.

Subtask 1.3 Agricultural Extension Support

Supporting the Rice Value Chain

In October, the Monrovia-based Extension Unit participated in lowland rice harvests and yield estimates in Lofa and Bong counties (Figure 4). As part of the exercise, the team captured video footage for developing an extension training documentary on sampling techniques for rice yield estimation, and result demonstrations for the different rice production technologies (i.e. Urea broadcast, Urea Deep Placement, and no fertilizer application). Expertise from FED's County based Extension and M&E officers, Community-Based Facilitators and Lead Farmers were also captured to help explain the harvest process and the challenges faced during production and harvesting phases of the rice value chain.



Figure 4. M&E officers in Doetainta, Bong County measure 1mX1m plots for rice yield estimation.

Supporting the cassava value chain

FED plans to reach 12,000 individual farmers with improved production technologies and extension messages on good agricultural practices in FY14.

Upon careful review of the FY14 cassava strategy, it was decided that in order to efficiently scale-up FED activities to reach targeted beneficiaries with the project's limited resources, an efficient and innovative approach was needed. The new strategy will focus project interventions on individual farmers instead of group demonstrations. Thus, the FED cassava and extension team visited Grand Bassa, Nimba and Lofa counties to discuss the new cassava strategy with county managers, extension staff, and selected farmers and group leaders.

Discussions with individual farmers brought to light the pre-existing village arrangement known as the *kuu* system. Using this traditional organizational method holds the potential to target thousands of individual farmers with extension messages. The *kuu* is a traditional farming practice in which farmers organize themselves into small groups for the purpose of helping each other perform production related activities like land preparation, planting, weeding and harvesting.



Figure 5. The Welekerma farming group's cassava plot is overgrown and abandoned due to land access issues.

Due to insecure land tenure arrangements, the group demonstration method is in many cases unsustainable. For example the Welekerma group (Figure 5) of Grand Bassa County was supported by FED with cassava cuttings and other inputs in FY13, however the group farm was repossessed and they had to find another location to farm on.

Sub-task 1.4 Increased productivity and profitability of the vegetable value chain

Peri-Urban Agriculture Demonstrations

During the month of October, FY13 vegetable groups continued to plant, harvest and sell produce.

In Nimba, six FY13 vegetable demonstration groups harvested vegetables from their plots (Figure 6), and reported sales are forthcoming. In Grand Bassa, eight FY13 groups planted 63 vegetable plots on 3.1 hectares of land. In addition, two vegetable sites (Own Your Own & Pipeline) plan to begin harvesting the first week of November 2013.

The Back to School Garden Pilot Project harvested three bags of corn at the Lower Harlandville School garden in Grand Bassa County, and the group sold the harvest for LD \$950.00 (\$13 USD).

The PUA vegetable team and county managers have identified 20 clusters in Montserrado, Margibi, Nimba and Grand Bassa representing 375 farmers that will participate in FY14 activities.



Figure 6. FED Vegetable group Menlekoyee, Nimba County.

Table 1: October 2013 vegetable harvest and sales table.

County	Crops	Kg	Sales (\$LD)	Sales (\$USD)
Margibi	Peanuts	103	\$3,600	\$48
Margibi	Pepper	14.2	\$1250	\$14
Margibi	Eggplant	9	\$250	\$3
Margibi	Corn	351	\$5,500	\$73
Lofa	Corn	50	\$2,500	\$33
Lofa	Pepper	50	\$3,500	\$47
Nimba	Cowpeas	141	-	-
Nimba	Bitter ball	531.9	-	-
Nimba	Cabbage	83	-	-
Total		1333.1 kg	\$16,600 LD	\$218 USD

Component Two: Stimulate Private Sector Growth and Investment

Task 2: Enabling Policy Environment for Private Sector Growth

On October 25, FED conducted a policy forum with USAID, MoA, EU and UN representatives to inform them on policy issues identified within FED value chains that pose an impediment to an enabling environment for agriculturalists.

A presentation was made on FED's policy issues, and afterwards the floor was opened for discussion.

There were several key issues agreed upon to be prioritized, and FED will provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Commerce and Industry and other targeted GoL Ministries for the following purposes:

- Translate into legal language the seed policy for this to become an "act."
- Develop implementing guidelines for the seed act.
- Translate into legal language the plant protection policy to be passed into an "act."
- Assess the national standards laboratory.
- Review the EO #30 and recommend specific clauses in legal language for inclusion or exclusion to EO#30. Review other investment incentive (taxation and customs) issues, and recommend concrete demands in legal language for advocacy.

Dr. McClain and the other Officials of the MoA agreed to provide the TORs for STTAs to: 1) translate into legal language the seed policy document; 2) draft seed policy implementation guidelines; and 3) to translate into legal terms the crop protection policy document on November 1, 2013.

FED will provide a STTA to review the EO#30 and other incentives and draft concrete recommendations on how to reform these policy incentives to further improve the business enabling environment for growth of private enterprises in the agriculture sector.

Subtask 2.1 Access to credit and business development services

On October 29 and 30, 2013, Liberia Entrepreneurial & Asset Development (LEAD), a local MFI signed a loan agreements totaling \$880,000 LD (\$11,000 USD) for individual vegetable farmers in Montserrado and Margibi who were part of FY13 demonstration plots. The groups include:

1. United Farmers Association (UFA) for \$250,000 LD (\$3,125 USD);
2. Money in the Bush for \$180,000 LD (\$2,250 USD);
3. Welekema Farmers Association For \$150,000 LD (\$1,875 USD) (Figure 7)
4. Kukatonon for \$150,000 LD (\$1,875 USD)
5. Kuwikai for \$150,000 (\$1,875 USD)

Prior to receiving the loans, FED assisted all five groups with opening bank accounts and setting up proper financial record keeping systems in order to qualify for the loans. The loan terms are set at six months with 16% interest charged. Though the loans have been given to qualified individual farmers, LEAD requires that each farmer is involved in a structured group in order to maintain accountability.

The loan signing ceremonies took place at the UFA farm in Montserrado and at BWI in Margibi. The program in Margibi was attended by FED staff, LEAD staff and the Ecobank Branch Bank Manager. Following the

programs and loan disbursements on October 31, the Access to Finance Officer coached the groups in proper record keeping for the loan disbursement and repayment process.

LEAD still has \$9,000 USD in loans to disburse to FED farmers. During November, the Access to Finance Officer will work with the LEAD team to identify additional farming groups that may qualify.

Village Savings and Loan Associations

During October, FED finished distribution of VSLA kits to 25 of the 26 pilot groups across six counties. FED partner, Educare, followed up with training on how to start the savings program in Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Grand Bassa, and FED partner Bong county-based NGO Liberia Initiative for Development Service (LIDS) delivered the training in Montserrado and Margibi counties

LIDS reported that five groups have already raised a total of \$18,040 LD (\$225 USD) in their first week of saving.

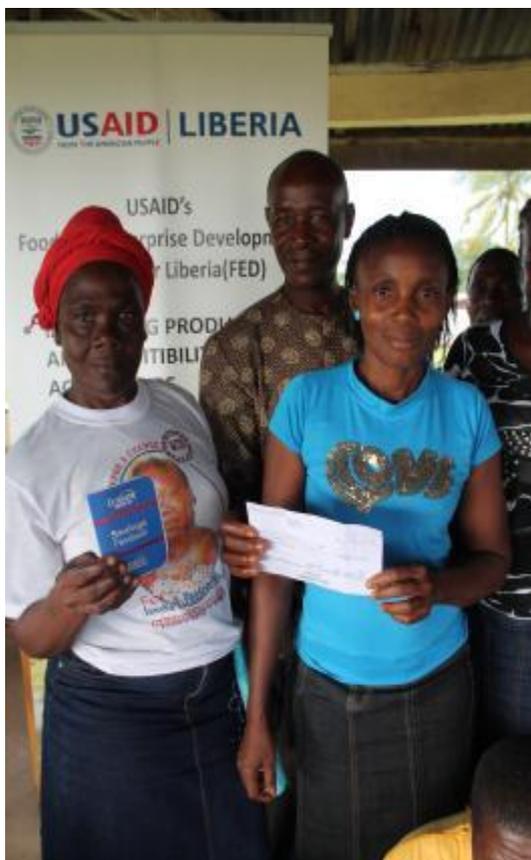


Figure 7. Farmers from Welekema Farmers Association were awarded a loan worth \$150,000 LD (\$1,875 USD).

Development Program (CAADP) event in FY13 were at the summit to present their business plans to potential investors. In FY13, FED partnered with Building Markets to improve the business acumen of the four businesses. FED expects to hear whether the four businesses have been chosen for investments by end of Q1 FY14.

Farming as a Business

FED partner Rights and Rice Foundation delivered Farming as a Business training to 12 farming groups (315 farmers) in Grand Bassa County. The business training used modules from the Farming as a Business resource material that cover basic profitability, farming with improved technology, record keeping and profit/loss analysis.

After the training, each group is responsible for delivering short farm business plan for the upcoming farming season. The business plan includes where each group can apply technology, agriculture inputs and labor that translates to crop yields that go beyond subsistence farming.

The training will continue throughout November with the remaining 19 groups (475 farmers.)

Forbes Billionaire Summit

On October 30, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry hosted the Entrepreneurial Exchange 2013 Business Summit in partnership with Forbes Magazine at Monrovia City Hall. The event hosted social entrepreneurs, impact investors and philanthropist from the US for an exchange with over 400 Liberian entrepreneurs.

Four of the FED supported entrepreneurs that also participated in the Comprehensive African Agriculture

Component Three: Build local technical and managerial human resource capability

Task 3.0 Develop Existing Vocational Centers into Centers of Excellence

FED conducted a baseline Organizational Capacity Assessment of all Centers of Excellence in seven areas of interest: Governance and Leadership, Administration, Organizational Management, Marketing and Business Development, Finance, Human Resource and Service Delivery. FED also delivered and facilitated the development of a plan of action to strengthen the CoE's capacity to effectively carry out their functions.

Some of the major findings from the report include:

- Community colleges have barely enough infrastructural and human capacity to execute the core mandate of teaching. Facilities such as laboratories and practical field sites are yet to be established.
- Libraries are too small for the student body and are often housed in converted classrooms. Only NCCC has a separate library building. None of the schools have computers and Internet for on-line research.
- Textbooks largely consist of old editions, and the staff have no access to vital reference textbooks.
- All three colleges are operating with no detailed strategic plans and this is compromising long-term planning.
- There is a huge funding gap and colleges respond by deferring capital expenditure.
- Student enrollment continues to grow.

The Bureau of Science, Technology, Vocational & Special Education of the Ministry of Education and FED disseminated the National Diploma Curriculum for Agriculture to four multilateral high schools in Voinjama, Harbel, Zwedru and Monrovia and the three Community Colleges, NCCC, LCCC and GBCCC for pilot testing. At the end of the first academic year, FED and partners will examine the success and lessons learned from the new curriculum.

Information Resources

FED delivered 87 agriculture and agribusiness related textbooks to the Ministry of Education, completing the textbook delivery activity that began in FY13. Partnering organizations are equipped with textbooks to begin piloting the National Diploma Curriculum for Agriculture.

FED distributed five Ti-B4 plus calculators and two copies of Mathematical Applications in Agriculture to the BSTVSE of the MOE as resource training equipment, and textbooks for agriculture and business.

FED provided one desktop computer (Dell Optiplex 390), one laptop (HP EliteBook 4540), one HP color laser jet printer (CP2025DN) and one Optima projector (DS330 DLP projection display) to the BSTVSE of MOE to build the capacity of their office.

FED conducted a needs assessment to determine the information resources needed at the Lofa County Community College that covered library resources such as a satellite internet system, computers, printers, LCD projectors and photocopier machine.

Infrastructure Activities

The renovation work of the career, enterprise, and agriculture offices at NCCC is 99% completed and ready to receive the equipment and supplies. A Bill of Quantity for the renovation of the LCCC career and enterprise office was submitted to MDF for review.

FED conducted a survey with Renewable Energy Education expert, Dr. Alma Cota, Deputy Chief of Party of USAID-funded LESSP, to discuss the possibility of collaboration for the provision of alternative source of power with current Centers of Excellence.

STTA Support for Agriculture Activities

On October 2nd, Dr. Carl E. Motsenbocker from the School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Science, LSU traveled to BWI and Gbarnga to facilitate a drip irrigation workshop in order to establish correlation between irrigation principles and practical application in vegetable gardening. A total of 11 participants (2 females & 9 males) from four CoE institutions were present.

The workshop covered drip irrigation technology in depth as well as organic gardening, backyard gardening, crop management, and soil management fertilizer analysis (NPK). The presentation concluded with a video demonstrating the pressurized 0.25 acre drip irrigation kit, displaying usage and maintenance.

During the training, FED's Vocational Agriculture Education Officer also presented on best practices in vegetable production including planning for production, site selection, land preparation, nursery management and transplanting. The site demonstration is part of the Student Farm Field demonstrations at the COEs.

The workshop improved the participants' knowledge of selecting suitable soil for growing specific vegetables; raising vegetable seedlings for planting; best practices of land preparation and planting; common pest and disease control; the nutritional value of vegetables; and the usefulness of drip irrigation systems for vegetable gardening.

FED plans to use drip kits for vegetable farming at the CoE demonstration sites in Q2 FY14.

General Agriculture Program Updates

Rice and Fish Pond Project in Nimba Country Community College

- Completed foundation for dike dam (barrage pond).
- Completed construction of small monk (sluice) in the nursery pond.
- Installed drainage pipes in pond #2.
- The fish in the nursery pond are ready to be transferred but 5 pieces of 1x12 planks are required to block water from entering the pond until the fish are captured for transfer; NCCC is supposed to provide the planks.
- Construction of the large monk, main and overflow canals are being constructed.
- Rice has been transplanted in pond #1.
- Second (2nd) round of weeding has been completed at the UDP demonstration site and rice is now in vegetative stage.
- The Suakoko-8 variety at the rice seed production site at the NCCC is in booting stage.

The nursery pond hosts 60 fingerlings of tilapia and 33 niloticus, while 10 heterotis generators are still with the farmers in Bong County for safe keeping until the second production pond is ready to accommodate them. Twelve fingerlings were found dead in the pond, and the APDRA technician is unsure why they died.

NCCC Demonstration Plot: Student have continued to take care of the CoE demo plots by weeding 2.5 hectares of rice and 3.5 hectares of cassava. In addition, agriculture students are caring for 958 peneria oil palm seedlings and 1,500 Sumari oil palm seedlings, which are waiting for transplanting.

LCCC Demonstration Plot: Agriculture students carried out weeding in 58 plots of lowland rice.

BWI Demonstration Plot: Approximately 45% of the maintenance work on 1.1 hectares of lowland rice is complete. The seedlings destroyed during the heavy rainy season have been replaced and insect infestation is under control at BWI. In the current semester, there are 58 agriculture students (32 male; 26 female) working on the demonstration plot.

Subtask 3.1 Enterprise Service Centers

In October, June Lavelle and Earnest Musinamwana conducted a market study for business development services in the counties and an organizational assessment of the four FED-supported community colleges to inform an appropriate business model to be used for Enterprise Service Centers (ESCs) and for the COEs. June and Earnest presented their findings on October 18th to FED staff. Results suggest the use of a privately-run ESC co-located near or at the CoEs. The following service options were also suggested: Mobile Training, Market Information and Brokerage Services, Equipment Rental Services, Protected Cultivation, and Shared Kitchen Facilities. Findings from their study informed the FY14 Workplan.

Crosscutting Tasks

Gender mainstreaming

FED staff traveled to Lofa County to conduct follow-up interviews with four FED women's groups. Each of the groups shared their successes since their intervention with FED and the way forward for FY14. The four women groups were:

- Foya Rural Women Organization in Foya
- Women for Peace and Development (WOFPD) in Kolahun
- Voinjama District Women Organization for Peace and Development (VODWOPED) in Voinjama
- Kubokeh United Farmers Association in Krugbehmai Town

FED extension agents will follow-up with agriculture training on intercropping and ISFM as well as assistance in forming women only VSLAs.

Celebration of World Food Day 2013 Celebration

The official World Food Day theme announced at the start of every year by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) gives focus to World Food Day observances, and helps increase understanding of problems and solutions to end hunger.

The October 2013 World Food Day celebration in Liberia was held under theme: "Sustainable Food Systems for Security and Nutrition." During the celebration, four FED-supported all women farmer groups and four predominantly women groups exhibited products they have grown and produced at the fair. The event proved to be successful as the FED groups gained recognition and sold \$97 USD worth of food and food products at the fair. The remaining food and products were taken to a nearby market and sold to market vendors.

Youth Involvement

Back-to-school Garden Competition

FED and partners judged the participating student gardens of the Back-to-School Garden Competition. The program forms part of FED's initiative to invigorate Liberia's youth with agriculture and give them the tools and knowledge to turn farming activities into viable professions. (Figure 8)

The team of judges included one representative from each of the collaborating partners: Advancing Youth Project (AYP), Food Enterprise Development (FED), Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Agriculture, Farmers Union Network of Liberia (FUN), and Community Youth Network Program (CYNP).

Judging took place over four days between October 16 and 19, 2013. The team had a mandate to use the criteria below for the first round of evaluation. The highest point that could be awarded was 75 points.

- School methods of motivating students in creating interest to participate in the school garden and youth clubs; 5 points.
- The standards used by the school's agro-club in creating their garden based on the TOT training and methods taught including setting up beds and planting vegetable seeds and cassava cottons; 20 points.
- The creativity of agro-clubs activities and maintenance of garden activities during and after school, and the regular attendance of members; 50 points.

Out of 20 selected schools in the competition the top five were:

1. Little Bassa Public School (AYP school)72 points
2. Liberia Christian High School (conventional school)69 points
3. Gorblee Public School (AYP school)64 points
4. S. D. A High School (conventional school)50 points
5. J. F. Yancy Elem. & Jr. High School -Camphor Mission (conventional school).....43 points



Figure 8. Some members from the Little Bassa Public School Garden.

Youth Club School Gardens Review Meeting

In October 2013, the second joint coordination meeting took place in Bong County followed by a field monitoring visit to youth club gardens to evaluate the level of progress that have been made since the partnership was established in Q4 FY13. At the end of the meeting, the following points were observed:

- Partners are impressed by the level of work done by youth clubs even without the involvement of donor organizations;
- There is need to have a refresher training for National Volunteers (NVs);
- Pests control is a serious challenge and should be addressed; and
- There is a need to focus on value addition for the group's crops.

FED will draft a comprehensive work plan for National Volunteers that focuses on the technical activities for planting cassava and vegetables, the main program's main crops. FED has also hired extension agents to assist the National Volunteers to implement improved agriculture methods—such as panting seasons—and thus enhance the productivity of youth clubs. The current group of National Volunteers will work with the youth groups until June 2014.

Improved Nutrition

During the month of October, a total of 14 CAHW goat farmers in Bong and Lofa county, who were being trained under the goat value chain activities, also participated in a nutrition, dietary practices and intake of

micronutrient foods (protein, vitamin-A, Iodine and iron rich foods) training. The nutritional training for CAHW in Grand Bassa County commenced in September 2013. Each lecture lasted two hours.

Coordination with Partners and other USG agencies

FED and the LAUNCH Program concluded a meeting on the development of extension materials on nutrition and Essential Nutrition Action (ENA) training for FED and MoA extension staff. Under the collaboration, LAUNCH will provide nutrition training in Bong and Nimba counties for FED and MoA staff. FED attendees will roll-out the ENA training messages with beneficiaries.

Environmental Compliance

The USAID Liberia office visited the New Generational Women's Project in Clay Ashland, Montserrado County in the period. The visit's purpose was to assess the level of integration of the Initial Environment Examination (IEE) as set forth and implemented by FED.

USAID guests included Dr. Kenneth Hasson, Environmental Officer Shawna Hirsch, and two delegates from the USAID West African Bureau. The team was escorted by FED's Environmental Officer. The visitors and FED staff discussed the Best Management Practices on the site. (Figure 9)



Figure 9. USAID mission field visit to NGW

FED also conducted a field visit on site compliance on October 29-31 in Lofa County as part of ongoing monitoring activities of the goat value chain and five water sources constructed in FY13. In order to fulfill IEE conditions, all water access points for the goats must be regarded as potable and therefore fit for human consumption. All water points visited have fulfilled the requisite as agreed in the EMMP document accompanying the IEE.

Communications and Knowledge Management

FED was featured in at least five media stories in local and international media, thus expanding recognition of the project and the hard work of FED farmers. The bulk of the stories covered a FED press release about the program's rural radio agriculture extension program. Other media stories include a full page feature about

food security and Liberia in various local newspapers, written by Samuka Konneh, a freelance journalist that FED supported in FY13.

M&E

The M&E Monrovia team participated in another FTF Indicator Webinar session with the Bureau of Food Security in Washington DC to discuss and clarify the definitions of four major indicators.

In the coming month, work will be initiated to train FED extension staff in collecting data at the field level, formalize a proposal for FED and MoA collaboration on M&E at the county level, prepare the Indicator targets for the Year 3 Work Plan, set the M&E operational plan in place for tracking Year 3 activities, initiate the second phase of the rice farmer survey with contracted enumerators at the county level.