



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

# Sector Scan

## The Agriculture Sector in Liberia

*Commissioned by the Netherlands Enterprise Agency*

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International.*

**Sector Scan**

**The Agriculture Sector in Liberia**

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Liberia Netherlands Business and Culture Council



## **Liberia Netherlands Business and Culture Council**

The Liberia Netherlands Business and Culture Council (LNBCC) is an organization that represents the business interests of both Liberian and Dutch companies. The LNBCC has been active in the capital - Monrovia - since 2016, and is an extension of the Ghana Netherlands Business and Culture Council (GNBCC). Both organizations work closely together with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Ghana.

The LNBCC's core business is the promotion and fostering of trade relations between Liberia and the Netherlands, under the mantra of 'growing together'. Currently two employees - Theo Dennis and Eline Terneusen - are working together in developing a membership base, producing sector scans on subsections of the economy and organizing networking events.

Besides those core activities, the LNBCC offers services to both members and non-members in the following areas:

- **Business development services:** the LNBCC executes market studies for businesses wanting to extend their services to Liberia. Company profiling and company visits can be set with possible local partners. The LNBCC can also represent organizations locally. With researchers on board with extensive experience in qualitative research methods, the LNBCC can provide local and context specific information on a wide variety of topics.
- **Business support services:** The LNBCC provides advice on financial constructions, accounting, bookkeeping, registering processes in Liberia, manners to get subsidies for business models and trainings for accountants.
- **Travel support services:** LNBCC can negotiate prices for / provide car rentals, hotel bookings, visa and immigration requirements.
- **Trade mission & event services:** Through our network we bring together authorities, experts and entrepreneurs. The LNBCC organizes events such as plenary sessions, workshops, trainings and meet & greets by taking on the event planning and management.

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## Chapter 1 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Liberia is a fertile delta area with an abundance of arable land and rainfall, the climate is suitable for several harvests annually. Currently the agricultural sector is only at a fraction of its possible capacity, meaning opportunities are wide and varied for companies seeking to enter the agricultural sector in Liberia. Government programs such as the Agenda for Transformation (AfT) and the Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda (LATA) hold as their main focus improving supply chains and attracting value adding industries to the country in an attempt to increase food security and make the sector a contributor to economic stability.

This sector scan delves into the Liberian agricultural sector with more detail, providing information on the climate, soil types and the current state of the sector. Several business opportunities are outlined in more detail, delving into the possibilities within irrigation, rubber & rubber wood, coffee & cacao, oil palm, rice, cassava and livestock & fisheries.

Sector	Opportunities	Supporting Program
Irrigation	Irrigation solutions	
Rubber & Rubberwood	- Replanting programs; Ribbed Smoked Sheet (RSS) rubber; Rubber manufacturing; Rubber compounding; Latex production	LATA
Coffee & Cacao	Planting/ replanting, transportation, input provision	LIFE III, IFAD, SOCODEVI
Oil Palm	- Refined oil; Soaps & cosmetics; Food processing; Mulch; Fertilizer; Animal feed; Bio-fuel	ACDI/VOCA, ECOWAS
Rice	Input provision; production; processing; supply of farm inputs & technology; hulling & milling; transportation	LATA
Cassava	Fresh cassava; processed cassava; animal feed; High Quality Cassava Flour (HQCF)	LATA
Livestock & Fisheries	Processing for local market, dairy processing, high value fish for the EU & US	AGOA, Everything But Arms

The limitations currently holding the agricultural sector back are outlined, including the opportunities for Dutch companies to support supply chain development and mitigate these bottlenecks. Relevant government plans, the policy and institutional frameworks of the sector are elaborated upon.

## Chapter 2 | ACRONYMS

ACDI/VOCA	Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance
AfT	Agenda for Transformation
AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Agency
CDA	Cooperative Development Agency
EBA	Everything But Arms
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
LACRA	Liberia Agriculture Commodity Regulatory Authority
LATA	Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda
LBR	Liberia Business Registry
LESR	Liberian Economic Stabilization and Recovery Plan
L-NES	Liberia National Export Strategy
LRA	Liberia Revenue Authority
MIGA	Multilateral Guarantee Agency
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoCI	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
SOCODEVI	Société de Coopération Pour le Développement International
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

### Chapter 3 | THE LIBERIAN CONTEXT

Liberia, as Africa's oldest republic is scenic, diverse and naturally resource rich. With 16 languages spoken across 15 counties, Liberia was declared a nation in 1847 by freed and freeborn black Americans who had arrived at its shores 26 years earlier. Between the 50s and 70s Liberia was a pillar of strength as many African nations were moving away from colonialism and in 1959 hosted the inception meeting of what is now called the African Union.

Since peace returned to the Nation in 2003, the Liberian economy has been viewed with optimism as aid-driven recovery and growth started shifting into private sector driven growth. This economic growth was fore fronted by mining, agriculture and other resource sectors. Harnessing this private sector potential has become a priority for the Liberian government, who is aiming to narrow the gap of growth and revenue between large (foreign) corporations and small local businesses. Its Agenda for Transformation (AfT) strategy holds as priority broad-based economic growth and employment creation.

In 2005, Liberia had \$82 million in Foreign Direct Investments, and by 2013 this figure had risen significantly to \$700m, peaking in 2011 at \$1.3 billion. Most of these investments were from mining, oil palm and forestry, where \$16 billion worth of agreements were signed.

The 2014 outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) temporarily stifled this growth. The World Bank estimated a decrease of 11.7% of the country's GDP in 2014. Abandoned farms, interrupted crop cycles and market shutdown led to weak agricultural outputs. In 2014 the production of the key staples rice and cassava declined, but returned to normal levels in 2015<sup>1</sup>. Research showed businesses' optimism that employment and revenues would increase again within the next 6 months. The growth of the Liberian marketplace in both diversity and capability in the ten years preceding the crisis provides a solid ground for the economy to bounce back<sup>2</sup>.

In October 2014 the Liberian Government came out with the Liberian economic stabilization and recovery plan (LESR) which contained assessments on the impact of EVD and guidance in terms of government response. The four sectors highlighted in this plan were infrastructure, education, energy and the agricultural sector.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://buildingmarkets.org/sites/default/files/pdm\\_reports/liberian\\_businesses\\_-\\_the\\_engines\\_of\\_economic\\_recovery\\_and\\_growth.pdf](http://buildingmarkets.org/sites/default/files/pdm_reports/liberian_businesses_-_the_engines_of_economic_recovery_and_growth.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Gathering Competitive Momentum: Overview of the Liberian Economy (USAID & Building Markets) 2014

## Chapter 4 | COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Bordering countries:	Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire
Land size:	111,369 km
Population <sup>3</sup> :	4.4 million
Literacy rate <sup>4</sup> :	42.9%
Life expectancy <sup>5</sup>	60.2
Poverty rate <sup>6</sup> :	96.9%
Urban population:	48%
GINI Index	38.2
GDP	2.10 billion US Dollars
GDP growth 2016 <sup>7</sup>	2.5%
Inflation rate <sup>8</sup>	11.50%
Unemployment rate	3.80%
National budget <sup>9</sup>	526.6 million US Dollars
Aid per Capita	149.80 US Dollars
Road Network <sup>10</sup>	6.2%
Access to Electricity <sup>11</sup>	2%
Mobile penetration <sup>12</sup>	75%
Internet penetration <sup>13</sup>	21%
Trade and Economic Memberships	ECOWAS Mano River Union African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) EU - Everything but Arms (EBA)

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<sup>3</sup> Estimation compared to the last official census of 2008 when 3.47 million citizens were counted

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/liberia\\_statistics.html](https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/liberia_statistics.html)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> % of citizens living under \$2.- USD per day

<sup>7</sup> estimation by IMF

<sup>8</sup> As recorded in April of 2017

<sup>9</sup> Fiscal year draft budget of 2017/2018 as submitted to the Legislature. 12.3% reduction from the 600.2 million USD approved for fiscal year 2016/2017

<sup>10</sup> 10,600 km road network in total, 657 km paved.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.usaid.gov/powerafrica/liberia>

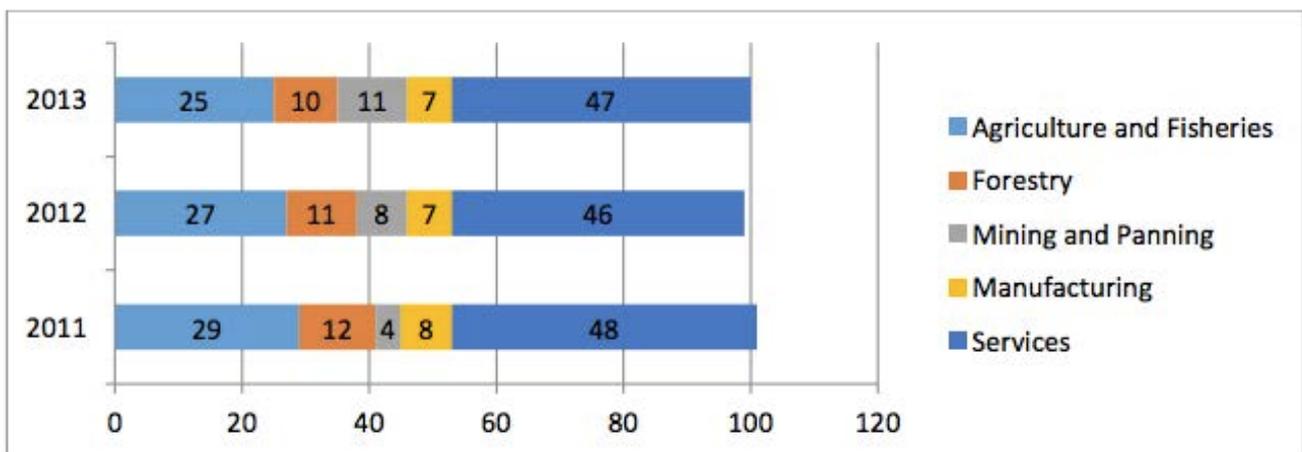
<sup>12</sup> <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Liberia-Telecommunications-Services>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

## Chapter 5 | THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR

The agriculture sector is dominated by palm oil and rubber production. There are currently ten concession agreements active for those two commodities. Rubber accounts for more than 30% of the total agricultural output in the country. Liberia is climatically very suitable for growing cacao and coffee, and output gains have been made in the period 2012-2013.

While agriculture is the biggest employer within the country, especially amongst women, its contribution to the GDP has been shrinking (graph 1). The majority of these farmers are into smallholder agriculture of a subsistence nature, which is characterized by low productivity.



graph 1

In 2010, the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was estimated at almost US\$ 1.7 billion, growing at a rate of 5.1% with a GDP per capita of about \$500 (CIA, 2010).

Agriculture contributed 42% of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2008 (CBL, 2009). The food crops sub-sector dominates agriculture's contribution to the national GDP. Rice is the main staple food grown by over 74% of the population on uplands (CFSNS, 2008). Cassava is the second most important food crop grown by about 62% of the population (CAAS-Lib, 2007). Paddy rice and cassava production and area harvested increased by more than 3% per annum during the period 2001-2009 (Table 2). Rice and cassava contributed 22% and 23% of the agricultural GDP respectively (CBL, 2009).

Tree crops, especially rubber, cocoa and coffee make an important contribution to the economy, accounting for 34% of the agricultural GDP in 2008 (CBL, 2009). Rubber is the most important cash crop and revenue from rubber export

increased from US\$ 150 million (95% of the total export revenue) in 2006 to US\$ 206 million or 86% of the total export earnings in 2008 (CBL, 2009).

The 6% annual growth rate of the agricultural sector between 2008-09 and 4 % in 2010-11 showed a slowdown of growth as compared to the initial post-war years, and EVD exposed unstable food security situation in the country. There is vast potential for growth of the agricultural sector, as the country is currently (unnecessarily) highly dependent on imports for food products.

Agricultural output is derived from three types of farms: traditional, commercial and concession. The traditional farming systems involve production of food and export crops (mainly coffee and cocoa, and recently, rubber), plus oil palm both for home consumption and for the market. The commercial farms are mainly owned and operated by Liberians engaged in the production of fruits, coffee, oil palm, cocoa and poultry and pigs. The third model is the foreign-owned concession plantations that produce mostly rubber and palm oil (CAAS-Lib, 2007). They are owned and operated by foreign firms.

The country is within the tropical rain forest belt of West Africa and occupies about 43% of the remaining Upper Guinea Forest (CASS-Lib, 2007). In 2008, forestry contributed 19% of the national GDP, totaling US\$ 97.5 million (CBL, 2009).

#### **Soils<sup>14</sup>**

The soils present in Liberia range from weakly developed muds and hydromorphic clays along the coast and the inland swamps, to shallow soils on the plateaus and mountains and lateritic hills and terraces in the north. The soil patterns are determined by differences in age, parent material, physiography, and present and past climatic conditions. Latosols are the most widespread soil type, followed by lithosols, regosols and alluvial or swamp soils in that order. The origins and properties of the different soil types are described in more detail below.

Latosols or lateritic soils: are developed from crystalline metamorphic and igneous rocks under high annual rainfall (1700 - 4500 mm) and mean temperature (28-30°C). It occupies about 75% of the total area of Liberia (Reed, 1951). It occurs on undulating, gently rolling, rolling or steeply rolling land that varies in elevation from almost sea level to about 550 m. The latosols have been classified into seven types according to their location: Ganta, Gbarnga, Kakata, Salala, Suakoko, Voinjama and Zorzor.

They are reddish brown, heavily leached, well-drained, acidic soils with good structure and deep profile. Humus, nitrogen and phosphorus contents are low, meaning that the latosols can be farmed continuously only by repeated application of fertilizers (Jallah *et al.*, 1991). Latosols are the most productive soils in the country on which upland rice,

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<sup>14</sup> FAO report, retrieved from: <http://www.fao.org/ag/AGP/AGPC/doc/Counprof/Liberia/liberia.htm>

the largest single food crop in Liberia, is grown. Large areas of the soils also support the country's tree crops and forest as well as providing valuable materials for road construction.

Lithosols or gravel soils: are poorly weathered soils consisting of rock fragments and poorly defined horizons. They are shallow with high gravel content, low moisture retention, as well as low humus and mineral nutrient contents. Lithosols make up about 17% of the soil cover of Liberia, being found mainly in hilly, rugged and mountainous regions of the country and have limited agricultural value due to their extreme topographic variation and shallowness. They are better suited for wildlife and forest reserves.

Regosols or sandy soils: are mostly found along Liberia's coastal plains and cover about 5% of the country's land area. They are white to gray in color, acidic, porous (60% coarse and fine sand) soils with low humus and mineral contents. There are three main groups: Claratown, Sinko and Freeport series. Although, inherently infertile, the sandy soils are suitable for pasture, oil palm and coconut production.

Swamp soils: make up about 4% of the soils in the country. They are found in swampy areas along the coast and in the interior. They include the alluvial, grey hydromorphic, 'half-bog', and mangrove swamp soils. The alluvial soils occur in narrow tracts along stream and river beds. They contain the largest amount of plant nutrients of all groups of soils in Liberia. They are the best soils for annual crop production.

The 'half-bog' soils occur in swampy areas where drainage is poor and water level in the upper soil layer is high. As a result, decay of plant materials is slow, resulting in the formation of a thick dark layer of a loamy-peaty organic material with high humus content. With proper drainage, the 'half-bog' soils provide good conditions for the cultivation of swamp rice and similar crops.

The most frequent of the swamp soils are the water-logged, gray hydromorphic soils. They are found in the floors of the valley, which are flooded in the rainy season. They are extremely deficient in plant nutrients, and are among the least productive soils in Liberia. However, if drained and fertilized, they can be used for producing rice and other crops.

Land type	Area (million ha)	Percent of total land
<b>Forest</b>	4.9	50
<b>Arable (upland and lowland)</b>	4.6	47
<b><i>Uplands</i></b>	4.0	41
<b><i>Lowlands</i></b>	0.6	6
<b>Others</b>	0.3	3
<b>TOTAL AREA</b>	9.8	

## Chapter 6 | OPPORTUNITIES

What makes the development of the agricultural sector a priority for the Liberian government is the expected global population growth in the foreseeable future (according to the United Nations from 7 billion in 2011 to 9.3 billion in 2050<sup>15</sup>) combined with an expected income growth per capita of about 4% globally and between 5-6 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) a rise in food production of approximately 50% will be needed to meet the food demands of the future. Many of the world's food producing regions have reached a plateau in production and companies are turning to new sources. Liberia can play a key role in harnessing these trends as it has vast untapped agricultural potential.

### Irrigation:

Liberia's agricultural yields as well as intensities of land use are some of the lowest in Africa. Less than 5% of its land is under permanent cultivation. Liberia has an abundance of land and water, allowing for multiple crops per year, making agriculture for export feasible and favourable. However, currently less than 1% of the land has been irrigated. Liberia has natural advantages as a food producer, this holds great opportunities for farmers to increase productivity<sup>16</sup>. In order for the agricultural sector to grow, companies with modern and technology based irrigation solutions are needed to make more land available for agriculture.

The total land area is about 9.8 million hectares (ha), half of which is tropical forest (Table 1). Arable land, comprising of uplands (41%) and lowlands (6%) cover about 47% of the total land area. Pasture land is about 182,000 ha.

### Rubber & Rubber Wood Timber:

Liberia has been in the natural rubber business since 1890. In 2013 that country produced 63,000 tons of natural rubber. Most of this rubber (55%) is produced in medium sized and smallholder farms, the remaining 45% is produced by concessions and used to supply Technically Specified Rubber for its tire production. There is scope for the expansion of Liberia's capacity for natural rubber to 325,000 tons. This is due to an abundance of land and a large unexploited West African market for ribbed smoked sheets and rubber crepe in the short-term and rubber products for concentrated latex on the long term.

With excess rubber, land and a cheap cost of production, Liberia is the optimal country in West Africa to produce RSS. Currently a century after signing its first concession agreement, Liberia is still only an exporter of rubber. The

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<sup>15</sup> United Nations: World Population Prospects. The 2010 Revision, New York

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.infoliberia.org/doc\\_download/AfT%20document-%20April%2015,%202013.pdf?a4705305cd27e04fb1f66830e7e0ef9d=MTM1](http://www.infoliberia.org/doc_download/AfT%20document-%20April%2015,%202013.pdf?a4705305cd27e04fb1f66830e7e0ef9d=MTM1)

government wants to see is a manufacturing plant where rubber can be turned into high-end finished products to be used in the home, hospitals, schools and other industrials.

The Liberia National Investment Commission expects that when production of rubber is scaled up to 80-100t per month across the sector, then rubber manufacturing (manufacturing tubes, mats, etc.) becomes feasible in Liberia itself. Rubber compounding and rubber manufacturing into other materials and finished products is an investment the Commission is also lobbying for.

The potential production capacity of latex has not recovered since the pre-war era. There is potential to expand to 325,000t, but this will only be possible with successful replanting for smallholders' rubber trees. Investing in the replanting of rubber trees can be interesting for Dutch companies. The cost to replant one farm lies between USD 400k-600k, with the additional costs of purchasing the land, the revenue intake per farm per year can be calculated at USD180k (resulting from 1.5t of latex per hectare)<sup>17</sup>.

Additionally, rubber wood timber is widely used for the manufacturing of high end furniture and a plethora of other applications such as flooring, pulp/paper, interior finishing and shoe heels.

#### Coffe & Cacao:

The coffee and cacao sectors in Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Nigeria is saturated, with many competitors and limited room for expansion. With a similarly ideal environment to grow this crop, Liberia is the next growth market for products of cacao and coffee. Currently the sector is unstructured with 90% of cacao being brought by informal traders and exported at average quality. Due to limited investments Liberian cacao farmers yield on average 200 kg per hectare, this is about 30% of what is obtained in neighboring countries and only 20% of its potential.

With abundant rainfall and a new highway linking the cacao belt (from Grand Gedeh through Nimba, Lofa and Bong counties to Grand Cape Mount), Liberia holds great opportunities for growth. Some constraints are that businesses working in cacao in Liberia are constitutionally obliged to use Agents to gather cacao from the more than 30,000 smallholder farmers. The farms which are located in rural areas are often located off the highway and transportations costs can be high (\$100 USD to \$250 USD per tonne, with capacity of trucks averaging at 30 tonnes).

For both cacao and coffee, long term investments are needed to deliver quality products. As farmers are predominantly smallholders and lack the financial capacity and inputs to make these investments, the cacao and coffee opportunities have remained underexploited. With continual political stability in the region the opportunities for Dutch companies to enter the market in Liberia are becoming increasingly viable.

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<sup>17</sup> [http://investliberia.gov.lr/new/page\\_info.php?&7d5f44532cbfc489b8db9e12e44eb820=NDg2](http://investliberia.gov.lr/new/page_info.php?&7d5f44532cbfc489b8db9e12e44eb820=NDg2)

Farmers currently lack the inputs (manpower, fertilizers, chemicals) to deliver quality cacao. This has led to several initiatives who aim to support smallholders in increasing the cacao to comply with international grade standards.

LIFE III (USAID via ACDI/VOCA)

<http://www.acdivoca.org/projects/livelihood-improvement-for-farming-enterprises-life-iii/>

Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Project Lofa (IFAD)

<https://operations.ifad.org/documents/654016/05ad2e81-a9d9-45a1-a51d-927f2aab596f>

Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Project Nimba (World Bank via SOCODEVI)

<http://projects.worldbank.org/P113273/lr-smallholder-tree-crop-revitalization-support-project?lang=en>

#### Oil Palm:

Oil Palm is native to Liberia and grows abundantly throughout the country. Half of Liberia's palm oil is produced by some 30,000 persons who harvest the kernels from the forest where they grow naturally. The other half is produced by some 70,000 hectares of oil palm plantations which were established in Liberia in the 1970's. In 2013 the production lay at 176,000 tons of palm fruit and 49,000 tons of crude palm oil.

Liberia's oil palm market was worth some \$91.5 million in 2014, as the country ranks second in the region in the consumption of crude palm oil per person per year. The market for products manufactured from oil palm is also growing, opening up business opportunities in soap & cosmetics production, food processing, mulch, fertilizer, animal feed and biofuel production.

Four international firms have been concessioned to develop an additional 870,000 hectares of oil palm. And in 2014 Liberias palm oil market was at least \$91.5 million USD with an annual growth of 5.9% per year since 2004. The ECOWAS market for palm oil is large and growing: ECOWAS consumed 2.4 million tonnes of crude palm oil and 1 million tonnes of refined palm oil in 2014.

<b>Name company</b>	<b>Ha2</b>	<b>Location</b>
Golden Veroleum	350,000	Sinoe, Grand Kru & River Gee
Sime Darby	220,000	Bomi & Grand Cape Mount
Equatorial oil Palm	169,000	Grand Bassa
Maryland Oil Palm	9,000	Maryland

Source: <http://www.fao.org/ag/AGP/AGPC/doc/Counprof/Liberia/liberia.htm>

The price of crude oil palm is \$700 per ton. Refined oil palm is worth \$1,100 per ton, and it costs \$250/ton to refine oil palm in Liberia. When refined, one obtains two products with high market value: Olein and stearin. The retail price of packaged oil palm cooking oil is \$1,600 per ton. The minimum wage for skilled labor is only US\$5/day, while for unskilled labor it's US\$4/day. By comparison the cost of unskilled labor in Ghana is US\$7/day. The Liberian climate provides the hot and tropical conditions under which the palm tree flourishes<sup>18</sup>.

Oil Palm supply chain development is being supported by the ACDI/VOCA SHOPS project. More information: <http://www.acdivoca.org/projects/smallholder-oil-palm-support-shops-ii/>

#### Rice:

Rice is Liberia's staple food, the country consumes 570,000 tons of rice every year, with the average Liberian consuming 120 kg per year (compared to 96kg on average in Senegal, 53 kg in Ghana and 33 kg in Nigeria). Currently 230,000 hectares are harvested with the potential to increase up to 600,000 hectares. Liberia is rich in rainfall and currently imports 2/3 of the rice it consumes. Its extended swamplands are particularly suitable for the Nerica variety and in combination with farming fish and horticulture.

Opportunities for investments exist along the entire supply chain, and particularly in input provision, production and processing. The supply of farm inputs and technology, hulling and milling, transportation and processing are mentioned as great business opportunities by the Liberian National Investment Commission.

Only 3% of Liberia's natural internal renewable water resources is currently used to supply rice agriculture. There is an abundance of water available. The majority of milling is done through traditional ways, making the market for milling extremely profitable at \$49 per metric tonne. Various development partners (West Africa Venture Fund and Afriland Bank) are engaged in the value chain (supporting improved research and access to seed, among other areas) and are seeking to provide support to private investors. The minimum wage for skilled labor is only US\$5/day, while that for unskilled labor is \$4/day. By comparison the cost of unskilled labor in Ghana is US\$7 per day<sup>19</sup>.

#### Cassava:

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), cassava is the third most important source of calories in the tropics after rice and corn. It grows naturally in Liberia and is the basis for many staple products such as gars, cassava flour, high quality cassava starches and adhesives. Under LATA, the government has identified agro-processing zones across the country to promote access to farm products, linking to a national highway. Cassava is identified by the Liberian government as a key commodity within the LATA.

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<sup>18</sup> Liberia National Investment Commission [http://investliberia.gov.lr/new/page\\_info.php?&7d5f44532cbfc489b8db9e12e44eb820=NDg3](http://investliberia.gov.lr/new/page_info.php?&7d5f44532cbfc489b8db9e12e44eb820=NDg3)

<sup>19</sup> Liberia National Investment Commission [http://investliberia.gov.lr/new/page\\_info.php?&7d5f44532cbfc489b8db9e12e44eb820=NDg5](http://investliberia.gov.lr/new/page_info.php?&7d5f44532cbfc489b8db9e12e44eb820=NDg5)

Opportunities for companies lie not only in the farming of cassava, but more especially in value-adding industries. Cassava's natural properties give it greater clarity and viscosity than other comparable starch products, making it ideal for animal feed as well as non-food products such as pharmaceuticals. The Liberia National Investment Commission believes expanding the cassava sector will boost the economy as it links up to other industries such as agro-food industry, the non-food industry and the poultry and livestock sectors. The majority of cassava farmers are youth and women, which means development in this sector would mean significant empowerment for these marginalized subsections of society. Options vary widely as cassava can be processed into over 150 different products within the categories of animal feed, starch, noodles, flour, sweeteners, organic acids and ethanol.

#### Livestock & Fisheries:

The livestock sub-sector plays a minimal role in the Liberian economy, accounting for about 14% of the agricultural GDP (Rhissa, 2007; Koikoi, 2011). Most of the animals are owned by traditional farmers who use local, less productive animal breeds and inappropriate techniques. Thus household-based chicken, goats, ducks, pigs, sheep and cattle rearing predominates (FAO, 2005, 2011a; Koikoi, 2011; SFNS, 2010). These farmers have access to few inputs, and receive limited or no government support services. No dairy production is undertaken in Liberia for commercial purposes (Koikoi, 2011). Total Livestock Units declined during the civil war (from 1990-2003), but the numbers had more than recovered by 2010. Demand for livestock products greatly outstrips domestic supply; as a result the import of livestock products and live animals is high. An estimated 19,580 heads of cattle (N'Dama and Zebu), 750 Sahel goats and 1500 sheep are imported from Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire and Mali annually for slaughter (Koikoi, 2011). In 2009, some 11 million metric tons of meat valued at about US\$ 4.3 million were imported (according to FAOSTAT imports of 9.6 M tonnes of meat were valued at 9.7 M US\$ in 2009).

The country has enormous marine and fresh water fishery resources. There are about 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> of marine fishing grounds, as well as over 1,800 km of rivers, and countless perennial swamps and inland water bodies with potential for inland fisheries and aquaculture (CAAS-Lib, 2007). Liberia's fishery sub-sector consists of an established marine fishery involving industrial and artisanal fishing activities, exclusively artisanal inland fishery, and aquaculture practiced in rural areas through fishpond culture. The fishery sub-sector provides about 3% of the national GDP (CBL, 2009). Over 80% of the population directly depends on fish for animal protein supply.

According to the Liberia National Investment Commission<sup>20</sup> there is market potential in the processing of shallow and mid-water fish for the local and regional market. Demand for fish in dry parts of the Sahel is currently unmet, these unsaturated markets are accessible through Liberia's connection to Guinea. Dealing in high-value fish such as fair trade tuna, barracuda and cassava fish is made easy as AGOA (US) and Everything but Arms (EU) provide easy access to markets.

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<sup>20</sup> Liberia National Investment Commission retrieved from: [http://investliberia.gov.lr/new/page\\_info.php?&7d5f44532cbfc489b8db9e12e44eb820=NDkx](http://investliberia.gov.lr/new/page_info.php?&7d5f44532cbfc489b8db9e12e44eb820=NDkx)

Please view recent investments by agricultural concessions in Appendix C.

## Chapter 7 | SECTOR CONSTRAINTS

Currently several constraints are experienced by the sector, which consists predominantly of smallholder farmers. These limitations have hampered the growth of the agricultural sector<sup>21</sup>:

- Low productivity of farmers
- Insufficient private sector investment at all stages of the value chain
- Limited market linkages
- Weak implementation capacity of government, for profit and non profit organizations
- Scarce agricultural financing services
- Inadequate policy environment and regulatory framework
- Limited demand-driven research
- Meager cooperative development
- Scant use of analytics and ICT

Liberia Agriculture Sector Rehabilitation Projects
Italian Supplementary Funding (IT-67) Project
Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Projects
Agriculture Infrastructure Development Program (AIDP)
West Africa Agricultural Productivity Program (WAAPP)
Climate Change Adaptation Agriculture Project
Smallholder Agricultural Productivity Enhancement and Commercialization Project
Liberia Agribusiness Development Activity (LADA)

- Highly inadequate extension services and agricultural education

In a 2012 World Bank survey of Liberian firms 59% identified electricity as a major constraint and 39% identified transportation as a major constraint<sup>22</sup>. Although infrastructure has received large amounts of funding through the 2008-2011 Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) period, only 6% of the roads are paved.

Due to up to 5 meters of annual rainfall, primarily between the months of June - October, a large part the of the country is only seasonally accessible through roads. This limits smallholders from accessing markets and leads to large post

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<sup>21</sup> LATA Strategy

<sup>22</sup> World Bank Enterprise Survey 2009, (<http://www.enterprisesurveys.org>). Results based on a survey of 150 firms conducted during September 2008- February 2009.

harvest losses. Although the installation of hydroelectric turbines by the Liberia Electricity Corporation ( LEC) has allowed for a drop in tariffs from \$0.49 to \$0.39 per kilowatt hour beginning March 1, 2017, supply is confined mainly to the capital city and costs are still more than twice the average of Africa as a whole<sup>23</sup>

Cross sector coordination needs to be further developed as there is a misalignment of actions across sectors. Lessons learned from PRS showed that limitations in one sector are often interrelated with limitations to other sectors. In this manner the shortcomings in infrastructure (lack of roads and electricity) can limit sectors like agriculture in reaching targets as smallholders fail to link up to supply chains. In the analysis of the PRS it also showed that the formalization of land rights and ownership hampered progress in agricultural development due to a lack of cross-sectoral policy coordination within the government as well as with private sector counterparts <sup>24</sup>.

Land ownership is governed by statutory and customary laws. Inconsistencies in these laws have resulted in several types of land holding arrangements with different levels of tenure security. These range from deed holders with a comparatively high degree of tenure security to squatters with no security. Three main types of land ownership prevail: state or public land, individual proprietorship, and common/tribal ownership rights based on customs. Customary ownership, under which chiefs are custodians of the land, is the dominant form of land tenure. A Land Commission has recently been established to propose, advocate, and coordinate reforms of land policy, laws, and programs.

Several projects are currently active in the agricultural sector to work on these constraints. Opportunities for businesses exist in linking up to these interventions.

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<sup>23</sup> In 2010 the average effective electricity tariff in Africa was measured at US \$0.14 per kilowatt-hour. <https://www.afdb.org/en/blogs/afdb-championing-inclusive-growth-across-africa/post/the-high-cost-of-electricity-generation-in-africa-11496/>

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.infoliberia.org/doc\\_download/AfT%20document-%20April%2015,%202013.pdf?a4705305cd27e04fb1f66830e7e0ef9d=MTM1](http://www.infoliberia.org/doc_download/AfT%20document-%20April%2015,%202013.pdf?a4705305cd27e04fb1f66830e7e0ef9d=MTM1)

## Chapter 8 | RELEVANT GOVERNMENT PLANS AND INTERVENTIONS

In post-war Liberia several initiatives, agencies and cooperations have been launched by the government to promote and develop the agricultural sector with as their main incentives the maintenance of peace, creation of food security and the creation of employment opportunities<sup>25</sup>. Another motivator being that Liberia has committed to the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Agenda (CAADP), the Malabo declaration as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

These initiatives include the Liberia Cooperative Development Act 2010, the Liberia Cooperative Development Regulations of 2010, the Liberia National Export Strategy (L-NES), Liberia Agriculture Commodity Regulatory Authority (LACRA), Agreement Economic Forum 2011, National Indicative Program of 2014-2020, the Agenda for Transformation (AfT) and -most recently- the Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda (LATA). AfT and LATA concentrate on agricultural reform specifically

### Agenda for Transformation (AfT)

The AfT, a medium term development strategy formulated by the Liberian Government in order to gain significant steps of inclusive growth by 2030, sees development of the agricultural sector as one of its core goals. Recognizing that agriculture is the largest source of employment as well as food for its people, transformation of the sector is seen as key within the governments poverty reduction strategies<sup>26</sup>.

Under the AfT several needs were stipulated to allow for growth of the sector: sustainable agriculture products value chains, policies for the promotion of agriculture production, access to information on demand, supplies of agricultural products and the improvement of knowledge on sustainable agriculture practices. All with the goal to increase value added, link smallholders to domestic and international markets and increase agricultural productivity.

Made possible by aid inflows, Liberia imports approximately three times as much as it exports. Liberia is connected to the international market, but those connections are not systematically used for exports. As aid flows taper off, these trends are expected to shift. Most imports arrive by sea and are processed through the Freeport of Monrovia. As part of the AfT, the Bureau of Customs and Excise at the Ministry of Finance has started implementing reforms, including atomization of procedures at the three most active ports of entry. This is expected to have a positive impact on agricultural value chains.

### Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda (LATA)

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.moa.gov.lr/doc/2014%20MoA%20Annual%20Report%20-%20Final%20Version.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.infoliberia.org/doc\\_download/AfT%20document-%20April%2015,%202013.pdf?a4705305cd27e04fb1f66830e7e0ef9d=MTM1](http://www.infoliberia.org/doc_download/AfT%20document-%20April%2015,%202013.pdf?a4705305cd27e04fb1f66830e7e0ef9d=MTM1)

LATA aims to enable Liberia as well as Liberians to achieve higher levels of economic resilience through inclusive growth. It aims to do this through four guiding principles that are aimed at increasing agricultural productivity: developing agricultural value chains, adopting innovative finance solutions, promoting an export-driven industrial policy and ensuring an enabling business environment.

By identifying and investing in priority value chains through the four guiding principles, LATA aims to grow the agricultural sector dramatically. The value chains that have been selected are: oil palm, rubber, cacao, fisheries, rice, cassava, horticulture and poultry/livestock. Value chain investments are a priority within LATA and the Liberian government is actively seeking strategic investors in agriculture, agro-processing and manufacturing. The government also desires to explore possibilities of Public Private Partnerships within the selected value chains.

## Chapter 9 | POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda is the guiding work along which the government will form its policy concerning the agricultural sector moving forward. This means its strategies will be centered around the four main principles outlined in the agenda.

### Four Principles:

1. Develop priority agricultural value chains, through private sector investment, market systems and use of technology;
2. Adopt innovative financing solutions;
3. Promote an export-driven industrial policy, with targeted governmental intervention that supports the emergence of value addition and the production of downstream goods;
4. Ensure the appropriate enabling business environment.

### Policies, Laws and Regulations:

There is an holistic attempt to promote the agricultural sector as an engine for the creation of wealth and value in Liberia, thus promoting industrialization. Therefore it explicitly links agriculture to agro-processing and manufacturing. More specifically, the agenda outlines that policies, laws and regulations will:

- Focus on market-based, sustainable value addition in country;
- Open the door to the production of further downstream products, such as rubber products and oil palm products;
- Set up supportive policy and institutional framework e.g. through seed boards, research institutions, building an agro-dealer network, suitable regulators ;
- Encourage export orientation by leveraging preferential trade agreements and regional policies
- Promote innovative and long term financing

### Policies Tax Deductions:

- The cost of equipment and machinery used in the year the asset is placed into service is eligible for a tax deduction of up to 30%;
- The buildings and fixtures used to manufacture finished products with at least 60% local raw materials are eligible for a tax deduction of up to 10%;
- The above are eligible for further tax deductions of between 5 to 12.5 percent if the investment is placed in an economically depressed region. Additional deductions are available if the investment created more than 100 jobs.

### Tax Company Income:

The legal basis of taxation in Liberia is currently the Revenue Code 2010, a New Revenue Code has been developed with the following highlights:

- Maximum annual taxes on net profits received by companies on income derived from their operations within Liberia reduced to 25% (down from 35% with the maximum for mining remaining at 30%);

- Income derived from sources outside Liberia is exempt if the majority of the voting power of a domestic company is held by foreigners or nonresidents;
- Earnings from the operation of maritime vessels carrying the Liberian flag are exempt, unless derived exclusively from coast-wide operations by resident corporations.

Trade Taxes:

- Most import duties are levied as ad valorem duties on the C.I.F (Cost, Insurance and Freight) value of imports and range from 2.5% to 25%. Some items are subject to specific, rather than ad valorem, duties;
- Liberia is migrating to the ECOWAS common external tariff. Exemptions from import duties apply, amongst other things, to intermediate goods used in agriculture and some medical and fire-fighting supplies; imports granted by special contracts to the large concessionaires operating in Liberia; and imports granted to investors with an investment incentive contract;
- Export duties are levied on forestry products. There is a customs user fee of 2.5% on unprocessed exported goods;
- Royalty fees are levied on mineral exports. The fee varies from 3% to 4.5%;
- An excise tax is levied on select products. The excise rate varies from 5% to 30%;
- A goods and services tax of 7% also applies to select products.

## **Chapter 10 | INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK**

### Liberia Business Registry:

All businesses are required by law to first register before operating as a formal entity. In 2011 the government launched the Liberia Business Registry (LBR) as a semi-autonomous government agency that operates as a one-stop shop to formalize or register enterprises and provide information to the public. This means only one interface with the Liberian government is needed for business registration and it takes approximately 48 hours for self- or assisted registration. Through self-registration a business applicant can submit their dossier with all required documents electronically. Assisted registration allows the applicant to prepare and submit a paper-based dossier with all required supporting documents to the LBR which then handles its registration.

### Liberia Revenue Authority (LRA):

The Liberia Revenue Authority is the newly created arm of the government responsible for assessing, collecting, enforcing and auditing all tax revenues. Tax may be assessed and may be paid in either Liberian dollars or US dollars.

### Ministry of Agriculture (MoA):

Policy issues related to agriculture sectors fall under the purview of MoA. MoA is also responsible for the implementation of the Liberia Agricultural Strategic Investment Programme, which concentrates on cocoa, rice and oil palm cultivation.

The Ministry of Agriculture is comprised of four departments covering a range of areas. The Department of Administration considers the internal workings of the Ministry including finance, procurement, human resources, communications and assets management. The Department of Planning and Development focusses on sector coordination, monitoring and evaluation, gender- and social development and food security. This department also manages the different projects the government is involved in (see 7.4). The third division is the Department of Regional Development, Research and Extension which is involved in the decentralization of the ministry. The Department of Technical Services manages and extends services in a range of agricultural endeavors such as crops and fisheries.

### **Collaborative Projects**

The following projects to develop the agricultural sector are running or have recently been completed in collaboration with the Liberian government and managed by the Ministry of Agriculture.

### Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI):

Policy issues and regulations related to export / import activities fall under the mandate of MoCI. This is also the case for the cocoa sector.

### 8.6 Cooperative Development Agency (CDA):

The Cooperative Development Agency is the main instrument of the government through which support is provided to cooperatives in the country. The civil war mostly destroyed the CDA infrastructure, but work has resumed on rebuilding the infrastructure and other capacities to pre-war levels. CDA is active in the main cocoa producing counties of Bong, Nimba and Lofa.

## **Appendix A: List of Relevant Contacts**

National Investment Commission

United Nations Drive, Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: +231(0)777-405-511/(0)777-088-828

[www.investliberia.gov.lr](http://www.investliberia.gov.lr)

National Bureau of Concession

[www.nbcliberia.org](http://www.nbcliberia.org)

Liberia Revenue Authority

ELWA Junction, Paynesville, Liberia

Tel: +231(0)886-510-086

[www.lra.gov.lr](http://www.lra.gov.lr)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

P.O BOX 10-9021 Capitol Hill 1000 Monrovia 10, Liberia

[www.micat.gov.lr](http://www.micat.gov.lr)

Private Sector

Ministry of Information

P.O BOX 10-9021 Capitol Hill 1000 Monrovia 10, Liberia

[www.micat.gov.lr](http://www.micat.gov.lr)

Liberia Chamber of Commerce

Queen's Avenue, P.O BOX 92 Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: +231(0)886-880-473/(0)777-857-805

[www.info@lcc.org.lr](mailto:www.info@lcc.org.lr)

Ministry of Agriculture

P.O BOX 10-9010 Somalia Drive, Gardnersville, Liberia

Tel: +231(0)777-961-574/(0)886-560-962

[www.moa.gov.lr](http://www.moa.gov.lr)

Liberia Better Business Forum

P.O BOX 660 Bright Building, Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: +231(0)886-930-916

Ministry of Commerce and Industry

Ashmun Street, Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: +231(0)886-762-995

[www.moci.gov.lr](http://www.moci.gov.lr)

Liberia Business Association

SD Cooper Road, Paynesville, Liberia

Tel: +231(0)886-558-008

## Appendix B: Overview Government Interventions

<p><b>Liberia Cooperative Development Act 2010 &amp; Liberia Cooperative Development Regulations of 2010</b></p>	<p>These documents were developed to inform the growth of the agricultural sector. They provide an enabling institutional and legal environment for the development of autonomous, viable and demand driven cooperative organizations.</p>
<p><b>Liberia National Export Strategy (L-NES)</b></p>	<p>Together with the International Trade Centre (ITC) Liberia developed a national export strategy which was launched in April of 2014. This strategy aims to democratize the export culture by incorporating MSME's. These enterprises have historically been neglected as Liberia's economic growth was fueled by commodity and extractive sectors which were based primarily in concessionaire-based activities. NES provides end-to-end value-chain analysis. This allows for a thorough needs assessment so donors can link up to projects dependent on time frame. NES is a blueprint that aids in coordinating and managing trade-related technical assistance. Priority sectors under NES are: cacao, fish and crustaceans, oil palm, rubber and cassava.</p>
<p>Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda (LATA)</p>	<p>LATA aims to enable Liberia as well as Liberians to achieve higher levels of economic resilience through inclusive growth. It aims to do this through four guiding principles that are aimed at increasing agricultural productivity: developing agricultural value chains, adopting innovative finance solutions, promoting an export-driven industrial policy and ensuring an enabling business environment. By identifying and investing in priority value chains through the four guiding principles, LATA aims to grow the agricultural sector dramatically. The value chains that have been selected are: oil palm, rubber, cacao, fisheries, rice, cassava, horticulture and poultry/livestock.</p>
<p>Liberia Agriculture Commodity Regulatory Authority (LACRA)</p>	<p>The LACRA Act was passed in 2016 under the LATA. It has been set up to develop functioning value chains and market systems and is an effective regulatory system for the trading of agricultural commodities. It protects value chains from under investment and poor crop quality. Its main focus is the cacao sector, one which is critically constrained by side-selling, but has the mandate to cover other commodities such as coffee as well.</p>
<p>Agreement Economic Forum 2011</p>	<p>The government is counting on concessions to account for a large portion of the country's infrastructural needs. One of the sectors with important concessions includes plantation agriculture (mainly palm oil and rubber). This export-oriented industry is highly dependent on sound infrastructure. Within concession agreements these infrastructural needs will be duly noted. At the Economic Forum in 2011, several agreements were made that show the strong preference of the Liberian government for Public Private Partnership structures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore channels for multi-stakeholder dialogue on infrastructure with the view of identifying win-win PPP's.</li> <li>- Introduce a coordination mechanism among concessionaires and the Government to avoid sub-optimal investment decisions for rail and energy</li> <li>- Prioritize the resolution of road and port bottlenecks affecting small concessioners</li> <li>- Pursue PPPs to implement this strategy</li> <li>- Collaborate on regional infrastructure projects such as the West Africa Power Project and Trans-West African Coastal Highway.</li> </ul>

<p>National Indicative Program of 2014-2020</p>	<p>Under the National Indicative Program of 2014-2020, the EU and Liberia stipulated an agreement of 279 million Euros in case an unforeseen need arises. Also, the support of the EU in the development of good governance, the energy-, health- and agriculture sectors were laid out.</p> <p>The purpose of the intervention being the promotion of a 'robust, competitive and modernized agriculture sector supportive of sustainable economic growth and development'.</p>
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## Appendix c: Summary of Recent Investments by Agricultural Concessions

Until 2008, significant private investment in agriculture was in tree crops. This changed with the increase in international food prices. Although cash crops investments are dominant, investors are now looking favorably into the food sub-sector of Liberia not only for domestic markets, but also for regional and international markets. The review that follows profiles current investment activities by agricultural concessions.

- Firestone Liberia produces natural rubber in Margibi County. The company is implementing a business plan that calls for US\$185 million to be injected into its Liberian operations through 2015; some of this is being spent on a new rubber wood processing facility and increased social expenditure.
- The Cavalla Rubber Plantation produces natural rubber in Maryland County and is owned by Belgian and French interests. The GOL has sold its 50% stake in the company to the current investors, and negotiations are ongoing to convert the land lease into a concession agreement. The company's business plan calls for injection of US\$25 million over the next four to five years.
- The Cocoa Plantation produces natural rubber in Nimba County and is owned by the Liberia Company, whose majority shares are owned by American investors. Some investment is being made to improve social services, replant, and expand the plantation.
- The Sinoe Rubber Corporation also produces natural rubber in Sinoe County. Ownership of the plantation remains in doubt, and the plantation is now being managed by the locals and their authorities with plans for a takeover by central government authorities. No new investment has been made aside from attempts to maintain minimum operations.
- The Guthrie Rubber Plantation in Bomi County produces rubber, and its concession rights are owned by Sime Darby, a Malaysian company. Sime Darby has renegotiated the concession agreement that has been ratified by the national legislature, and the company plans to make an investment of over US\$800 million, mainly in oil palm cultivation and processing.
- The Salala Rubber Corporation is in Bong County and it produces rubber. In 2007, Salala merged with Weala, and the International Finance Corporation took an equity stake in the new company. New investment is unknown.

Other substantial investments in the agriculture sector by private entities are as follows:

- African Development Aid – This Libyan-backed venture plans to spend US\$30 million during the first phase of massive rice production in Fora, Lofa County, and Gbedin, Nimba County. It has obtained a concession agreement from government and initiated activities in Lofa.
- NOVEL – An international rice marketing firm with substantial interests in Liberia, this company received a concession agreement to cultivate 5,000 acres of rice in the Garwula Tombe area of Cape Mount County. Very little activity has taken place.
- Equatorial Biofuels (EBF)/Liberia Incorporated (LIBINC) – EBF obtained a concession agreement from the GOL for the rehabilitation and expansion of the Butaw Oil Palm Plantation in Sinoe County. It then merged with LIBINC in Palm Bay, Grand Bassa County. Initial investment amounts were US\$9.0 million for Butaw and US\$5.2 million for Palm Bay. Following the ratification of these two agreements by the legislature, LIBINC investors sold their interest to EBF, which now controls both entities.
- The GOL is currently engaged in renegotiating the concession agreement with the Liberia Agricultural Corporation, a producer and exporter of natural rubber located in Grand Bassa County and is far along in the competitive bidding process for management of the Decoris oil palm plantation in Maryland County.

Source: [http://www.gafspfund.org/sites/gafspfund.org/files/Documents/Liberia\\_4\\_of\\_7\\_LASIP\\_Sector\\_Investment\\_Plan\\_0.pdf](http://www.gafspfund.org/sites/gafspfund.org/files/Documents/Liberia_4_of_7_LASIP_Sector_Investment_Plan_0.pdf)



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