

We wish all MIA staff a Merry Christmas & Prosperous New Year

MIA Renaissance



"The size of your dreams must always exceed your current capacity to achieve them. If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough."
...EJS

A Weekly Newsletter. Ministry of Internal Affairs. Capitol Hill. Monrovia, Liberia.W.A.

Vol.1 No.7

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9TH DECEMBER, 2013



"Growing your own food is like printing your own money"



Can Liberia Feed Itself? -Govt. to double rice production by 2018



Weighing milled rice



Paddy rice in a Lofa warehouse

Can Liberia produce enough food to feed its nearly 4 million citizens? The answer to that question may not be a resounding 'yes' for now. There are still hurdles! But the prospects are certainly improving. While the country is blessed with an excellent climate favorable to agriculture, extensive biodiversity, and vast natural resources, decades of war obviously ravaged Liberia's productive assets.

Relative political stability has returned to the country since the end of the civil war in 2003, and though Liberia still struggles to overcome the social, economic, and human costs, there are vital signs that agriculture activities are once more on the rise,

Just before the country descended into fighting in 1989, Liberia

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Cleaning paddy rice

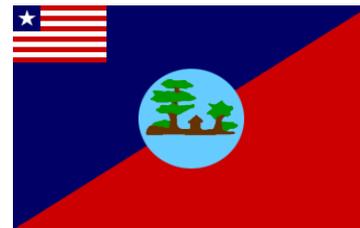


Milled rice ready for local consumption

County Profile



Montserrado County



Florence F. Brandy Senator Joyce Musu- Freeman, Senator Geraldine Doe-Sheriff Reps. Adolph A. Lawrence (15) (No Photo), Edward S. Forh (16), William V. Dakel, Sr (17), Josephine M.G. Francis(1) Julius F. Berrian(10), Gabriel Nyankan (No Photo (11) Richmond Anderson (12) Saah H. Joseph (13) Abraham V. Corneh III (14) Sekou S. Kanneh (2) Bill Twehway (No Photo.#3)Henry B. Fahnbulleh(4)Thomas P. Fallah (5)Edwin M. Snowe(6)Solomon C. George (7)Acarous M. Gray(8)Munah E. Pelham (No Photo 9)

Montserrado County is a county in the northwestern portion of the West African nation of Liberia. One of 15 counties that comprise the first-level of administrative division in the nation, it has four districts. Bensonville serves as the capital with the area of the county measuring 1,909 square kilometers (737 sq mi), the smallest in the country. As of the 2008 Census, it had a population of 1,144,806, making it the most populous county in Liberia.

Created in 1847 at the foundation of the country, the county is the oldest in Liberia. The most populous city in the county is Liberia's capital, Monrovia with 1,010,970 residents, while Montserrado's County Superintendent is Florence F. Brandy. The county is bordered by Bomi County to the west, Bong County to the north, and Margibi County to the east. The southern part of Montserrado lies on the Atlantic Coast.

Located on the coast in the northwestern third of Liberia, Montserrado County is bordered by three counties. The Atlantic Ocean makes up the county's southern border, while Bomi County lies on the western border. Bong County is to the north and

Margibi County to the east. The land is mainly alluvial soils, primarily clay, washed seaward from the streams and rivers of the interior valleys. In the lowlands on the coast grow palm trees, mangrove woods, and savanna grasslands with tropical forest covering the interior hills and valleys. Rivers include the St. Paul, Mesurado, Du, and Po.

The climate is tropical with dry and wet seasons. Annual precipitation measures approximately 75 inches (190 cm). From May to November is the rainy season, followed by the dry season from December through April. During the dry season winds from the Sahara Desert called the Harmattan create wild temperature fluctuations from December to the beginning of March.

Districts

Careysburg District and Todee District are the two statutorily created districts in the county. Greater Monrovia District and St. Paul River District are also recognized, but are not officially recognized as administrative districts. There are 21 townships, seven cities, one borough, and two chiefdoms contain with these districts. Administration varies by subunit with a governor running the borough, mayors in charge of cities, commissioners administering townships, and superintendents controlling districts.

Careysburg's capital is Bentol City, with a district population of 28,463. The main ethnic groups are Kpelle, Bassa, Mano, Kissi, Loma, and Gola. Both the White Plains Water Treatment Plant and the Mount Coffee Hydropower Project are in the district.

Todee District's population is 32,695 with farming the primary economic activity. The district is run by chiefdoms and clan systems, as the county contains a large number of native African communities.

The most populous district in the county and the nation, Greater Monrovia District, is home to 1,010,970 people. The district is made up of all the communities surrounding the city of Monrovia, but not the capital itself. Employment is mainly informal, small scale trade and government employment through the national government or foreign

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Editorial

Encouraging the Reactivation of Communal Farming Program

News that county superintendents and the Minister of Internal Affairs are to reactivate the Communal Farming Program is welcoming.

We consider this as good news and this good news could have come at no better time than now when the need for the country to be self-sufficient in food production. It therefore cannot be overemphasized.

Rice and cassava are the principal food crops of Liberia; the country must import rice to meet its consumption need. That is why superintendents are particularly concerned, and have therefore decided to get involved.

We are told that each superintendent will voluntarily cultivate fifty (50) acres, while Minister Dukuly will cultivate two hundred acres of land.

We commend the county superintendents and the Minister of Internal Affairs for resolving to reactivate the Communal Farming Program.

The Communal Farming Program, which contributed to the production of rice and other food crops locally in the past, must be encouraged by everyone because it will help to reduce the huge economic burden associated with imported food, especially rice.

When everyone embraces the reactivation of the Communal Farming Program, we believe, the desired objectives of this human driven initiative will be achieved as witnessed in the past.

This initiative, we urge, must not be left with the county superintendents and the Internal Affairs Minister alone – everyone should be part of it for its enhancement.

Again, we commend the county superintendents and the Minister of Internal Affairs for resolving to reactivate the Communal Farming Program and encourage everyone to embrace it. -*Courtesy of the Heritage Newspaper*

MIA Renaissance

A publication of Ministry of Internal Affairs.
Capitol Hill, Monrovia, Liberia.W.A.

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MIA Conducts 3-day Workshop on Risks Assessment/Identification in Margibi County

By Guankehye Koso



Participants posed for a photo

The Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs for Administration, Mr. Varney Sirleaf, on Monday November 2, 2013, opened a three day partnership workshop on Risks Assessment/Identification in Kakata, Margibi County.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, the Deputy Minister said the training was necessary to ensure viable and disaster management. He said in order to raise the NDRC to an appreciable level; the government should prioritize building the capacity of employees and institutions to help mitigate risks of disaster in the country.

Minister Varney said the Minister of Internal Affairs stands ready to promote the passage of the NDRC draft policy into Law.

Giving the overview of the workshop, MIA's Deputy Minister for Operation, Ranney B. Jackson told the participants that the workshop was organized by the Ministry to educate the citizens of Margibi on Disaster Risks Management cycles, Emergency Preparedness Plan and Early Warning System. He admonished citizens to know their roles and responsibilities in identifying hazardous and vulnerable areas in their respective communities to avoid disaster situation. Concluding, Deputy Minister Jackson said Disaster Risks Management is a serious challenge and should be treated as such to ensure safety throughout the country.

Also making remarks at the workshop, UNDP representative Mr. Robert Dorliea, who served also as facilitator said community dwellers should always work together to prevent disaster. They should take initiatives and strategies that will promote disaster prevention in families, in communities, which will lead to living in a safe environment.

Participants and facilitators of the workshop came from line Ministries, UNDP, WFP, UNMIL and Civil Society Organizations.

The workshop was organized by the Government of Liberia through the Ministry of Internal Affairs – NDRC in Collaboration with the WFP, and UNMIL, funded by the United Nation Development Program (UNDP).

Can Liberia Feed Itself? Farming activities across the country



Feeding Liberia

By: Joe K. Roberts

Last year, the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf government quietly crafted a far-fetching, comprehensive rice strategy document with the overall design of feeding its people. That strategy document outlines, amongst other things, increasing and doubling the production of the nation's staple – rice, over the next five years.

The government intends to, as signified in its strategy document, 'Liberia National Rice Development Strategies' (LNRDS) tackle the document's six main strategic components. They are: (i) Land and water management's plan. (ii) Increasing availability and accessibility of smallholder farmers to farm inputs, (iii) Enhancing post-harvest quality improvement, (iv) Increasing access to market, (v) Institutional capacity building, and (vi) Mechanization.

Through the implementation of the six main strategic components mentioned, the government is aiming to achieve increased rice productivity in both upland and lowland ecosystems and by expanding the land area under rice cultivation in the lowlands.

According to statistics, our annual rice consumption rate is something close to 465, 276 tons, at least that what the latest statistics showed in 2010. Our annual per capita consumption of rice (133 Kg per year) is the highest in Africa. The gap between the demand and local production is met through importation of rice from countries such as China and USA.

The seemingly large importation of rice adds pressure on the country's trade balance and its foreign exchange. Given the social and political significance of rice in Liberia, the government concedes, there is a strong need for increasing domestic rice production.

Experts have suggested and the government has now taken those suggestions under consideration that the opportunities for sustainable rice production and the profitability of growing rice are substantially higher in the lowlands than in the uplands. This means that more attention will be focused on swamp land farming than the uplands where trees and shrubs are burnt, destroying much of the soil nutrients before crops are even planted.

A Remote Monitoring Update system sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) predicts that "Good harvests, coupled with normal livelihood strategies, are enabling households to meet essential food and non-food needs. Households are expected to be food secure (IPC Phase 1) through at least June 2013. Rice production during the 2012/13 cropping season was slightly above-average. These good production levels, combined with the normal levels of rice imports, will be sufficient to meet Liberia's food needs during the 2012/13 consumption year. Imported rice prices will likely remain stable with little variation over the upcoming months."

In southeastern counties of Grand Gedeh, River Gee, and Maryland, rice harvests ended in October and land preparation activities have been ongoing since November for the next upland rice and vegetables planting season, which starts in April. In



other counties, rice harvests were completed in December and land preparation activities are ongoing at low levels.

Liberia's national 2012/13 paddy rice production has been estimated at 298,178 MT, which is a 2.6 percent increase as compared to last year and 2.9 percent increase compared to the four-year average. These slightly above - average harvests, coupled with ongoing harvests of plantains (in central and southern Liberia) and other tubers (throughout the country), have contributed to normal food stock and crop income levels. In the southeast, food stocks from this season's harvests are expected to last a normal, five months, which means household food stocks will deplete in April/May.

In Lofa and parts of Bong counties, which are major rice producing areas of the country, markets are currently dominated by locally milled rice.

Meanwhile in the rest of the country, markets are currently well-supplied with rice imports, reduced market demand, due to households consuming their own food stocks, have caused imported rice prices to decline in December compared to November levels. These price decreases have ranged from 3 percent in Monrovia and Voinjama to 15 percent in Foya compared to last year's levels, imported rice prices in December remained to 14 percent lower this year.

Two exceptions are Pleebo and Buchanan where rice prices displayed a 23 and 41 percent annual increase respectively given that the government of Liberia recently extended an executive order suspending import tariffs on rice, imported rice prices are expected to remain at normal and stable levels during this consumption year.

Montserrado County

governments. The population has members of each of Liberia's 16 main tribes.

St. Paul River District is the second most populous district in the county with 63,541 residents. Residents are primarily Christians and a member of the Bassa, Dey, or Kpelle tribes. Farming and fishing are the main economic activities along with some small scale trading. The district has one paved road.

Montserrado is the smallest county by size at 1,909 square kilometres (737 sq mi), but largest by population at 1,144,806 or approximately 33% of Liberia's total population. The population density is 599.7 inhabitants per square kilometre (1,553 /sq mi), the highest in Liberia. The county had a population of 491,078 at the 1984 Census. The average household size was 4.7 people, a decrease from 5.4 at the 1984 Census. The county capital of Bensonville has a population of 4,089.

Males outnumber females in the county with 585,833 to 558,973. Christians compose an estimated 68.2% of the population, with Muslims totaling 31.8%. All of Liberia's 16 main tribal groups are represented in the ethnic makeup of the county. Kpelle speaking groups represent 52% of the population while Bassa speakers comprise 21%, followed by Lorma with 6%, Kru with 4%, and all others with 3% or less each.

In the county 10% of the population was considered food insecure, with 35% listed as highly vulnerable, 43% as moderately vulnerable, and 13% were listed as food secure regarding access to sustenance as of October 2006. Residents lived mainly in owner occupied dwellings, which made up 61% of households. Seventeen percent rented their homes with an average cost of 341 LD, and 22% lived rent free in their home.

Each county in Liberia is headed by a superintendent appointed by the Liberian President. Montserrado's county superintendent is Florence F. Brandy. Other executive officers include commissioners for districts and townships, line ministries, and an assistant superintendent that focuses on development. The county is divided into two districts, seven cities, one borough, twenty-one townships, seven clans, and two chiefdoms. A district superintendent heads each of the two statutory districts.

Judicially, the county has eight total courts between probate, justice of the peace, and magisterial courts. The Liberian National Police have 844 officers spread across 33 stations in the county, as of October 2007. Additionally, the National Police Training Academy is in Montserrado County in Paynesville City. Other national government employees assigned to the county include tax collectors, revenue agents, and customs officials.

Economy

The county contains the most and the largest markets in the entire country. One of these markets is in the Red Light neighborhood of Paynesville where a variety of consumer goods are sold out of wheelbarrows and old intermodal containers. Markets include daily markets, primarily for food, and weekly markets. The Red Light market and the Duala markets serve as distribution markets for incoming goods from the rural parts of Liberia.

Agriculture is small part of the economy, with the main crops consisting of cassava (90% of all crops), rice (16%), other vegetables (18%), corn (16%), sweet potatoes or eddoes (8%), plantain or bananas (8%), and pulses (1%). Livestock is mainly pigs, chickens, and ducks. Commercial crops grown include cocoa, coconuts, sugarcane, pineapple, kola nuts, palm oil, and rubber.[2] Some palm oil is produced on government owned farms in Mt. Coffee and Fendell.

Rubber plantations are located in the Todee and Careysburg districts. These include the Morris American Rubber Company in Todee that employs 600 and the Liberia Resources Corporation in Careysburg with 300 employees. Overall rubber production accounts for eight percent of household income in Montserrado County. Small scale mineral extraction occurs for gold and diamonds. Other resource extraction activities include logging and fishing.

The county had a total of 947 students enrolled in school in 1910. In 1948, the missionaries from the Pentecostal faith opened a school in Mein Clan in Todee District. Additional primary schools were built in the 1970s, while in 1976 the University of Liberia opened the Fendall branch campus in Louisiana. Bentol City added a high school in 1978. The University of Liberia's main campus is located in Monrovia, and includes the country's only law school in the Louis Arthur Grimes School of Law.

Enrollment in primary schools in the county totaled 314,409 students, which was 35% of the total number for the nation as a whole. Students attended a total of 1,096 schools in the county.

On December 11, 1821, officials from the United States arrived aboard the vessel Alligator under the command of Captain Robert F. Stockton at Mesurado Bay. Stockton and Dr. Eli Ayers negotiated to acquire the land in and around the bay from the native chiefs for a settlement by former slaves before sailing to Sierra Leone to pick up these colonists. On January 7, 1822, the former slaves arrived and settled Providence Island on the Mesurado River under the auspices of the American Colonization Society, and by April they had moved to the mainland. Many of the communities in the county are named for the pioneers who settled the area and their former homes in America. Natives inhabiting the land that made up the county were from the Deygbo, Gola, and Kpelle tribes.

The Liberian Herald began printing in 1830 in Monrovia and was the first newspaper in Liberia. In 1832, the Dey-Golah War erupted between the colonists and the native tribes. This war had one battle, with the colonists from Monrovia defeating the Dey and Golah (Gola) combined group. In 1847, the colony declared its independence and Montserrado was the first of the Republic of Liberia's counties to sign the Declaration of Independence on July 26, 1847. At the time of creation, the county was composed of three administrative districts in Bomi, Gibi, and Marshall with Monrovia as the county capital. In 1885, the first municipal water supply system was completed in Monrovia.

The first County Inspector was appointed in 1949 by President Tubman, followed by President Tolbert's appointment of the first County Superintendent in 1973. A railroad was constructed in the mid-1960s from Monrovia's port through Todee District by the Bong Mining Company. The Mount Coffee Hydro-power Project's first phase was completed in 1966. Rubber and palm oil plantations were started in the 1960s and 1970s, while a factory for producing clothing was built in 1979 in Bentol City.

In 1974, the county capital was moved by President Tolbert from Monrovia to his hometown of Bensonville. In 1976, an Assistant Superintendent was added to focus on development in Montserrado County. Bomi Territory in the western portion of the county became Bomi County in 1983. In 1984, Marshall and Gibi territories were combined and became neighboring Margibi County to the east.

30% Liberia's forest

providing evidence to display its legality on the market. He noted that without the certificate no exported timber would be sold on the world market.

The spokesman said this system makes knowing whether timber has passed through the legal means to enter the world market more transparent, as opposed to the Private Use Permit which he described as a disaster. He however clarified that the EU's role in assisting Liberia to maintain its forest through the VPA is not meant to create a monopoly for the EU.

The VPA between Liberia and EU is aimed at properly managing the Liberian natural rain forest for the benefit of its people and generations to come.

The signing ceremony was attended by EU Ambassador to Liberia, Attilio Pacific, and representative of Liberian Timber Association, Agriculture Minister Dr. Florence Chennoweth, officials of EPA, GAC and UNMIL.

The VPA is an international agreement launched in 2009 between the EU and Liberian government to improve the governance of the forestry sector and ensure that the timber imported into the EU has complied with Liberian legal requirements.

Can Liberia Feed Itself?

imported only 30 percent of its rice mostly because the government dropped all import duties on farming tools to help farmers to increase production.

Four years ago in 2008, when security forces stopped a truck carrying about 700 bags of rice at the Guinea border, the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf led government banned all food exports, particularly rice, because profiteers



Cleaning paddy rice

were taking advantage of the country's cheap rice prices - already in short supply in Liberia - to neighboring countries to sell at higher prices. The government discovered that dealers from neighboring countries were buying up bags of rice on the Liberia's market to resell in countries like Guinea where it is more expensive, the then Commerce Minister Frances Johnson Morris said. The government launched a campaign to urge Liberians to adjust their diet toward starches other than rice, like yams, cassava, plantains and eddoes.

"If you compare our price of rice with those in the sub-region, we have the lowest," Morris told reporters. She said a 50-kilogram bag of rice costs between \$26 and \$28 in Liberia, compared with up to \$50 a bag in Guinea.

Under a 13-million-dollar European Union food facility to tackle the food price crisis U.N. agencies and the country's Ministry of Agriculture have been promoting the rehabilitation of swampland, irrigation schemes and dams which had fallen into disrepair as part of Rice imports accounted for 60 percent of total consumption in the year to May 2008 in a country where the farming population is dispersed, rain fed crops are farmed with small machinery and processing is limited - all of which heighten the country's vulnerability to international market shocks, according to the U.N.

Liberian subsistence agriculture is traditionally based on burning bushes on slopes for farming but experts say it is in the interest of the government to encourage farmers to use the country's more than 560,000 hectares of swampland.

"While the yields in uplands range between half to one metric tons per hectare, in the lowlands (swamps) it is between 2.5 to 3.5 metric tons per hectare under traditional farming and should you adopt improved methods of farming you could take it to 5 metric tons per hectare," According to Sheku Kamara, a food expert delegated to support the farmers by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

According to statistics, in 2010, the total demand for milled rice in Liberia was estimated at 465,276t. Being a popular food choice in Liberia, the annual per capita consumption of rice (133 Kg per year) is the highest in Africa. The gap between the demand and local production is met through importation of rice from countries such as China and USA. The large importation of rice adds pressure on the country's trade balance

and its foreign exchange. Given the social and political significance of rice in Liberia, there is a strong need for increasing domestic rice production.

In response to the global food crisis in 2008, the Government of Liberia acknowledged the importance of increasing rice production and has helped markets increase the rice supply by subsidizing the importation of rice. The government did not only acknowledge, it decided to do something about it.

The government is targeting 2018 as the year it should be able to double local rice production. In a comprehensive strategy document titled: The Liberia's National Rice Development Strategies (LNRDS), the strategies proposed aim to achieve this by increasing the rice productivity in both upland and lowland ecosystems and by expanding the land area under rice cultivation in the lowlands

The intensive slash and burning of food crops has reduced the levels of soil nutrients in the uplands, thus affecting the sustainability of rice production in the uplands. Whereas in the lowlands, the vast uncultivated land area, the abundant water resources and the climatic suitability offer greater potential for increased rice yields and multiple rice cropping cycles.

Thus the scopes for sustainable rice production and the profitability of growing rice are substantially higher in the lowlands than in the uplands. The LNRDS aspires to improve productivity in smallholder rice farms through a value chain approach in which the needs and issues of various subsectors will be addressed through an integrated approach.

According to the government, the six main strategic components of LNRDS include (i) Land and water management, (ii) Increasing availability and accessibility of smallholder farmers to farm



Rice ready to eat

inputs, (iii) Enhancing post-harvest quality improvement, (iv) Increasing access to market, (v) Institutional capacity building, and (vi) Mechanization. The abundant land and water resources could play an important role in doubling rice production.

The LNRDS aspires to rehabilitate existing irrigation infrastructures and construct new irrigation schemes with improved drainage and water storage facilities in the lowlands. Policy tools outlining the guidelines on maintenance, ownership and water sharing under these schemes will be developed and disseminated. The sustain ability of rice production will be enhanced through improved land management practices and increased adoption of organic-and inorganic fertilizers in smallholder rice farms.

So, the question: 'Can Liberia Feed Itself?' may eventually come to a resounding 'yes'.

Superintendents Must Account for County Sports Meet Fund

...MIA's DMA Sirleaf



MIA's DMA Sirleaf

As the country's National County Sports Meets draws nearer, Superintendents in all of the fifteen counties have been warned to account responsibly for every dime from fund they will received for the hosting of the various games.

Sounding the warning to superintendents recently on national radio, Internal Affairs Deputy Minister for Administration, Mr. Varney Sirleaf

said the fund should be carefully managed and given only to those it is meant for including athletes, coaches, referees and other essentials. After the sporting activities is concluded, he said, all superintendents will be required to fully account

"Celebrating Ten Years of Peace Through Sports," as this year's County Meet is been themed, the matches will kick off in five day beginning Saturday, November 15 in Lower Buchanan, Grand Bassa County.

The 15 counties of Liberia are expected to be represented by their respected teams to participate in all of the tournament's five disciplines of football, kickball, basketball, volleyball and athletics. They have been placed in four groups for the preliminary football and kickball games to be played at four different venues across the country.

Grand Bassa, Grand Kru and Bomi Counties have been placed in group I, and their games will be played at the refurbished Doris Williams Sports Stadium in Lower Buchanan. Bong, Maryland, Grand Gedeh and Montserrado Counties make up group II, whose games would be played at the David Kuyon Sports Stadium in Gbanga, Bong County.

Lofa, River Gee, Margibi and Grand Cape Mount Counties are being placed in group III, with their matches scheduled to take place at the Vojjama Sports Stadium, Lofa County; while Sinoe, Gbarpolu, Nimba and Rivercess Counties constitute group IV, and they will battle each other in Greenville, Sinoe County, at the James E. Green Sports Stadium.

From the preliminary rounds to the grand finale of the volleyball, basketball and track & field events will be played in Monrovia, Montserrado County, alongside the quarterfinals, semifinals and the grand finale of the football and kickball games, somewhere between December 2013 and January 2014.

30% Liberia's forest set aside for conservation Under EU, GOL 6m Euro agreement



He said reforestation is high on the agenda of GOL, and that the FDA's door was opened to people who wanted to plant trees and carry on their planting for future harvesting.

An FDA spokesman stressed that before any certificate can be signed for a company to operate in the Liberian forest, it would have to be clarified through a technical system that indicates whether the certificate to be signed has met every legal requirement. He said the system would also serve as form of security, whereby those who may want to bypass the process will be restricted.

He said Liberia will benefit immensely from the Voluntary Partnership between Liberia and EU because every timber would be fully certificated, thereby

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The Government of Liberia has mandated that 30 percent of the nation's forest be set aside for conservation as a way of protecting them from deforestation. The decision is government's own measure taken to protect Liberia's forest and wildlife for future generations and as a defensive measure against the challenge of climate change", FDA officials said over the week end.

At the signing of the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) on December 2, 2013, The European Union (EU) and the Government of Liberia (GOL) signed a 6 million Euro agreement for the maintenance of protected areas in the Liberian forest.



Liberia is poised to double its rice production by 2018. This farming expert in Lofa County told 'Internal Imaging' recently that he thinks it's achievable. "This year alone, we have bought at least five thousand bags of rice of paddy rice, out of which we have produced over three thousand bags of milled rice."