

Liberia

June 2015: Emergency Food Security Assessment

Despite the improvement of food consumption over the last years, many households face chronic difficulties in accessing the markets and in ensuring quality food utilization. The Ebola epidemic has hit hard farmers and those living on irregular jobs, thus eroding their purchasing power and limiting further their access to food. The epidemic containment measures, coupled with the fear of Ebola, have isolated the households, contributing to the loss of employment and to the erosion of their purchasing power that pushed thousands of households into food insecurity.

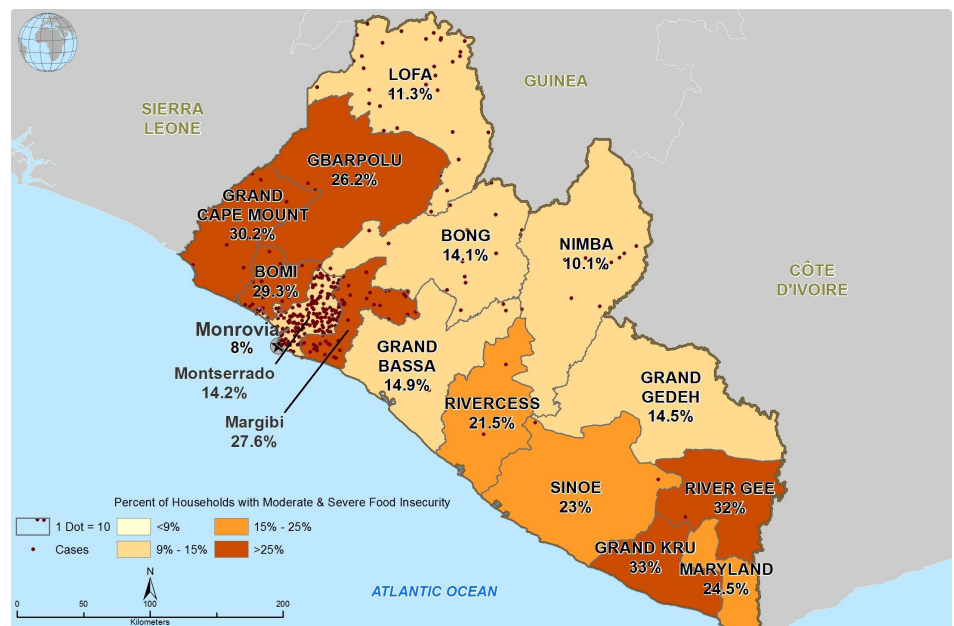
The main goal of this joint evaluation, carried out under the umbrella of the Food Security Cluster, is to assess the food security situation in Liberia, six months after the rapid food security assessment. The fieldwork has been carried out in all the 15 counties of Liberia and results are representative at county level.

Food security situation

Food insecurity affects **640,000 people**, corresponding to 16 percent of the population. Among these about **52,000 households** (2 percent) are severely food insecure.

- 21 percent of households do not have access to an adequate diet.
- 41 percent of households did not have food or money to buy food the week before the survey, thus the average reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) doubled in three years.
- Food expenditures share is beyond 65 percent of the total household expenditures for one fourth of Liberian households.
- 18 percent of households are using emergency coping strategies (mostly begging) to ensure bulk of food needs.
- In May rice stock was completely depleted for one third of the households and the cassava stocks for 18 percent of the households.

The most food insecure counties are located in the south eastern part of the country (Grand Kru: 33 percent; River Gee: 32 percent) and the North (Grand Cape Mount (30 percent) and Bomi (30 percent) where the physical access to market is a constraint, and the disruption of markets and reduced economic activity due to Ebola measures have not returned to pre-crisis level.



CARI Console

		Food secure	Marginally Food secure	Moderately Food insecure	Severely food insecure
Current status	Food Consumption	<i>Acceptable</i> 79%	-	<i>Limit</i> 16%	<i>Poor</i> 5%
Coping capacities	Economic vulnerability (% of food expenditures on total)	<50% 48%	50-65% 27%	65-75% 13%	>75% 12%
	Asset depletion	59%	11%	11%	18%
Food security classification		42%	42%	14%	2%
National prevalence of food insecurity households				16%	

Determinants of the food security

- **The negative effects of the containment measures are still lingering and affecting the population.** The temporary closure of the markets, the impediment to collective rural works at crucial times of crops' growth, the rise of food prices, coupled with the fear of contracting the disease, contributed to the loss of jobs and incomes, leaving an economic burden on most vulnerable households.
- **Agricultural production has been disrupted**
- **Incomes dropped** for one third of the households (35 percent) compared to January-March 2014, the two main reasons being the lack of jobs and the fear of contracting Ebola.
- **Stock's depletion** pushed the households to become increasingly dependent on markets to cover food needs and for a longer period than usual.
- With a **diminished purchasing power**, households have eroded their livelihoods.

Recommmendations

- Meet most vulnerable households' immediate food needs to allow them to overcome the incoming lean season.
- Continue monitoring the food security situation closely.
- Assess market's functioning prior a possible food assistance in the form of cash, especially considering the effects of the rainy season on the roads viability.
- Consider prioritizing Ebola affected households, without excluding those only indirectly affected.
- Redefine free food distribution target in order to reach the most food insecure households.
- Work closely with the Government and the partners of the FSC to include a solid early warning system that would allow a sound preparedness for a rapid emergency response into the National Recovery Plan.
- Reinforce resilience building programs to restore livelihoods.
- Reinforce school feeding programs, both as a means of enabling families and communities to get their children in school, and as a means of encouraging farmers to produce more food for sale, "home grown food" a local food based feeding program.

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