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Bulletin

EBOLA OUTBREAK IMPACT ON AGRICULTURE IN SIERRA LEONE

The Ebola Virus Disease outbreak has severely affected Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea, resulting in deaths and adversely impacting on the agricultural sector and food security

Ebola outbreak is devastating Sierra Leone's agricultural sector

The Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak has severely affected Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea, resulting in deaths and adversely impacting on the agricultural sector and food security conditions, the World Health Organization (WHO) said September 18th, 2014. These countries are very poor, and the Ebola outbreak could even make them poorer. Sierra Leone and Liberia just emerged from horrific wars and both countries have been rebuilding their economies. In Sierra Leone currently 12 of 13 Districts are affected with Ebola.

Agriculture is the main stay of the vast majority of the population and accounted for 50 percent of the economy according to a report released by World Bank (17th September 2014). The same World Bank report predicted that with expected

production disruptions due to the quarantine-induced restrictions on farmer movements, it is very likely that national rice production for the 2014/15 season will be significantly affected.

Also report by Global Information and Early Warning Systems on Food and Agriculture (GIEWS) on 2 September 2014 warns that a decline in both food and cash crop production would severely impact household incomes, thus reducing purchasing power and inhibiting food access.

The areas that have high incidences of EVD are among the most productive regions of Sierra Leone. As a result, the outbreak of EVD together with imposed travel ban has restricted movement of people, and supply

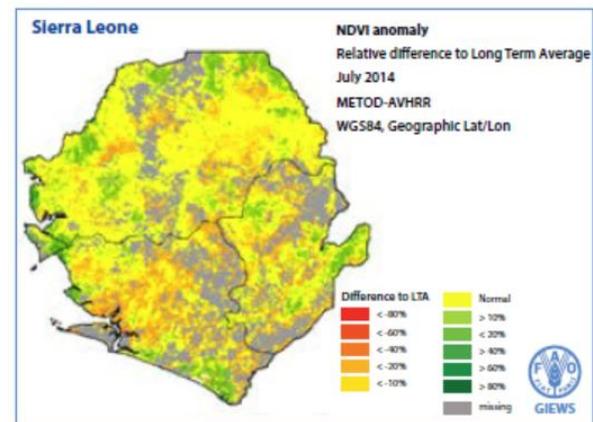


FIGURE 1. SOURCE: FAO)

of labour has led to serious concerns on production prospects. In addition, cash crop production (including rice, cocoa and coffee) is expected to be seriously affected, with recent reports indicating labour shortages according to Sierra Leonean Authorities interviewed in different international news media.



Food Insecurity in Sierra Leone

According to recent report from the BBC, Ebola is having a devastating impact on the economies of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. Joseph Sam Sesay, Sierra Leone's Agricultural Minister explained to BBC that "The economy has been deflated by 30%". Mr. Sesay also added that farmers living around the epicentres are moving away to areas that don't have the disease; this also creates labour shortages for farms they leave behind. Also Kaifala Marah, Minister of Finance discussed to CNBC that a good number of people are running away from their farms. He added that Cocoa and Coffee production that account for 90 percent of ...



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Food Insecurity in Sierra Leone

Agricultural export has decreased. Minister Marah was asked by Eleni Giokos of CNBC if he is worried about the Food Security and if the country will import food. Marah replied that Sierra Leone will have to import more food and food security is under threat. He added that Sierra Leone will need to recalibrate its agricultural sector in making sure that farmers will return back to their farms. Apart from agriculture, mining and tourism activities are also down due to Ebola outbreak in the country. Minister Marah also discussed that the world has isolated his country and Sierra Leone's revenue is drying up. According to CNBC report on 21 October, half of Sierra Leone's GDP is derived from agriculture, and the two regions at the epicenter of the Ebola outbreak produce about 18% percent of domestic rice output.

Sierra Leone now is at the peak of crop harvesting (see figure 2), and this will have severe implications for food and cash crop in the affected areas.

Road blocks are also blamed for food shortages in the country as food distribution is disrupted. On the other hand, the road block strategy taken by the Sierra Leone Authorities is vital for reducing the spread of Ebola virus to other towns. This strategic initiative is also supported by United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) David McLachain-Kar who told the BBC that "A robust response to quarantining epicentres of the disease is absolutely necessary." But he admits agriculture in Sierra Leone has been brought to its knees.

The outbreak will also have impact on staple food prices as The World Bank report indicated that rice price may spike up to 30 percent in the Ebola affected areas due to measures taken to contained EVD. Also these measures will be further exacerbated by the country's heavy dependence on imported rice, with import volumes potentially reduced due to land border closures discussed the same report.

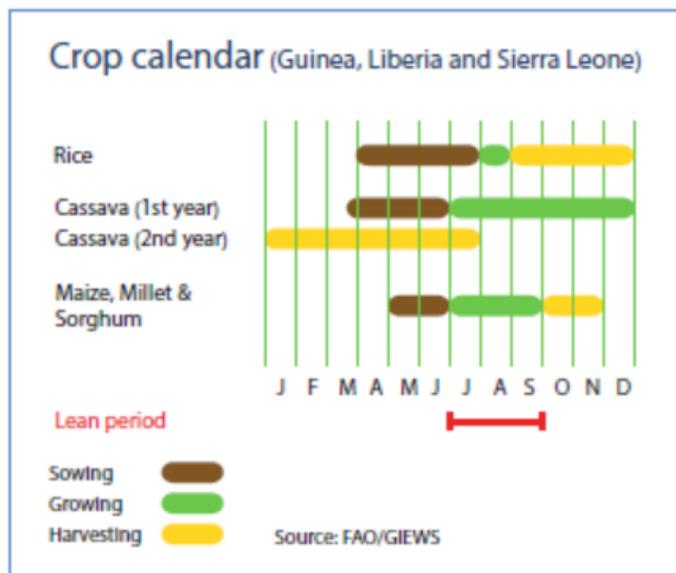


FIGURE 2 (SOURCE: FAO)



Figure 3. A rice farm outgrown by weed in Koindu, Sierra Leone. (Source: WFP)



FIGURE 4. MOVEMENT OF RICE IN SIERRA LEONE (SOURCE: FAO)

Action by FAO

In Sierra Leone alone, 1200 persons have died from EVD. Sierra Leone has declared an emergency and is implementing preventative and eradication measures to combat the EVD outbreak. These include the establishment of quarantine zones and imposition of restrictions on the movement of people. These steps taken by Sierra Leone Authorities were necessary but challenging for Sierra Leoneans in the country. For example, these restrictions have resulted in food security concerns that curtailed the movement of goods and services, including food items, leading to panic buying, food shortages and significant price hikes.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has launched a campaign to tackle growing food security threat in the three worst affected countries. The goal of FAO is to raise \$30 million urgently needed for 90,000 vulnerable households in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea whose food supplies and livelihoods have been impacted by the Ebola outbreak. The Ebola outbreak has hit rural agricultural areas. UNDP has already asked for \$18m to improve Sierra Leone's health centers while FAO said Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea will need \$90m, an update from its previous assessment.

An Appeal for Urgent Food Donation to Sierra Leone

UNICEF reported in "State of Food and Nutrition in Sierra Leone 2011" that during lean season from June to August more than 2.5 million (45% of the population) people became food insecure that year. The seasons in Sierra Leone don't change that much. This means the current EVD outbreak will increase the percentage of people becoming food insecure this year. For example many farmers have abandoned their fields at the peak of harvest due to the Ebola outbreak as discussed earlier.

World Food Program (WFP) is one of the leading providers for food in quarantined households. WFP have made an assessment that over 1 million people will be in dire need of food because of the direct and indirect impact of EVD outbreak. The World

Bank Report discussed that both WHO and FAO have called for an emergency operation of 65,000 tons to provide food for 1.3 million people for over three months in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. UNICEF and World Bank have also given further support in providing food provision to WFP. Another Challenge for NGOs to distribute is logistics. Roads have been improved but more remains to be done. The rain season makes it difficult for trucks to move from one point to another. See figure 5.

SLOF is appealing to Governments around the world and private organizations to donate to NGOs responsible for addressing Food Insecurity in Sierra Leone. This is very urgent and food such as rice, oil etc. can also be donated to the NGOs who work in Sierra Leone.

SIERRA LEONE FOOD SECURITY SITUATION:

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FIGURE 5. LOGISTIC CHALLENGE (SOURCE: WFP)



Current Ebola Outbreak Situation in Sierra Leone

Ebola in Sierra Leone is increasing to rate of more than 20 deaths per day, reported The Guardian (October 21). It was also reported that government confirms 49 cases at the beginning of the week in two Ebola zones inside Freetown. Forty-one new cases alone were reported on Monday in two Ebola zones. The number of confirmed EVD patients in these two zones alone total 851. On Monday there were no new cases reported in Kailahun and Kenema Districts which previously have been the epicentres of outbreak in the country according to The Guardian. The death toll for Ebola now stands 4,900 out of 10,000 affected (WHO). In Sierra Leone alone over 1,200 have died.

Mali's First Ebola Patient

In Mali, first case of Ebola has been confirmed, the health minister said on Thursday evening. The announcement was made on Malian state television by Ousmane Kone saying that the patient was a 2-year-old girl who had come from neighboring Guinea. The child was taken to a hospital in the Malian town of Kayes on Wednesday which is about 600 km from Bamako, and her blood sample tested positive for the virus. The girl's father has also died from Ebola according to CNN report. The girl passed away on 24 October, discussed Malian Authorities (Aljazeera). Authorities in Mali have also quarantined 40 people who came in contact with the girl but there are still others who the authorities are looking for, reported France 24.

New York Ebola Case

A New York Doctor who just returned on the 17 October back from Guinea contracted EVD. He was tested positive. He was working for Doctors Without Borders.

SLOF takes the opportunity to offer relevant information concerning Ebola Outbreak in West Africa, especially in Sierra Leone. Our bulletin includes news in a nutshell concerning a particular topic about Ebola which may be relevant for Sierra Leoneans living in Finland and Finnish Citizens. SLOF information sources are WHO, FAO, CNBC, FAO, MSF, AP, WFP, AFP, BBC, Aljazeera, France 24, and CNN, The Guardian and other media. SLOF is not responsible for any misinformation.