



# NATIONAL OIL PALM STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN OF LIBERIA (2021-2025)



## FOREWORD

Oil Palm is an important tree crop in Liberia that covers over more than 1 million hectares. About 21.2% of the farming households produce palm oil, and more than 220,000 people are employed in the oil palm sector. In addition to the employment opportunities provided, the export of crude palm oil serves as a major source of foreign exchange earnings for the Government of Liberia. The main stakeholders in this sector are the farmers, co-operatives, large multinational corporations and concessionaires, and intermediaries. Within the next five years, we anticipate being a major player in the oil palm production in West Africa. This has been demonstrated in the progress made by the Government over the years. For instance, the production of palm oil increased from 18,104 MT in 2018 to 22,265 Mt in 2019, indicating tremendous efforts being made by the Government to improve productivity in the sector.

Oil palm has brought significant benefits and prosperity to Liberia. It helped improve the regional and landscape and smallholder community economy. The opportunities in the international markets for the Liberian palm oil and other palm products are considerable. Global growth in palm oil use and supply shortages indicate that good prices will be achieved in the coming years. Growth in the oil palm sector will generate value, which, coupled with the related public policies will improve services to key vulnerable sectors of the society, and contribute to improving the quality of life in the oil palm smallholder communities.

The creation of the National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia (NOPPOL) and strengthened; coordination among government ministries and agencies demonstrates that all key stakeholders: government, private sector, NGOs, business associations, and smallholder associations have the same strong determination to create a more sustainable Liberian palm oil industry from a social, economic, and environmental point of view. The realization of the Ministry of Agriculture National Decree & Presidential Regulation is clear evidence of the Liberian government's commitment to supporting a more sustainable palm oil industry.

In the coming years, we envision in transforming Liberia's oil palm development into a sustainable, vibrant, responsible, and productive economic sector that contributes to economic growth and wellbeing while maintaining forest cover and biodiversity. The commitment and vision that NOPPOL stakeholders share are proof that Liberia is ready to make the change our industry needs. We acknowledge that achieving our vision will require continuous improvement for sustainable oil palm development. This will need strong dedication and commitment from all stakeholders to undertake the basic changes in business practices.

We are encouraged by all key stakeholders supporting the improvement efforts that are outlined here and are actively involved in addressing the issues we face in guiding sustainable oil palm development. For that, we would like to offer our sincere thanks to all parties who actively contributed to the development of the National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan and Action Plan (NOPSAP).



Jeanine M. Cooper, Minister  
Ministry of Agriculture, R. L.

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The National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia looks forward to more collaboration on the implementation that will be driven by stronger partnerships in sustainable oil palm production.

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## ACRONYMNS AND ABBREVIATIONS

SPOTT	Sustainable Policy Transparency Toolkit
LLA	Liberia Land Authority
APOI	Africa Palm Oil Initiative
AfT	Agenda for Transformation
CARI	Central Agriculture Research Institute
CAB	Conformity Assessment Body
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CBIT	Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency
CDA	Cooperative Development Agency
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CMS	Convention on Migratory Species
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CPO	Crude Palm Oil
CSO - OPWG	Civil Society Organizations Oil Palm Working Group
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPO	Equatorial Palm Oil
EPML	Environmental Protection and Management Law
FCPF	Forest Carbon Partnership Facility
FFA	Free Fatty Acids
FLEGT	Forest Law Enforcement, Governance, and Trade
FPP	Forest Peoples Programme
FDA	Forestry Development Authority
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
GAFSP	Global Agricultural and Food Security Program
GVL	Golden Veroleum Liberia

GGP	Good Growth Partnership
GoL	Government of Liberia
HCS	High Carbon Stock
HCV	High Conservation Value
RISS	RSPO Independent Smallholder Standard
ICLUP	Integrated Conservation and Land Use Plan
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labor Organization agreement
LOI	Letter of Intent
LATA	Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda
LEITI	Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
LFSP	Liberia Forestry Support Project
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
LISHAM	Liberia Standards Harmonization Model
MT	Metric tons
MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MOCI	Ministry of Commerce and Industries
NBC	National Bureau of Concessions
NFRL	National Forestry Reform Law of Liberia
NI	National Interpretation
NOPPOL	National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia
NOPSAP	National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan
NSL	National Standards Laboratory
NWCPAML	National Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management Law
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPQ	Non-photochemical Quenching

NQP	National Quality Policy
POTICO	Palm Oil, Timber, Carbon, Offset
P & C	Principles and Criteria
PLUP	Participatory Land Use Planning
POP	Persistent Organic Pollutants
PAPD	Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
PAs	Protected Areas
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation
RSB	Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials
RSPO	Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil
STAR-P	Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TA	Thematic Areas
TFA	Tropical Forest Alliance
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combat Desertification/Land Degradation
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement
WRI	World Resource Institute
MOL	Ministry of Labor

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Government of Liberia (GoL) has identified oil palm as one of the priority crops to spur agricultural growth and development under Pillar II of the Pro Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) 2018 – 2023. Prior to the civil war, oil palm plantations were solely owned by the GoL. They were also owned communally with aid from the GoL and managed by cooperatives or held under trusteeship by managing communities. The situation has now changed, and production of oil palm is done by medium<sup>1</sup> and smallholders as well as concessionaires. Oil palm is the most widely grown tree crop in Liberia by about 21% of households<sup>2</sup> which accounts for approximately one tenth of employment in the agricultural sector.

Despite the economic benefits associated with oil palm development, its cultivation can lead to environmental degradation risks, inequalities in ownership of resources and sharing of benefits, land conflicts, poor labor conditions, and loss of biodiversity. This has led to the sector facing significant criticism over unsustainable production practices and unequal benefit sharing. Various challenges and opportunities for sustainable oil palm production have been identified through the NOPSAP to produce a framework to guide sustainable oil palm production in Liberia.

The National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan (NOPSAP) is the result of the efforts of a wide range of stakeholders in the oil palm value chain. The NOPSAP aims to guide public and private institutions, small to large-scale producers, technical and civil society organizations participating in the sector to achieve common objectives. The overall goal of the NOPSAP 2021 - 2025 is to place the oil palm sector as a strategic engine for national and inclusive rural economic growth.

To achieve this goal, the strategy is organized around seven objectives with various interventions and responsible institutions tasked with achieving them:

### Objective 1: Compliance with National Standards for the Liberian Oil Palm Sector

This objective aims to ensure compliance with national standards that guide the production, processing, and marketing of palm oil. This will require the GoL to establish and / or strengthen existing systems of compliance with national and international standards.

### Objective 2: Develop an Enabling Regulatory Framework for the Oil Palm Sector

Liberia had no improved regulatory framework to guide the oil palm sector until 2020 when the RSPO Board of Governors endorsed the country's RSPO-National Interpretation. This presents an opportunity to improve regulations in the oil palm value chain to promote investment, participation and growth. This objective aims at encouraging actors to conform to relevant national and international regulatory frameworks for sustainable palm oil.

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<sup>1</sup> 2021 July 8, Ministry of Agriculture proposed policy on medium scale oil palm production consistent with Liberia's RSPO NI

<sup>2</sup> Republic of Liberia. (2016). Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2014

### **Objective 3: Develop a 5-Year Financing Mechanism to Guide Sustainable Oil Palm Development**

Access to long-term finance is essential to facilitate investments and growth in the oil palm sector. This strategy calls for the mobilization of financial resources targeting community oil palm development, producers and processors. This should include innovative financial mechanisms that can be instituted through public and private partnerships. At the heart of this model is the responsibility of government to guarantee that funds are accessible to targeted actors.

### **Objective 4: Provide Support to Improve Livelihoods for Smallholder Farmers and Communities**

This objective seeks to promote support for smallholders and local communities to build knowledge and capacity on sustainable agriculture practices, provide access to agricultural inputs (such as seeds, organic fertilizers, and nurseries), extension and advisory services, and access to finance.

The NOPSAP also proposes that local communities whose livelihoods are affected by oil palm production activities have access to sustainable diversified livelihoods (such as providing skills training programs, small business opportunities).

### **Objective 5: Develop a Conflict Resolution Mechanism and a Feedback Grievance Redress Mechanism**

Investment in the oil palm sector drives conversion of land for large scale oil palm development as government looks for economic development opportunities. Through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), government allocates concession rights with the understanding that the companies will adhere to relevant national legislation and policies that require engaging communities to gain access to the lands. In some cases, there have been conflicts over respect for Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and Rights Based Approaches (RBA) protocols and their application to obtain community consent. This intervention aims to develop a National Conflict Resolution Strategy and a Feedback Grievance Redress Mechanism (FGRM) aligned with Liberia's Land Rights Act and Regulations.

### **Objective 6: Develop an integrated land use plan in conformity with the Liberian Land Rights Act (2018), with specific focus on the acquisition of deeds for customary land**

To allocate land for development purposes, it is prudent to develop an integrated land use system that facilitates communities' ownership, developmental aspirations, and improved livelihood systems. This objective will protect investments on customary land and utilize public and private land. Further, this objective seeks to ensure that land development is sustainable and adheres to various deforestation regulations and biodiversity conservation specifications.

### **Objective 7: Integrate Sustainable Conservation Practices in Oil Palm Production Landscapes, in conformity with the Liberia National REDD+ Strategy and other Relevant National and International Commitments**

The aim of this objective is to develop actions to allow for sustainable forest conservation in oil palm production landscapes. This is in conformity with the National REDD+ Strategy, Liberia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and relevant international commitments on biodiversity conservation. Concepts such as HCS/HCVs in oil palm development are meant to conserve biodiversity and forest. The NOPSAP should ensure a balance between biodiversity conservation, land use plans and economic growth.

The Land Rights Acts (2018) grants customary communities land ownership rights, further strengthening Community Rights Law (2009) that grants communities the right of access to forested land through a nine-step process. It ultimately guarantees communities the right to decide on the intended land use for the indicated land. This has inadvertently resulted in (some) communities opting to sell timber rights and chain saw operations, and to allocate such lands for slash-and-burn agriculture. This has ironically resulted in deforestation and forest degradation, contrary to the expectation of the law that such an approach would safeguard forest land and biodiversity. There is concern, too, that companies are merely paying lip service to No Deforestation commitments. The rate at which the forests were being converted to plantations by commodity companies is not perceived to reflect such professed commitments.

The table below show in detail the expected results to be achieved by each objective:

Table 1: summary of objectives and expected results

1. Objective	2. Expected Results
1. Compliance with National standards for the Liberian Oil Palm Sector	1.1 Actors along the Oil Palm Value Chain Demonstrate Commitment to National, regional and International Sustainability Standards
	1.2 Actors along the Oil Palm Value Chain Demonstrate Compliance with all Applicable Local, National, regional and International Laws and Regulations
	1.3 Environmental, Social and Corporate Terms and Approaches Specified in RSPO Standards are Clearly Defined and Implemented for the Liberian Context
	1.4 Fair partnerships between mills and independent smallholders and their communities
	1.5 Gender and Smallholder Issues are mainstreamed into Local and National Practices
2. Develop an enabling regulatory framework for the oil palm sector of Liberia.	2.1 The Liberia oil palm sector is governed by enabling laws and regulations

	<p>2.2 Formulation of the regulatory framework to guide operations taking place in the sector</p>
	<p>2.3 Administrative structures for the effective enforcement of regulatory frameworks are established</p>
	<p>2.4 Actors in the Liberian oil palm sector adequately aware of relevant laws and regulations to enable them take informed decisions and actions</p>
	<p>2.5 Perfect Alignment of Strategy (Plan) with the NSAP</p>
<p>3. Develop a 5-Year Financing Mechanism to Guide Sustainable Oil Palm Development in Liberia.</p>	<p>3.1 A financing mechanism that supports all stages of the palm oil sector over the next 5 years</p>
	<p>3.2 Stakeholders demonstrate commitment to sustained financing of the oil palm sector</p>
	<p>3.3 A mechanism is established for effective among stakeholders for accountability, transparency, and reporting</p>
	<p>3.4 The oil palm sector financing plan addresses food security, gender equity and other social and human right issues</p>

<p>4. Provide Support to Improve Livelihood for Smallholder Farmers and Communities Provide support for improved livelihood practices to both independent and out-grower smallholder oil palm farmers and communities.</p>	<p>4.1 smallholder palm oil farmers are to engage in sustainable farming practices, including out-grower schemes</p>
	<p>4.2 Capacity Building of Smallholder Farmers to Improve Productivity, Income Earning, value addition and participation in high value markets</p>
	<p>4.3 Community-Identified Areas in Oil Palm Landscapes Are Prioritized for Development in an Integrated Land Use Plan</p>
	<p>4.4 A Strategy is Developed for Mainstreaming Gender Issues in Smallholder oil Palm Development</p>
<p>5. Develop a Conflict Resolution Mechanism for the Liberia Oil Palm Sector.</p>	<p>5.1 Stakeholders Demonstrate Commitment to Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in the Oil Palm Sector</p>
	<p>5.2 Peaceful Co-Existence resulting from Stakeholders Commitment to Conflict Resolution.</p>

<p>6. Develop an integrated land use plan that protects ownership, and user rights in conformity with the Liberian Land Rights Act (2018), with specific focus on the acquisition of deed for customary land.</p>	<p>6.1 Land use planning takes production away from HCV &amp; HCS areas into degraded land</p>
	<p>6.2 Land use change is monitored over appropriate periods, and factored into adaptive management practices</p>
	<p>6.3 A mechanism is developed to address land use encroachment</p>
	<p>6.4 Supporting communities to develop their Land Use Plan</p>
<p>7. Integrate Sustainable Conservation Practices in Oil Palm Production Landscapes, in conformity with the Liberia National REDD+ Strategy and other Relevant National and International Commitments</p>	<p>7.1 The national definition for Forest and HCV/HCS is mainstreamed in the oil palm sector</p>
	<p>7.2 Producers are effectively engaged in Conservation in Sustainable Oil Palm Development, and their experiences shared with Stakeholders</p>
	<p>7.3 A Sustainability Action Plan is developed for Conservation in Oil Palm Landscapes</p>
	<p>7.4 Incentives and benefit-sharing mechanism is developed to facilitate conservation in oil palm landscape</p>

In conclusion, the NOPSAP seeks to ensure that all stakeholders participate in the sustainable development of the oil palm sector. At the heart of this strategy, the focus will be on cross cutting issues such as gender equity, youth empowerment, labor rights and fair benefit sharing within the

value chain. The strategy also presents a monitoring and evaluation framework with highlighted indicators and means of verification that will be instrumental in accountability and learning.

# 1 THE LIBERIA OIL PALM SECTOR

## 1.1 Structure of the Liberian Oil Palm Industry

In the 1970s, the Government of Liberia made a strategic decision to establish oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis*) as an alternative tree crop for export, besides rubber. Oil palm plantations were first established in the northern region of the country (Nimba, Bong and Lofa). The selection of this region was because bulk of the commercial agricultural activities were concentrated in these counties. These plantations consisted of the higher yielding Tenera variety and could produce both edible and industrial grades of crude palm oil (CPO). The plantations were solely owned by the GoL and communally managed by cooperatives. However, the civil war resulted in large-scale abandonment and destruction of plantations and processing facilities. There has been limited maintenance or replanting after the civil war and the trees have outlived their productive lifespan.

In Liberia, the oil palm tree is endemic and grows in the wild groves. Oil palm is a widely grown tree crop in Liberia. The wild collections supplied almost half of the 35,000 tons of palm oil produced in 2007. Cultivation is done by smallholder and medium scale farmers as well as large-scale or concessionaires. About 21.2% of the households grow oil palm and it accounts for more than 10% of the employment in the agricultural sector. However, with this output, there was still disequilibrium in supply and demand. Even though Liberia is not a major player in the production of oil palm, the country witnessed a phenomenal growth between 2008 and 2009 of 90% in export value for the commodity, exporting about 2million USD worth of palm oil in 2012. Despite this gain, in 2017, Liberia imported palm oil along with its derivatives to the tune of 22 million USD.

The key players in the oil palm value chain are smallholder farmers working with Dura/Tenera varieties, medium sized growers, and large concessionaires. The value chain is dominated by large concessionaires.

Palm oil producers undertake minimal adoption of modern agronomic techniques, which leads to lower yields. Medium-to-large scale plantations are more likely to adopt higher yielding plant varieties and agronomic techniques including fertilizers, pesticides, and other technologies.

### Concessional Oil Palm Development in Liberia

The Oil Palm Export Strategy of Liberia identifies oil palm as an important tree crop for economic growth and development. Between 2009 and 2010, the GoL granted Golden Veroleum, Sime Darby (now Mano Palm Oil Industries), Equatorial Palm oil and Maryland Oil Palm Plantation concessions to develop plantation estates and support out-grower schemes. In 2019 Sime Darby sold out the concession to Mano Palm Oil Industries (MPOI). Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL) operates in Sinoe, River Cess, River Gee, Grand Kru and Maryland counties; while Mano Palm Oil Industries (MPOI) operates in Grand Cape Mount, Bomi and Gbarpolu Counties. Equatorial Palm Oil also operates in Grand Bassa, Sinoe and River Cess.

All the concessions are required to develop out-grower schemes, encouraging the inclusion of the local population in the opportunities provided by the oil palm value chain. Most of the lands allocated to the concession companies in these counties were customarily owned and used by rural communities as a source of livelihood and protected areas for culture. This brought serious conflict between these concession companies and the rural communities.

Table 1: Prospective Oil Palm Development in Liberia

Name of company	Area under concession contract (hectare)	Year of commencement of the agreement	Duration of Contractual Agreement	Out-grower scheme in concession contract (hectare)	Planted oil palm area 2016 (hectares)
Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL)	220,000	2010	65 years	40,000	15,005
Sime Darby (Now MPOI)	220,000	2009	63 years	44,000	10,411
Maryland Oil Palm Plantation	8800	2011	25 years	6400	Unknown
Equatorial Palm Oil (EPO)	70,524	2008	25 years	18,201	18,201

Source: Basta (2016): *Live or drive, a choice has to be made: A Case Study of Sime Darby Operations in Liberia*

However, with all the economic benefits associated with oil palm in terms of job creation and improved income, its cultivation brings a risk of environmental degradation, especially deforestation and water pollution. Therefore, environmentalists are advocating that the production of oil palm should not be at the expense of biodiversity. This has led to the sector facing significant criticism for non-sustainable production practices which include clearing large swathes for cultivation of oil palm.

### Out-grower Schemes

As indicated in Table 1, all the concessionaires are required to support out-grower schemes which are developed and funded by government. The concession agreements of these companies indicate that the Government of Liberia is responsible for the financing of the out-grower schemes. Even though the concession companies have expressed willingness to progress with the out-grower schemes, however, no finance has been identified or secured to establish the out-grower schemes. Currently, there is no appropriate oil palm out-grower scheme structure and model in Liberia.

## Socio-economic Context

Palm oil is the most consumed vegetable oil in the world<sup>3</sup>. Palm oil and Kernel oil are found in about 50% of the products on supermarket shelves<sup>4</sup>. Additionally, they are the most traded oil in the world<sup>5</sup> and they account for over 10% of total employment in agricultural sector<sup>6</sup> in Liberia. About 220,000<sup>7</sup> Smallholders produce half of Liberia's palm oil while the remaining half is produced by companies such as MPOI, Equatorial Palm Oil, Golden Veroleum, Maryland Oil Palm Plantation, and Agro, Inc<sup>8</sup>. Smallholder farmers in Liberia produce palm oil for markets, cooking, and soap making. It is also the biggest source of dietary fat in Liberia<sup>9</sup>.

## International Conventions and Treaties Applicable to the Oil Palm Sector

Liberia is a signatory to international agreements/conventions, and treaties which are relevant to the oil palm sector. Some of these include: Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES); United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD); ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age (1973); UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); ILO Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration (1975); The UN Convention on Migratory Species (CMS); International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC); Basel Convention Prohibiting the Movement of Hazardous Chemicals; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); ILO Convention No. 29 on Forced Labor (1930); Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001); Rotterdam Convention on Prior and Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (1998), and Paris Climate Change Agreement in 2016<sup>10</sup>. Others include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. The lead inter-governmental institutions managing these agreements/conventions are the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA); the Forestry Development Authority (FDA); the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA); Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; Ministry of Labor; and International Labor Organization agreement (ILO).

## National Laws, Policies and Regulations Applicable to the Production of Palm Oil

Liberia has also instituted a variety of national laws, policies, and regulations that can also be applicable in monitoring and implementing activities in the oil palm sector. These list below shows some of the national laws that are applicable to the production of oil palm in Liberia: Environmental Protection and Management Law (2002) - Section 37 Environmental Impact Assessment, Community

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<sup>3</sup> Global Market Report: Palm Oil (Sustainable Commodities Marketplace Series 2019)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ecowatch.com/palm-oil-environmental-costs-2640781015.html>

<sup>5</sup> Government of Liberia (2014): National Export Strategy: Oil Palm Strategy

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.moci.gov.lr/doc/Liberia%20Oil%20Palm%20NES\\_web-FINAL.pdf](http://www.moci.gov.lr/doc/Liberia%20Oil%20Palm%20NES_web-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Fauna and Flora (2014). Review of Smallholder Models: Liberia and Sierra Leone

<sup>8</sup> [farmlandgrab.org/post/view/21375-live-or-drive-a-choice-has-to-be-made](http://farmlandgrab.org/post/view/21375-live-or-drive-a-choice-has-to-be-made)

<sup>9</sup> The Republic of Liberia National Export Strategy: Oil Palm Export Strategy (2014-2018)

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.epa.gov.lr/?q=content/meas-projects>

Rights Act (2009), Agricultural Concession Agreements ratified by the National Legislature of Liberia, Community Forest Reform Law of 2006, Revenue Code of Liberia Act of 2000, Environmental Protection and Management Law (EPML 2002), Decent Work Act (2015), National Forestry Reform Law 2006, Land Rights Act 2018, Independent National Commission on Human Rights Act 2005, Forestry Development Authority, Ten Core Regulations on Forest Management (2007), National Gender Policy of 2010, National Policy and Response Strategy on Climate of 2018, National Pesticides Policy of 2016 - Ministry of Agriculture and the 1986 Constitution of the Republic of Liberia. The above-mentioned regulations are coordinated by the GoL.

### **Land Tenure and Legal Framework**

The Land Rights Act enacted in 2018 provides clear specific laws on the ownership, acquisition process, jurisdictional institutions, and management rights for land and associated resources in Liberia. This legal instrument recognized four categories of land ownership: Public, government, Customary, and private. Apart from the Constitution and specific statutory laws enacted by the legislature, jurisdictional institutions have developed relevant regulations, policies (such as land dispute resolution policy, community rights law of 2009) and guidelines to facilitate the enforcement of these laws. One of the institutions was the Liberia Land Authority that was approved in 2016. These laws fully recognize local people's rights to land and associated resources, which include protection of their cultural and archaeological sites.

### **Environmental Services and Management**

Liberia has a strong legal framework for the protection of rare and threatened species that also includes protection of certain fresh water and high forest habitats. For instance, the existing framework is captured in the Liberian National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2025), the Environmental Protection and Management act of 2002, and the National Forestry Reform Law of 2006, and the National Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management Law of Liberia of 2016. Individual species (2,000 flowering plant species, 225 timber tree species, 590 bird species, and 125 mammal species (e.g. eagles, rats, leopards, monkeys, elephants), 74 species of reptiles and amphibians and over 1,000 insect species receive strong levels of legal protection in theory. Penalties for contravention of such laws include fines and/or terms of imprisonment. For example, anyone who commits an offence related to the environmental impact assessment law in Liberia is liable on conviction to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 5 years or to a fine not exceeding 10,000 USD or both. However, there is no evidence of the implementation of these legal provisions in practice in agricultural and forestry concessions.

There are general and specific provisions for the protection of the ecosystems and habitats within current Liberian law. The country is in the process of incorporating numerous relevant international conventions into national law. The requirement to conduct environmental assessments prior to the commencement of development activities prevents or mitigates adverse impacts on the specified ecosystems and habitats. National zoning includes protection of 'high forest', protected areas and important forest corridors, leading to some provisions for where agricultural and forestry activities are developed. Legal provisions for the protection of riparian buffers, steep slopes and extraction and use of water in forests exist in the current law. However, these provisions require clarification for agricultural developments. Provisions for the protection of vulnerable soils are still in development. Protections in agricultural developments rely indirectly on the general provisions

under environmental impact assessments exercised by the EPA and based on the Environmental Protection and Management Law (EPML).

From the Constitution of Liberia, through the EPML to the community right law there are clear and specific legal provisions recognizing the rights of communities to land and associated resources, and requiring commodity companies to seek their free, prior, informed consent (FPIC) prior to development.

There are laws such as National Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management Law (NWCPAML) that encourage commodity companies to make provisions for the conservation of natural resources and wildlife management on private land, including the establishment of conservancies. However, companies are not legally bound to set up such set-asides. Besides, there is no economic incentive for doing so. This makes the implementation of these regulations a challenge. Hence, there is a need to find ways that will incentivize stakeholders to observe these laws either by giving them rewards or attaching a significant penalty to non-compliance.

## 1.2 Environmental, Social and Corporate concerns in Oil Palm Development in Liberia

### National Land Cover Setting

Liberia contains nearly half of the remaining Upper Guinea forest in West Africa. The country's 6.6 million ha of lowland tropical forest comprises approximately 44% of the forests in West Africa extending from Guinea to Togo. Liberia is the most forested country in West Africa, with forest cover on two-thirds of the land surface (*Figure 1*). About 6.6 million hectares of forested land, constituting approximately 69% of the total landmass are naturally regenerated forest, and around 8,000 hectares are planted forests<sup>11</sup>. The national forest cover is concentrated in two forested areas: the evergreen lowland forests in the southeast and the semi-deciduous mountain forests in the northwest. The land cover is broadly distributed as: two thirds is under forest cover, of which (44%) is mapped as degraded forest, agriculture (13%) and savanna (11%). Smaller land cover classes include thicket (3%), gallery forest (2%) and plantations (1.5%)<sup>12</sup>. Other land cover classes each occupy less than 1% of the land surface<sup>13</sup>. Approximately 37% of all forested land in Liberia is contained within commercial concessions or designated for conservation as Protected Areas<sup>14</sup>, However, most of the concessions are yet to be developed, and most of the protected areas are yet to be designated.

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<sup>11</sup>National Forestry Inventory 2018/2019

<https://eros.usgs.gov/westafrica/land-cover/land-use-land-cover-and-trends-liberia>

<sup>13</sup>USGS (2013). Land Use, Land Cover, and Trends in Liberia. <https://eros.usgs.gov/westafrica/land-cover/land-use-land-cover-and-trends-liberia>

<sup>14</sup>FDA (2016). Liberia REDD Strategy Final Report. <http://www.fda.gov.lr/projects/redd/the-redd-strategy-and-roadmap/>

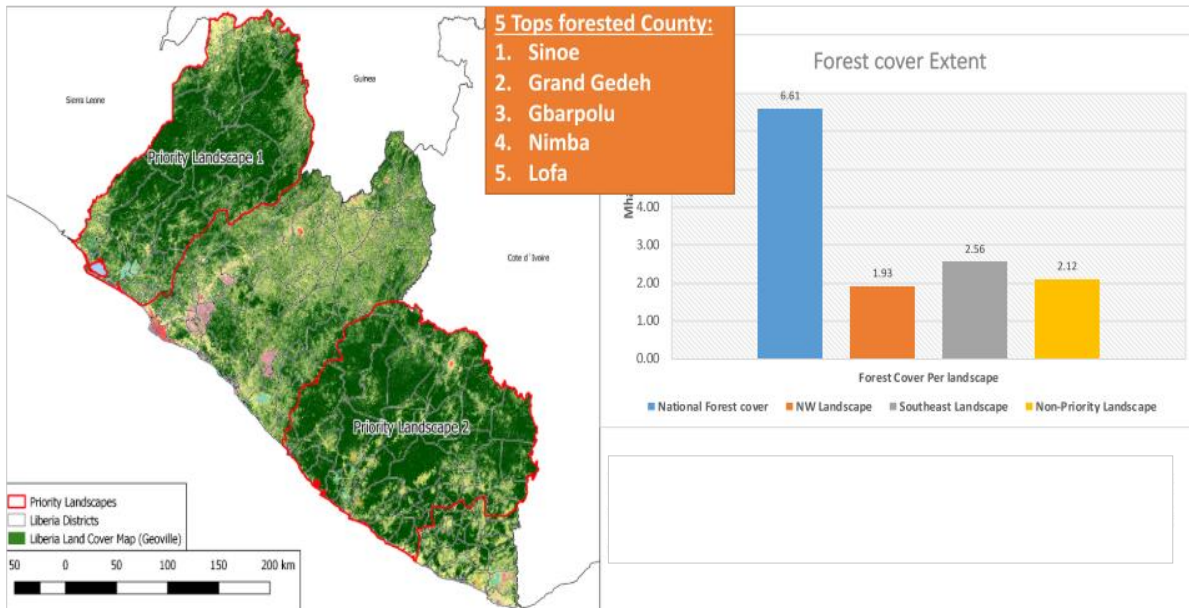


Figure 1: Land cover and forest mapping of Liberia 2019

Source: Liberia’s Carbon Income Generation Potential 2021

### Deforestation and Forest Degradation

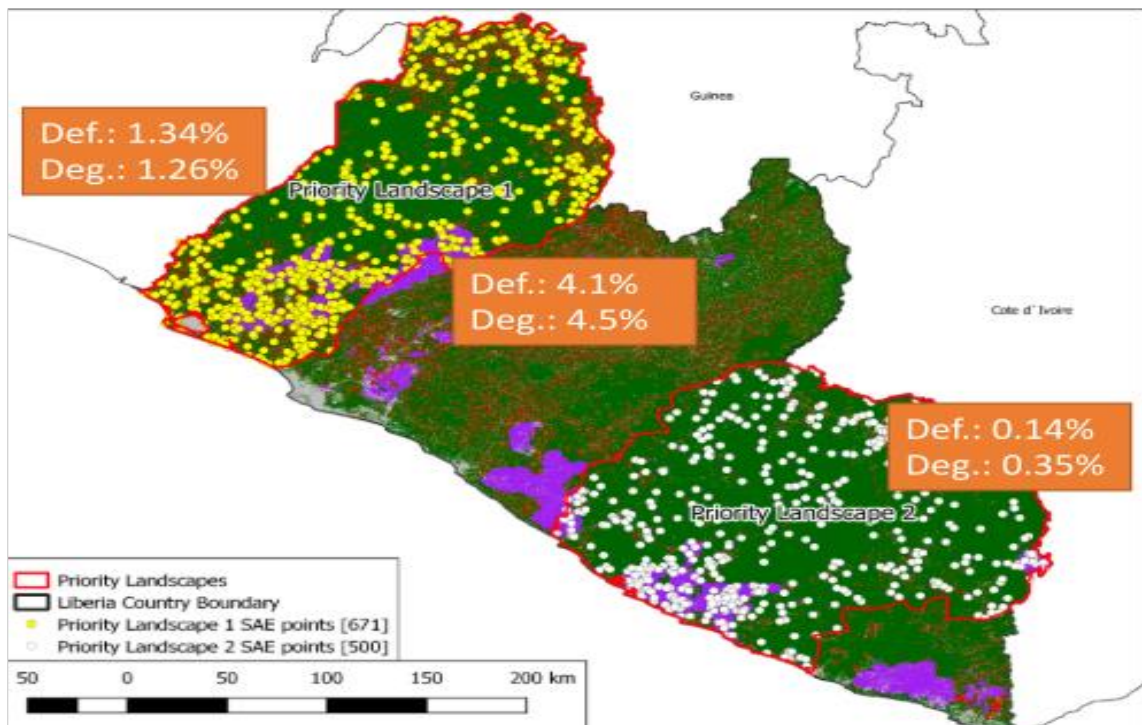


Figure 2: Forest cover and change from 2009-2018

Source: Liberia’s Carbon Income Generation Potential 2021

Despite the extensive forest cover in Liberia, less than 5% is considered primary forest while the vast majority is regenerated forest. The annual rate of deforestation from 2005-2015 in Liberia was

estimated at 0.46%<sup>15</sup> (Figure 2). Between 1990 – 2010, Liberia lost an estimated 12.2% of its forested area. The current annual deforestation rate is estimated to be 0.3%<sup>16</sup>. Conversion for agriculture and mining and uncontrolled logging are the main drivers of deforestation.

Specifically, the key drivers of deforestation in Liberia are:

- Shifting cultivation practices in subsistence and smallholder agriculture, predominantly driven by the staple foods rice and cassava.
- Plantation agriculture, rubber, and oil palm.
- Logging, dominated by forest concessions and chain/pit-sawing.
- Mining (both alluvial and industrial).
- Infrastructure development (destruction of forest for road construction and mangrove forest for construction of houses along the coast).

### Targets for Biodiversity Conservation

The 2006 Forestry Reform Law of Liberia mandates the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) to set aside 30% of the national forest under protected area management and a proposal to create 13 protected areas (PAs). Three of these areas already established include: the flagship Sapo national Park, the East Nimba Nature Reserve, and the Lake Piso Multiple Use Reserve, located in the southeast, northeast, and southwest, respectively. They account for only 3% of protected forest land; and even with these, the capacity to enforce conservation laws is very limited. Additionally, the Gola National Forest and the Grebo-Krahn National forest are under full protection and management. It is expected that the government will continue the existing practice of co-management arrangements between communities and the government and/or leading Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) to minimize the loss of biodiversity caused by oil palm cultivation. Land ownership is also a critical factor for the expansion of the PA network, because much of the land in proposed PAs is likely to be recognized as communally owned, under the pending Land Rights Act.

### Existing and Recent Initiatives Tackling Deforestation in Liberia

The following represent the main relevant initiatives tackling deforestation in Liberia:

- **Rubber Renovation Program:** Smallholder farmers in Liberia produce palm oil for markets, cooking, and soap making. It is also the biggest source of dietary fat in Liberia the Global Agricultural and Food Security Program (GAFSP) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) jointly supported the replanting of 5,000–8,000 ha of aging rubber plantations from

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<sup>15</sup>Christie et al. 2007. Fragmentation and clearance of Liberia's forests:1986-2000 Oryx 41 1-5.

<sup>16</sup>FAO Global Forest Resources Assessment 2015. <http://www.timbertradeportal.com/countries/liberia/>

2014-2018. The funding from IFC was received through a local financial institution as loans to the smallholder farmers.

- **Tropical Forest Alliance’s Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI):** Liberia has been a partner of the Tropical Forest Alliance (TFA) and Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) since March 2015. The Africa Palm Oil Initiative (APOI) focuses on sustainability of oil palm in West and Central Africa. The objective is to make oil palm a sustainable driver of long-term and low carbon development through 3 phases: engagement, development, and implementation<sup>17</sup>. Liberia is currently at the implementation phase of the APOI, having developed national principles for sustainable oil palm development, and an action plan.
- **FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA):** As part of the post-conflict reform of the forestry sector, Liberia signed the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union (EU) in May 2011. The aim was to establish a system of traceability and verification of legality of timber to a nationally agreed definition and as part of the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance, and Trade (FLEGT) program.
- **Mano River Union Forestry Conservation Project (MRUFCP):** This project seeks to achieve sustainable management of the trans-boundary forests in the Upper Guinea Forest Ecosystem linking the Mano River Union states of Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone. It includes components for capacity building for institutions and communities to benefit from emerging global programs such as REDD and providing support for climate change interventions at the local levels.

### Targets to Reduce Deforestation

In September 2014, the GoL and the Government of Norway signed a partnership through a Letter of Intent (LoI). Norway offered to provide USD\$150m funding to; (a) support the development and implementation of Liberia’s REDD+ strategy to ensure significant net reductions in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; (b) contribute to sustainable development in Liberia through protecting natural forests, restoring degraded lands, and developing Liberia's agricultural sector; and (c) collaborate to support progress on global efforts regarding climate change and sustainable development in general and REDD+ in particular. The overall goal was to curb deforestation by 2020<sup>18</sup>. The funding was contributing to the US\$37.5 million proposed by the Liberia Forestry Support Project (LFSP) currently in advanced stage of initiation. Liberia also pledged at the Paris Climate Summit in 2015 to restore one million hectares of degraded forest land as part of the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative<sup>19</sup>.

The primary mechanism to address deforestation in Liberia is through the National Strategy for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) In Liberia, which was adopted in 2017. The time frame for the REDD+ is in line with the national long-term strategy *Vision*

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<sup>17</sup><https://www.tfa2020.org/en/activities/african-palm-oil-initiative/>

<sup>18</sup>Letter of Intent between the Government of the Republic of Liberia and the Government of the Kingdom of Norway on “Cooperation or reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) and developing Liberia's agricultural sector.” New York, 23 September 2014.

<sup>19</sup>World Resource Institute citing a release from the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative, December 6, 2015. Available from: <http://www.wri.org/news/2015/12/releaseafrican-countries-launch-afr100-restore-100-million-hectares-land>.

2030. After engaging the REDD+ readiness process in 2007, with funding from the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have led the country's effort to complete the REDD+ readiness phase of the FCPF process. The first phases of the Norwegian REDD+ funding (USD \$37.5 million through the LFSP) is for preparation and demonstration of REDD+ interventions; while the final phase, from 2020 onwards, is for payments for verified emission reductions. There are four strategic priorities under the Liberian national REDD+ Strategy:

**Priority 1:** Reduce Forest loss from pit sawing, charcoal production and shifting agriculture, by restricting the expansion of pit sawing, charcoal production and shifting agriculture, particularly into >80% canopy cover forest.

**Priority 2:** Reduce impact of commercial logging, by promoting the practical implementation of policies and regulations for sustainable forestry.

**Priority 3:** Complete and manage a network of protected areas, from the current 3% to around 18% of the total forested land in Liberia (forest canopy cover  $\geq$ 30%). This will contribute to the long-term target of 30% proposed by the 2006 Forestry Reform Law.

**Priority 4:** Prevent or offset clearance of high carbon stock and high conservation value forest in agricultural and mining concessions. This seeks to limit the amount of forest land that is permitted for development (i.e. clearance) to 5% of the total national forested area. It further limits deforestation to less dense forest in conformity with Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) standards for conservation of High Carbon Stock (HCS) and High Conservation Value (HCV) forest.

**Priority 5:** Fair and sustainable benefits from *REDD+*; which seeks to establish a natural resource economy that supports equity and sustainability, by prioritizing options for distributing REDD+ benefits fairly, and for investing REDD+ income so that the benefits are sustainable.

## Biodiversity Conservation

Liberia is regarded as one of the world's biodiversity hotspots. The large expanse of the remaining Upper Guinea ecoregion contains a diversity of plants and animal species, including a high proportion of endemics. Liberia serves as a flyway for migratory birds and a home for many resident birds, including the critically endangered Liberian Greenbul, and the endangered Rufous fishing-owl. The country also harbors charismatic conservation species such as the Western chimpanzee, Pygmy hippopotamus, forest elephant, and Zebra duiker.

Despite Liberia's recognition as a global biodiversity hotspot, only five <sup>20</sup>protected areas (Sapo National Park, East Nimba Natural Reserve, Gola National Forest Park, Grebo-Krahn National Forest Park, and Lake Piso Multiple Use Reserve) have been implemented so far, and 11 others proposed

(Figure 3). It is also important to highlight the role that the community plays in achieving conservation roles. For instance, the Poro and Sande communities are well known for their conservation efforts in natural biodiversity for cultural purposes. Projects advocating for the role of communities in supporting protected areas such as the Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) project of Foya District, Lofa County- have also been initiated and so far over 50 protected areas have been identified and documented with the help of the community. This conservation goal, however, competes with extractive economic activities.

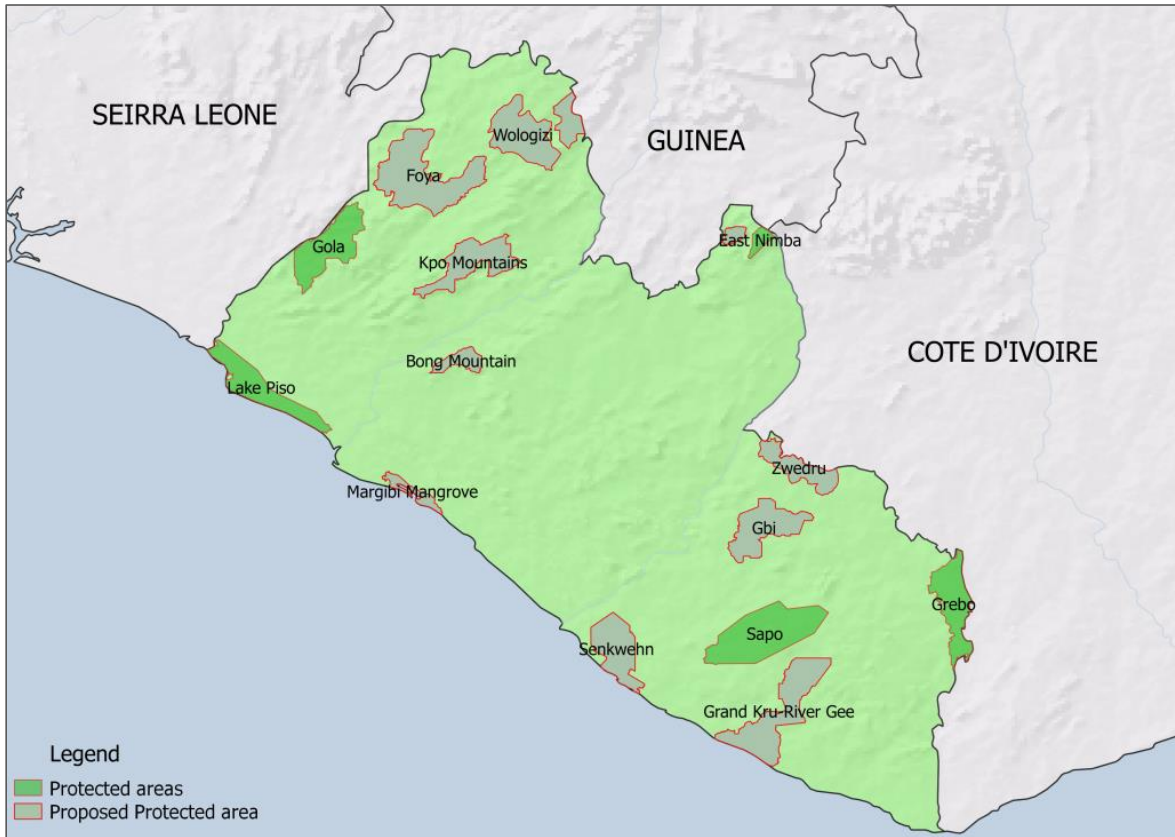


Figure 3: Protected areas network, including designated and proposed protected areas

Source: <http://www.liberianfaunaflora.org/where-we-work>

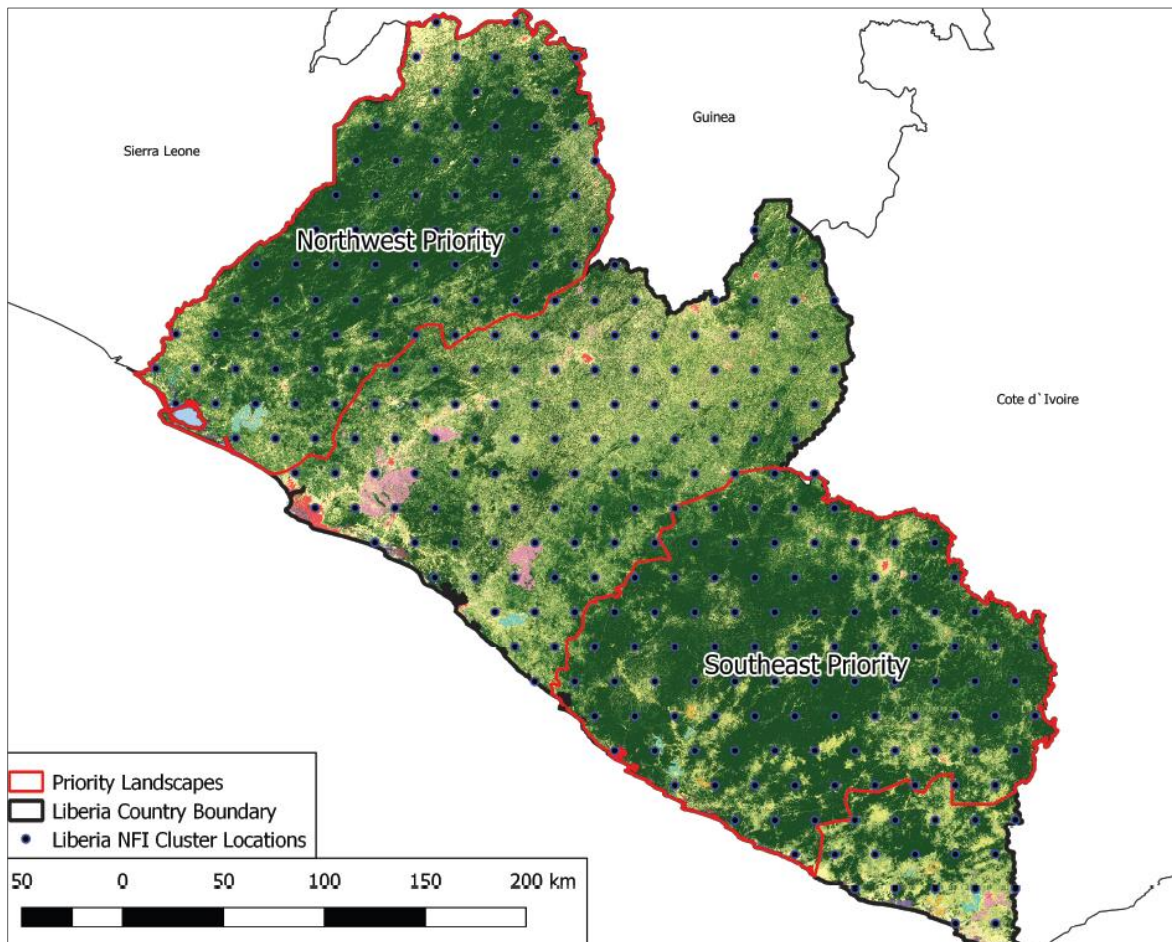


Figure 4: priority forest landscapes

Source: National Forest Inventory Report of 2018/2019

### Social and Corporate Concerns

A range of social issues affect the production of oil palm despite the sector contributing to various economic outcomes. First, social conflicts – which is because of land conflicts or land grabbing incidences. Second, loss of cultural heritage – there is a high likelihood that culturally significant sites may be lost in the process of developing plantations. Third, labor rights – cases of the use of child labor in plantations, and poor working conditions among plantation workers including lack of access to basic sanitation services. Fourth, health issues- excessive use of pesticides and herbicides may have a negative effect on the quality of drinking water and uncontrolled burning during plantation expansion may have significant health and economic effects.

### 1.3 Barriers and Opportunities to Sustainable Oil Palm Development in Liberia

#### Barriers to Oil Palm Development in Liberia

The reasons below are the main barriers to sustainable oil palm development in Liberia

- Failure of the land tenure system in place when awarding the concessions to allocate full ownership rights to land has led to land conflicts and held back new planting.

The host communities have cited lack of transparency by the in-land negotiations to facilitate their FPIC for investors to develop their ancestral land, including their right to refuse without duress, any development on their land.

- Limited budgets for government support

The government of Liberia is responsible for oversight of the activities being undertaken in the oil palm value chain. However, this mandate is in jeopardy with limited budgets for implementation. The constraints are linked to several factors including low capacity within GoL, and a lack of focus by its decision makers to develop evidence-based policies due to low institutional and financial capacity.

- Severe resource constraints that have hindered oil palm sector growth.

The extractive structure of the Liberian economy constrains the size of the tax base and revenue generation. This is largely due to the existence of weaknesses in the resource governance and policy environment, lack of an inclusive value-added economic framework, and the failure of public debt management to focus on public-private partnerships (PPP) to finance infrastructure gaps.

- Lack of rights for the communities and people involved in the plantations

Production of oil palm has been closely linked with poor working conditions for workers and the surrounding communities. For example, the use of child labor and poor working conditions for workers such as poor pay, long working hours, and lack of sanitation facilities in their workplace are some of the rights issues that limit the sustainable production of oil palm in Liberia. Further, the dependence of smallholder producers on large processors may in some cases lead to exploitation due to low bargaining power resulting in a lower value for their product.

- Ambiguity of environmental requirements

Liberia is a signatory of various national and international laws and standards, so there are stipulated environmental requirements for the production of palm oil. But there is an understanding amongst producers of oil palm on how they should comply with these requirements.

### **Opportunities for Sustainable Oil Palm Production**

To achieve sustainability in oil palm production, it is important to ensure that the development of plantations does not adversely affect the environment and has a special focus on the social aspects that emerge due to establishing and managing plantations. At the center of this initiative is the role of both producers and consumers to advocate for sustainability in the oil palm value chain. Below we provide some key opportunities that seek to ensure sustainable oil palm production:

- Availability of Relevant Certification Schemes

There are several applicable global certification schemes such as the RSPO, Rainforest Alliance, International Sustainability and Carbon Certification (ISCC) and the Roundtable on Sustainable Biomaterials (RSB) that aim to make oil palm cultivation sustainable by imposing a variety of standards on producers. Some of the benefits that these certifications may achieve include reducing rain forest clearance and violation of human rights in oil palm production.

- Adhering to ongoing initiatives

The REDD+ and TFA APOI are ongoing initiatives in Liberia that are geared towards reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. REDD+ is a mechanism that also creates a financial value for carbon stocks in forests hence acting as an incentive for countries to reduce emissions.

#### 1.4 Environmental Issues

Unlike in the past (the decades before the 2000s) where huge plantations were established all over the country without a sustainable model, the present dispensation requires that biodiversity conservation be prioritized in the country. These include the preservation of biodiversity hotspots such as High Carbon Stock (HCS) and High Conservation Value (HCV) areas which are prevalent in Liberia. Hence, the presence of primary forest (HCS and HCV) in many parts of Liberia, calls for responsible development of a new oil palm value chain with an emphasis on sustainable production models that do not cause deforestation and loss of biodiversity. It would even be more beneficial if these models included a reforestation component through the planting of native trees that will enhance both the biodiversity and economic diversity of Liberia.

#### 1.5 Rural Livelihoods and Smallholder Agriculture

Over 70% of the Liberian population is involved in farming; and most smallholder farmers or farm laborers in Liberia are women. Smallholders constitute over 80% of the farming population and are mostly living in rural areas with generally limited access to improved storage and processing facilities, as well as access to markets. This lack of infrastructure makes it difficult for farmers to access major regional markets. The few viable cooperatives do not have access to the financial services needed to effectively manage the agricultural value chain<sup>21</sup>. Despite the influx of donor-supported interventions after the civil war which have led to steady improvements in agricultural production, the country remains food insecure, and depends heavily on international imports. About 55% of the population falls under the poverty line, particularly in rural areas. This has been attributed to limited capacity for farmers, particularly smallholder farmers to increase production. The majority of smallholders still use outdated techniques<sup>22</sup>.

From a commodity perspective, especially oil palm, there is one key smallholder production model in Liberia. The current existing model is classified as:

- Independent/smallholder farmers— these are farmers who are not bound by any contractual obligations to a company. They have free will to choose the types of crops to plant, management practices to undertake, and the marketing outlets to sell their produce.

However, the country envisages facilitating a process for development of out-growers around large-scale oil palm plantations or mills. These are (out-grower) farmers who will be contractually bound by mutual agreement to a specific mill. Based on the contract, these farmers will not have the sole

<sup>21</sup><https://www.wfp.org/purchase-progress/news/blog/five-facts-about-linking-smallholder-farmers-markets-liberia>

<sup>22</sup><http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:TdZd5ZX5yMUJ:pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/162871479919170584/Policy-Liberia-Global-Agriculture-11-3-16.pdf+&cd=3&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=gh>

decision on the type of crops to cultivate but sustainable land management practices to use. However, they may benefit from support services from the government or other third parties.

Current and accurate data on oil palm production by smallholders has not been collected at the nation-wide. Nevertheless, it is widely acknowledged that smallholders are engaged in production of four main export commodity crops: rubber, cocoa, coffee, and oil palm.

From a general perspective, as of 2019, Liberia had a total of approximately 43,620 ha of oil palm covered by plantation (excluding MOPP developed area), with a production of 176, 119 tons of oil palm fruits, and a productivity of 99,429 hg/ha (FAOSTAT).<sup>23</sup> With regards to the quantity of processed oil palm a total of 42,000 MT were processed in 2018.

In terms of smallholder production of oil palm, about 220,000 smallholders contributed to an estimated 50% of Liberia's CPO production<sup>24</sup>. These smallholders represent approximately 75,000 ha of oil palm plantation and 36,952 households.

In terms of organization, we have two groups of smallholders - independent, and associated smallholders. Independent smallholders are farmers who are self-organized and self-financed and are at liberty on their land and output use. On the other hand, associated smallholders are farmers who are structurally bound by contract to a particular mill.

***Challenges faced by smallholders include:***

- Inadequate access to financial services needed to effectively manage and participate in the oil palm value chain.
- Persistently low productivity compared to the regional average.
- Inefficiency in the technical and organizational skills needed to integrate them into the agricultural value chain.
- Inadequate of access to improved varieties for production.
- Limited access to extension services and/or other training options.
- Lack of organization (collective action) to enhance their bargaining power in markets.
- Poor road infrastructure connecting the farms to the market.

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<sup>23</sup><http://www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/QC>

<sup>24</sup> Fauna and Flora (2014). Review of Smallholder Models: Liberia and Sierra Leone

- Limited information on post-harvest management leading to high incidence of loss after harvest.

Several donor-driven initiatives, such as the World Bank sponsored Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project (STAR-P), seek to address these challenges, with the aim of laying the foundation for sustainable and inclusive agricultural development that will help transition smallholders from subsistence to commercialized systems<sup>25</sup>.

## 2 THE LIBERIA NATIONAL OIL PALM STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

This National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan is based on consultations with a wide range of actors from the Oil Palm value chain, the GoL, private sector companies, development partners, civil society, and academic institutions. It aims to transform the Liberian oil palm sector within a period of 5 years to ensure its continued growth, environmental sustainability and the well-being of the women and men who work in this sub-sector and their communities. This will enhance the sector's attractiveness in the global commodity market, and capital markets and facilitate the collaboration among actors needed to meet increasing demand for locally produced oil palm products in both domestic and international markets. The oil palm strategy and production plan includes access to finance, standards and certification, land-use policy, smallholder inclusion, conflict management, forest conservation and regulatory frameworks. The plan aims to achieve sustainable development outcomes for various communities while supporting smaller businesses as well as reducing poverty and unemployment and increasing the national revenue potential.

At the end of 2018, the National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia (NOPPOL), under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, convened a series of meetings for the preparation of the National Oil Palm Strategic and Action Plan for Liberia. These meetings brought together farmers and marketers of oil palm; government institutions; international organizations; representatives of the civil society; and concessions to jointly develop solutions to challenges facing Liberia's oil palm value chain.

The National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia (NOPPOL) is a multi-stakeholder dialogue space aimed at bringing together different stakeholders in the oil palm sector to collaborate. The vision of the platform is to achieve the development of a modern, competitive, and sustainable oil palm culture in the Republic of Liberia and in the world market. Methodologies developed by the Good Growth Partnership (GGP) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) are used by this platform, which works worldwide to promote sustainability in the production of commodities.

The National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan of Liberia aims to guide public and private institutions, technical and academic institutions, and members of civil society participating in the sector for the achievement of common objectives and results articulated under a long-term strategic vision. Its execution requires coordination among the various actors; the allocation of resources; and monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning.

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<sup>25</sup>World Bank, 2017. Smallholder agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project (STAR-P) (P160945). Report No: PIDISDSC21914

The NOPSAP will serve as a framework for public, private investment and as a guide for all the actors involved in the production of oil palm. The NOPSAP also provides an advantage for synergies and investment. In response to the challenges of transforming the Liberian oil palm sector, the NOPSAP serves as a tool for planning and implementation with a view of achieving the development of a modern, competitive, and sustainable oil palm value chain.

The National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan is linked to government programs, such as the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD), Agenda for Transformation (AfT), the Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda (LATA), and Liberia Agricultural Sector Investment Plan II which focus on improving supply chains and attracting value adding industries in an attempt to increase food security and make the sector a contributor to economic stability.

## 2.1 Goal

The overall goal of the National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan, 2021-2025 is to place the oil palm sector as a strategic engine for national and an inclusive rural economic growth, through the development of a well-coordinated planning and implementation process that is proactive, transparent, and accountable. This involves the full participation of every stakeholder that promotes food security, income generation and poverty alleviation.

## 2.2 Vision

The vision of the NOPSAP is to transform Liberia's oil palm development into a sustainable, vibrant, responsible, and productive economic sector that contributes to economic growth and wellbeing while maintaining forest cover and biodiversity.

## 2.3 Mission

The mission of NOPSAP is to enhance the development of a balanced Liberian oil palm sector with fair benefits for communities and smallholders and without deforestation through the adoption of sustainable practices across the entire value chain.

## 2.4 Strategic Objectives and Outcomes

The objectives of NOPSAP are to:



- Compliance with National Standards for the Liberian Oil Palm Sector.
- Develop an enabling regulatory framework for the oil palm sector of Liberia.
- Develop a 5-Year Financing Mechanism to Guide Sustainable Oil Palm Development in Liberia.
- Provide Support to Improve Livelihoods for Smallholder Farmers and Communities.
- Develop a Conflict Resolution Mechanism for the Liberia Oil Palm Sector

- Develop an integrated land use plan that protects ownership, and user rights in conformity with the Liberian Land Rights Act (2018), with specific focus on the acquisition of deed for customary land.
- Integrate Sustainable Conservation Practices in Oil Palm Production Landscapes, in conformity with the Liberia National REDD+ Strategy and other Relevant National and International Commitments.

In response to the challenges affecting the oil palm sector, NOPSAP identifies five thematic areas for redress:

Table 2: Challenges and Thematic Areas in the Liberian Oil Palm Sector

Thematic areas (TA)		TA1: Compliance with National Standards for the Liberian Oil Palm Sector	TA 2: Establish oil palm regulatory framework
	CHALLENGES	TA1: Lack of compliance with national standards and certification frameworks in the oil palm sector is one of the major problems	TA 2: Lack of regulations amongst stakeholders hindered growth in the sector. Clearly defined framework to govern the sector is a major challenge in the cultivation of oil palm, Limited participation of local communities is one of the major root causes serving as obstacles to the growth of the oil palm industry
	OBJECTIVES	TA1: Ensure implementation of the national interpreted RSPO; and to outline a national context for certification and jurisdictional approach from the oil palm perspective in Liberia	TA 2: Review and make appropriate recommendations for updating the existing regulatory framework affecting the oil palm sector and specifically the production of sustainable oil palm in Liberia.
TA3: Holistic financial plan for Sustainable Oil Palm Production	TA3: Weak access to finance (especially for smallholders), weak institutional support, an inefficient business services network (providing support services across the value chain)	TA3: Develop a framework for the national oil palm finance plan as a part of the national strategy and action plan in collaboration with other task groups, to ensure holistic	<p><b>WHERE WOULD THE WORLD BE WITHOUT STANDARDS?</b></p> 

		<p>finance plan that ties into each task groups financial needs</p>	
<p><b>TA4: Improved livelihoods of smallholder oil communities</b></p>	<p><b>TA4:</b> Smallholders are underfunded, lack the best management practices, lack support to manage their farms. They have lower yields as compared to commercial outfits, and have limited access to export markets.</p>	<p><b>TA4:</b> Develop actions for Liberia that support oil palm smallholder development and ensure appropriate community engagement in oil palm production landscape</p>	
<p><b>TA5: Natural resource management and use</b></p>	<p><b>TA5:</b> Lack of a national land use plan based on national forest definitions to delineate HCS/HCV forests versus agricultural land, degraded forests and other land categories based on a national interpretation of RSPO standards.</p>	<p><b>TA5:</b> Develop actions to allow for sustainable forest conservation in production landscapes, in conformity with the national REDD+ strategy and international commitments.</p>	

## **Objective 1: Compliance with National Standards for the Liberian Oil Palm Sector**

This objective aims to ensure compliance with national standards that are meant to guide the production, processing, and marketing of palm oil. This will require the GoL to establish and / or strengthen existing systems of compliance with national and international standards.

Between 2013 and 2021, GoL worked on the National Interpretation working group on forest definitions for RSPO, and on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021, this framework was endorsed by the RSPO board of governors, thus establishing a criterion for effective monitoring and enforcement of compliance with environmental, social, economic, certification, human rights, and equal benefit sharing standards.

Limited inter-sectoral policy dialogue and harmonization among government agencies / ministries has been a major contributor to the flawed concession agreements because of several agencies having different mandates and policies concerning natural resource management. In other countries, these policy documents are harmonized. The lack of harmonization of forestry, agriculture, and investment policies within GoL resulted in the allocation to oil palm concessions of HCS and HCV forests that are for conservation of biodiversity in the global climate frameworks.

Liberia still lacks a national standards body responsible for standardization. However, there is a proposed act for the establishment of the Liberia Standards Authority. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry through the Liberia Standards Harmonization Model (LiSHAM) has adopted international and regional standards as temporary measures for national standards. Some of these standards address the food value chain in terms of process and product specifics. In reference to the oil palm value chain, the recently endorsed Liberia NI RSPO Principles and Criteria, the 2018 Land Rights Acts, the National FPIC Framework and ongoing REDD+ activities offer sufficient opportunities for sustainable oil palm production. These are important tools for Liberia to prioritize compliance with best practices in the palm oil value chain.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industries has designated the National Standards Laboratory (NSL) as Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) for carrying out related activities including product certification, inspection, and testing. Though NSL is currently carrying out some CAB activities, it does not have in place a product certification scheme and capacity to provide services relating to international certification schemes. It is recommended that the Non-Photochemical Quenching (NPQ) further extends their certification criteria by adhering to the accreditation mechanism of certifying bodies. This will ensure that the certification processes are in line with the provisions of national and international environmental and social standards.

### **Expected Result 1.1: Actors along the Liberian Oil Palm Value Chain demonstrate Commitment to National and International Sustainability Standards**

Liberia has significant leverage in compelling sustainable practices by concessionaires in line with the National Interpretation of the RSPO, the national FPIC framework, and applicable national laws. These instruments contain several key mechanisms and tools to address land use change issues, including the requirements to conduct HCV, HCS assessments while following responsible and transparent procedures for new plantations. For instance, the RSPO Principles and Criteria (P and C) is one tool which uses the nationally adapted Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) framework to provide means to avoid and resolve land use conflicts for the improvement of sustainable oil palm value chain development. Adherence to national and international standards for certification will also create a

significant competitive advantage in selling Palm Oil for premium prices globally. In addition to certification, the promotion of community rights, fair pricing mechanisms, FPIC, selling kernel to crushers, value addition, community benefit, and land governance are important to the sector.

Raising awareness about standardization is the first and most important step in the process of helping producers and actors along the value chain to ensure commitment to ethical conduct. An increased awareness of standards will help smallholder farmers to understand how they can be used as a medium to achieve high quality oil palm production in Liberia. However, the smallholder farmers need to be trained and provided with tools and support to ensure that they can comply with various specifications in certification guiding oil palm production.

Requirements are being set for certification assessments to be made. These local gaps versus local and international standards like APOI will be progressively closed through a concerted and sustained development of sector-specific standards to be used for the next 5 years. At the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> year, sector-specific standards that ensure producers and actors along the value chain are committed to ethical conduct in all transactions that ensure sustainable oil palm production should be developed. Furthermore, to encourage national ownership, efforts should be made to domesticate all the relevant standards in the sector.

The Government of Liberia and collaborating stakeholders in the oil palm sector, will lead the development and implementation of a national standard for sustainable oil palm development using smallholders and RSPO NI for lessons learned.

Table 3: Benchmark for Palm Oil Quality

No	Strategies	Responsible Institution
1	Extension officers will support smallholder farmers on the different fruit storage periods on yield, organoleptic appreciation and free fatty acid level of crude palm oil produced	Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of labour, LACRA,
2	Categorizing palm oil based on quality of free fatty acid (FFA) indicators for export and industrial domestic markets is enforced.	Ministry of Commerce and Industry, FDA, EPA, LACRA
3	Service providers (private sector) in the oil palm sector will be required to obtain the right quality of input imports for palm oil production.	Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of commerce and industry

Smallholders will be required to adopt appropriate best farm management practices as key criteria for certification, yield and increasing farmers’ income. Improving sustainable agricultural practices is the

most promising area for increasing the impact of certification on smallholders' livelihoods. Identifying the kind of extension services provided by certified technical services to smallholders is critical. The NOPSAP proposes that the relevant authority provides services to ensure smallholders are supported to make this transition.

**Expected Result 1.2: Actors along the Liberian Oil Palm Value Chain Demonstrate Compliance with all Applicable Local, National and International Laws and Regulations**

The NOPSAP National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan will catalyze a transformational shift to the one that is low carbon emission, and respecting local and international laws related to land rights, environmental, labor and biodiversity conservation. For instance, in determining workers’ remuneration in the oil palm sector, the wage rate should conform to the standard of wage outlined in Liberia’s Decent Work Act of 2015. The 2009 Community Rights Law with Respect to Forests Land should be adhered to, by stakeholders in the oil palm value chain. Within the next 5 years, the local community will be made aware of their rights and be encouraged to collaborate with the authorities in the implementation and enforcement of the law to achieve the long-term vision for a sustainable oil palm industry in Liberia. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry will spearhead this intervention with assistance from the Forestry Development Authority (FDA), National Bureau of Concessions (NBC), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Liberia Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (LEITI) and CSO.

Within the 5-year period, there will be evidence of commitment to compliance with applicable laws and regulations through monitoring and enforcement of the existing laws. There will be commitment to transparency and environmental responsibility coupled with conservation of natural resources and biodiversity.

Table 4: Strategies for compliance with environmental laws regarding oil palm production

No	Strategies	Responsible Institution
1	Emissions from oil palm are associated with the drainage of peak soil, sector requires stopping the expansion of oil palm plantations on carbon-rich peak soils and drastically reducing oil palm related deforestation while keeping Liberia in the high forest cover category.	FDA, EPA, and NBC
2	Improve the governance and enforcement of laws and policies on protected areas and high forest management.	, FDA, MOA, NBC and EPA

3	Increased productivity across all farms sizes, including smallholder farms and expansion of plantations should only take place through increased production or ensuring that large parts of existing lands by concessions are fully developed or on marginal or already degraded land as defined by Liberia National Forest Definition, land use changes and remote sensing results in the preceding ten to twenty years.	Ministry of Agriculture through the Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI) and FDA
4	To ensure accountability and respect of rights from all the players within the palm oil value chain. This will involve robust monitoring and penalties for non-compliance.	EPA, NBC, FDA, LLA and MOA

**Expected Result 1.3: Environmental, Social and Corporate Terms and Approaches in relevant Standards are Clearly Defined and Implemented for the Liberian Context**

The Liberian Forest Inventory Report (2018-19) has clearly defined High Carbon Stock (HCS)<sup>26</sup> and High Conservation Values<sup>27</sup> (HCVs) to enable a clear delineation of agricultural land, degraded forests, and other land categories. For instance, based on the national interpretation of RSPO standards (e.g., RSPO Principle 5 on Environmental Responsibility and Conservation of Natural Resources and Biodiversity), this is critical for sustainable expansion of oil palm plantations without deforestation. To address these capacity issues, financial support is needed to provide training and mentoring to enable implementation of the HCV and HCS approaches among key stakeholders with the goal of building capacity for practitioners and equip them with practical fieldwork experience to conduct assessments for compliance.

The approval of the National FPIC Guidelines, endorsement of the RSPO NI, existence of local laws and regulations are important steps toward ensuring clear monitoring and compliance with principles of ecological, social and environmental frameworks.

***Strategies for implementing Certifications Systems in Liberia***

The principal objectives of Liberia RSPO NI and other certification standards are “to promote the growth and use of sustainable oil palm through cooperation within the supply chain and open dialogue between its stakeholders.” All producers and auditors should adhere to the criteria specified in the NI RSPO of Liberia while seeking for certification within the country. The NI RSPO will serve as a standard for certification of oil palm producers in Liberia, who are members of the RSPO while producers who are

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26 methodology for distinguishing forest areas that should be protected or restored, from degraded lands that may be developed, using an integrated land-use planning approach

27 These are biological, ecological, social, or cultural values that are outstandingly significant or critically important at the national, regional, or global level. They include Species diversity, Landscape-level ecosystems, ecosystem mosaics, and Intact Forest, Ecosystems and habitats, Cultural values, and community needs

not members of the RSPO should abide by the other national and international laws, policies, and regulations that govern oil palm production.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry will spearhead this intervention - in collaboration with FDA, the Technical Services Department of the Ministry of Agriculture. This will serve as the roadmap for protecting forests and biodiversity in Liberia. A clear understanding of HCS and HCVs will be achieved because HCS is designed to protect forests, whereas HCV aims to maintain critical values.

### ***Certification process requirements***

ISO Guide 65<sup>28</sup> recognizes that there will be additional requirements for specific certification schemes. The requirements for RSPO certification audits include the following additional elements over and above those specified by ISO Guide 65 or 66. These additional elements are necessary to ensure a sufficient level of technical rigor and credibility.

The accredited systems of the certification body must include the following specific requirements:

#### ***a. Specific competencies of assessment teams***

- The certification body must define the minimum competencies of lead assessors and the requirements for assessment teams, for both RSPO Criteria and supply chain assessments. As a minimum, these must be consistent with the specifications defined in ISO 19011: 2002 Guidelines for quality and/or environmental management systems auditing, with modifications to consider the specific requirements of palm oil and chain of custody evaluation, as described below.
- Assessment procedures for certification assessments against the RSPO and criteria of other standards must require that teams demonstrably include sufficient oil palm expertise to address all of the requirements relating to a specific assessment of the legal, technical, environmental and social issues, and must include team members that are fluent in the main languages relevant to the location where the specific assessment is taking place, including the languages of any potentially affected parties such as local communities.

#### ***b. Context Analysis of Liberia's Oil Palm Certification System***

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has the statutory mandate and responsibility of ensuring the establishment and proper functioning of a national quality infrastructure, which entails standardization and technical regulation, conformity assessment, accreditation, and metrology. There is an existing National Quality Policy that details the establishment and operation of the national quality infrastructure.

### ***Strategies for Implementing the RSPO Certification Scheme in Liberia***

1. Liberia intends to utilize a regional accreditation system to meet its national needs. To this end, a focus person will be designated by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as an accreditation

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<sup>28</sup> Product and company certification. Conformity assessment

focus person, in accordance with NQP, who will have the responsibility to coordinate all accreditation activities and establish linkages with external accreditation systems for the provision of required services.

2. A capacity and financial needs assessment will be conducted along the oil palm value chain to identify standards that are needed. This includes creating an enabling environment for smallholders.
3. Ministry of Commerce and Industry through the National Standards Laboratory will facilitate the certification program. The national certification committee comprised of key stakeholders MOC, LLA, EPA MIA, CSOs, NGOs will monitor the implementation of the different certifications in the context of Liberia with specific criteria and performance indicators satisfying the requirements of not just the RSPO but other international protocols with respect to the oil palm sector.
4. Liberia will adopt and internalize relevant national and international certifications systems and supply chain certification standards for organizations seeking or holding certification.
5. Ministry of Commerce and Industries through the NSL will contract a competent third-party certifying body that meets relevant requirements for accreditation to conduct a third-party certification, while NSL will develop its capacity and get ISO certification in order to assume certification services in three to five years.

Table 5: Strategies for the Application of Relevant Standards and Certifications

No	Strategies	Responsible Institution
1	Provide relevant information to stakeholders on environmental, social, and legal issues for enforcement	EPA, MoA, FDA, and NBC
2	Conduct workshops and national fairs to allow for stakeholders' participation in understanding the principles of RSPO and other relevant national and international conventions.	Ministry of agriculture
3	Provision of relevant information to be used for compliance by stakeholders	MOA, EPA, FDA, NBC,
4	Develop and enforce commitments that are in sync with the principles of RSPO and other relevant national and international conventions.	Government of Liberia/MoA, NBC, EPA, and FDA

5	Provide technical training and information to producers about the process and benefits of certification	Ministry of Agriculture, GoL, specialized service providers such as NGOs
6	Strengthen and ensure proper functioning of a national quality infrastructure, which has consistent monitoring and inspection, including creating an enabling environment for smallholders	MOCI and MoA
7	Carry out related activities including product certification, inspection, and testing	MoCI (National Standards Laboratory)

#### **Expected Result 1.4: Fair Partnerships between Mills and Independent Smallholders and their Communities**

The GoL in partnership with CSOs, associations of smallholders and various oil palm mills should use a multi-stakeholder dialogue process by developing a framework that will increase transparency and accountability between the mills and independent smallholders. Some of the issues to be addressed in this framework should include, the specification of payments, the environmental concerns to be adhered to by both parties, institutional support that mills could offer to independent farmers and a system that will ensure accountability if these specifications are not conformed to. The stakeholders are advised to refer to the newly published (EPA website) Guidelines for Community Consultation using the National FPIC toolkit 2019 to ensure adequate community involvement in the oil palm sector.

#### **Expected Result 1.5: Gender and Smallholder Issues are mainstreamed into Local and National Practices**

The Government of Liberia will develop guidelines to ensure that current processes of growth and commercialization in the oil palm sector leads to equal opportunities for both male and female stakeholders including people with disabilities to contribute to the sustainable development of the oil palm sector. The inclusiveness depends on the extent to which GoL creates the enabling environment for most smallholders (favoring women, youth, and people with disabilities) to access the resources and services they need to earn income from oil palm activities. This should aim at inclusiveness, social justice, and gender equity. We recommend more emphasis on women, youth, and people with disabilities because usually these groups are discriminated against from access, use and control of resources compared to people already active in the sector. Moreover, investing in women, youth, and people with disabilities in oil palm production presents a business case for women and youth since it creates employment for these groups that are usually excluded from other value chains. It is important to consider the different roles men and women currently have within the oil palm sector, as strategies for enhancing gender equity should be tailored based on these roles.

Gender equity in the oil palm sector will be ensured, helping to assess the potential of the oil palm value chain to contribute to reaching objectives related to both economic growth and women's empowerment. Currently, male farmers mostly cultivate oil palm for commercial purposes, while their

female counterparts mainly extract palm oil for use domestically and to sell in local markets on a smaller scale. To ensure that gender gap is narrowed, the strategy recommends improved organizational strengthening, financial literacy, entrepreneurial skills, raising awareness on rights and putting in place safeguards to prevent exploitation, with a specific focus on women, youth, and people with disabilities.

The Ministry of Agriculture in close collaboration with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection will lead this program. In addition, they will have the additional support of other line ministries and agencies, local governments, farmers and CSOs. Strategies for enhanced smallholder’s livelihood food security and gender equity will be developed and implemented by 2025.

Table 6: Gender mainstreamed Strategies into Local and National Practices

No	Strategies	Lead Institution	Collaborating Institution
1	Develop and enforce gender sensitive policies	MoGCSP	MoA
2	Create spaces for marginalized groups (women and youth, PWDs) to participate in the oil palm value chain	Ministry of Agriculture	Smallholder farmers and Private Sector
3	Ensure gender sensitivity and inclusivity of women in certification and social auditing process	MoGCSP	Government of Liberia; Knowledgeable CSOs

Table 7: Strategy for Independent Smallholder Inclusion

No	Strategies	Lead Institution	Collaborating Institution
1	Develop and enforce smallholder inclusive policies	Ministry of Agriculture	Smallholder cooperatives; Relevant NGOs; CSOs
2	Development of financial and technical support mechanisms for independent smallholders (both women and men)	Ministry of agriculture	Financial institutions; CSOs
3	Develop and test smallholder inclusive business models with existing mills (e.g. FAIR company community partnership)	Ministry of agriculture	Oil Palm companies; relevant NGOs;

4	Ensuring equal benefit sharing between smallholder farmers and companies	Government of Liberia	Oil Palm companies, CSOs
5	Observe rights of laborers working in oil palm plantations	Ministry of labor	Relevant NGOs; workers Union; CSOs

## Objective 2: Develop an Enabling Regulatory Framework for the Oil Palm Sector of Liberia

Liberia lacked an improved regulatory framework to guide the oil palm sector until 2020 when the RSPO Board of Governors endorsed the country's RSPO-NI. This presents an opportunity to improve regulations in the oil palm value chain to promote investment, participation, and growth. This objective aims at encouraging actors to conform to relevant national and international regulatory frameworks for sustainable palm oil.

The oil palm sector of Liberia lacks a consistent regulatory framework that clearly stipulates the responsibilities, rights, and possible consequences in terms of non-compliance among stakeholders, community members, smallholders, concessions, and other relevant institutions. This has resulted in stifling growth, limiting participation of all relevant stakeholders, especially local communities. The limitations include inadequate leadership participation amongst community members, inadequate stakeholders' coordination, poor negotiation skills from community dwellers including smallholders and limited community participation in negotiations and award processes, and limited awareness of communities regarding the value of land in the oil palm industry. There is also a prevalence of what is considered as unfair compensation to communities for crops that were damaged during the clearing of lands for the planting of Palm, poor working conditions for employees, and using child labor in palm oil production. This situation conflicts with principle number 4 of the Liberia National Interpretation of the RSPO and other relevant laws, regulations, and best practices.

A critical aspect of the business environment is the legal and regulatory framework, which has significant gaps in aligning local laws, regulations, with the requirements for national and international best practices. It has been recognized that the best way to ensure that Liberia's oil palm sector complies with those international commitments is to close those gaps through a participatory process of consultations leading to the enforcement of relevant laws and enabling regulations. This will include amendment of the 2009 Community Rights Law with respect to forest land to incorporate Carbon Rights Regime., that will clarify carbon revenue for concessions and local communities. It will also include similar legislative and regulatory actions to support the recently developed REDD+ strategy and its results-based payment program to encourage community compliance with non-deforestation. Further the oil palm sector should tap into the recently approved Land rights act of 2018 as one of the legal frameworks guiding oil palm production. Moreover the nationally interpreted RSPO for Liberia recommends compliance with all the local, national, and international laws such as General Business Law of Liberia 1973, Associations Law of Liberia 1976, Community Rights Act (2009), Environmental Protection and Management Law (EPML 2002), Agriculture Concession Agreement ratified by National Legislature of Liberia.

### Expected Result 2.1: The Liberia Oil Palm Sector is Governed by Enabling Laws and Regulations

The best way to ensure that Liberia’s oil palm sector complies with international commitments is to close those gaps through a participatory process of consultations leading to an enabling regulatory framework. There is a challenge in harmonizing public and private sector actors in these attempts to regulate the oil palm industry.

Liberia has no specific statute or regulation to regulate the oil palm sector. In lieu of this gap, the government has opted for the formulation of a national strategy which lacks the force of law. Given the global experience of human rights violations and the dispossession of communities from their customary land by large agriculture concessionaries, a statutory or regulatory framework should have been developed. This would have set the legal framework to guide the formulation and enforcement of Agricultural Concession Agreements (ACAs) as well as to inform the development of a national strategy which serves as the programmatic component of the oil palm sector.

In the next five years, a regulatory framework should be in place to guide operations in the oil palm sector. Liberia Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority (LACRA) should lead this process with the participation of other relevant government institutions.

In the next five years, the proposed regulations will support a multi-stakeholder initiative which will have broad authority to regulate the performance of actors and build stakeholder (local communities, CSO, etc.) relations in the oil palm sector.

The MoA will lead this intervention in collaboration with sectoral partners including CDA, EPA, FDA, the Association of Liberian Oil Palm Farmers, INC (TALOPFI), Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will work together to strengthen the regulations for the oil palm industry. In addition, the Ministry of Justice will lead the review of the legislative, regulatory, and incentive framework that regulates oil palm cultivation and, in dialogue with other stakeholders will propose a new incentive framework to stimulate investments in the oil palm industry. There is a need for improvement in environmental impacts assessment as well as major efforts for enhancing sustainability in the oil palm industry in the next 5 years. Effectively regulating oil palm expansion, while mitigating negative effect on the concession affected communities and improving governance of the sector is the aim.

Table 8: Strategies for improving Regulations in the Oil Palm Sector

No	Strategies	Responsible Institution
1	Articulate the interest of all actors in the oil palm sector in the process of developing regulations.	Association of Liberian farmers; palm oil farmer cooperatives; CSOs
2	Ensure development of a stand-alone regulation for the oil palm sector	MoA, NBC and IMCC

3	strengthen the regulation of the oil palm sector to ensure regular monitoring for compliances	NBC EPA and FDA
4	Review and enforce existing legislative frameworks in the oil palm sector and propose for changes in the outdated regulations.	EPA, NBC, FDA, LLA and Ministry of Justice

**Expected Result 2.2: Administrative Structures for the Effective Enforcement of Regulatory Frameworks are Established**

The Government of Liberia has inadequate capacity to deliver a range of services to many commercial growers, smallholders, and agribusinesses. This includes the National Interpretations of RSPO standards as well as periodic audits on compliance by sector operators to GoL regulations and TFA 2020 requirements. The passage of relevant laws through a participatory process will be enacted and enforced within the 5 years.

NBC with the collaboration of MOA, EPA and FDA will lead this intervention. Concessions and smallholders-medium level producers will commit to transparency, compliance with applicable laws and regulations and the use of appropriate best practices. For example, FPIC from local community members prior to oil palm development will be enforced and application of the Integrated Land Use Plan (ILUP) and management regulations.

**Expected Result 2.3: Actors in the Liberian Oil Palm Sector are adequately aware of Relevant Laws and Regulations to enable them take Informed Decisions and Actions**

The inadequately focused regulations for the oil palm industry among actors, coupled with weak enforcement, hinders the expansion of sustainable oil palm development in Liberia. For a more sustainable oil palm value chain development, regulating the industry in the following areas is needed:

- Land
- Environmental
- Labor and employee
- Gender equity
- Agrochemical use
- Wildlife
- Price regulation
- Value addition

Strong regulations for the oil palm industry will be formulated in 5 years that will have positive implications on the above-mentioned parameters. The Government of Liberia will ensure compliance to national laws and regulations by these concessions. The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MoFDP) and Ministry of Agriculture with close collaboration with the Ministry of Gender will lead this program.

For example, in land issues the NOPSAP recommends adequate use of the Land Rights Act of 2018 with regards to the formalization of Customary Land Rights and its implications for accessing community land that is necessary for the expansion in terms of production and processing. Some of the key issues to consider are transitioning Tribal Certificates into Public Land Scale Deeds, Confirmatory Surveys and issuance of Statutory Deeds as well as the formation and operationalization of the governance structure (Community Land Development Management Committee). It is important for the oil palm sector stakeholders to adhere to these amended laws while seeking to increase production and processing by reducing land conflicts.

Within 5 years, the government will enforce existing regulations on concessions that will enhance quality which leads to considerable improvement for oil palm development.

Table 9: Strategies for Robust Enforcement of Laws and Regulation on Oil Palm Production

No	Strategies	Responsible Institution
1	Institute comprehensive reform to address inadequacies of systemic weaknesses in laws, policies and regulations governing following areas mentioned above, especially impunity, conflict of interest, and discretionary power among executives. This includes revising the terms of conflicting laws/regulations of public agencies responsible for governing and awarding concessions or permits to avoid duplication of functions.	MOA, EPA, Land Authority, FDA and Bureau of Concessions
2	Carry on massive sensitization and awareness campaigns to increase actors in the sector access to relevant information and develop their technical capacity to meaningfully engage with related activities. This includes providing clear and timely information on existing legal and regulatory frameworks.	MOA, EPA, and SDI
3	Improve the participation of civil society organizations and other stakeholders in decision making processes and monitoring to enhance compliance in the areas mentioned above. Also employ strategy to enhance the dissemination of information nationwide.	MOA and FDA

**Expected Result 2.5: Alignment of Strategy with the National Action Plan**

Advocacy in the oil palm industry and Liberia should aim to promote the NOPSAP at all levels through awareness raising, articulation and policy alignment. Nevertheless, the NOPSAP should merit financial investment to be captured using advocacy materials. (e.g., documentation, print and electronic media, handouts/pamphlets, etc.)

In the next 5 years, *'Love MY Palm Oil'* innovative campaign will be set up to increase awareness of the aims and objectives of the NOPSAP among stakeholders in the oil palm industry. This will also serve as an outreach vehicle to raise awareness of sustainability practices among local community members and concessionaires.

The Department of Extension and Research of the Ministry of Agriculture will lead the planning, execution and monitoring of this the *'Love MY Palm Oil'* innovative campaign, in collaboration with the TALOPFI, Farmers Union Network, CSO-OPWG and WAREB. In addition, the MOA with support from the Ministry of Information to provide more information to the public on the *'Love MY Palm Oil'* innovative campaign. Within the 5 years, the *"Love My Palm Oil"* innovative campaign will raise consumer awareness.

### **Objective 3: Develop a 5-Year Financing Mechanism to Guide Sustainable Oil Palm Development**

Access to long-term finance is core to facilitate investments and growth in the oil palm sector. The NOPSAP calls for the mobilization of financial resources targeting community oil palm development, producers, and processors. This should include innovative financial mechanisms that can be instituted through public and private partnerships. At the heart of this model, is the responsibility of government to guarantee funds are accessible to targeted actors.

So far, the oil palm sector in Liberia has received the highest committed amount of Foreign Direct Investment in the post-war years, totaling over US\$6 billion. The four biggest players are Mano Palm Oil Industries (MPOI), previously operated by Sime Darby (US\$ 3.1 billion until 2025), Golden Veroleum (US\$ 2 billion until 2017), Equatorial Palm Oil (US\$ 800 million until 2017) and SIFCA operated Maryland Oil Palm Plantations (US\$ 20 million until 2015).

There are challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), smallholders and medium growers in the sector. These include inadequate access to finance (especially for smallholders), inadequate institutional support, limited technical capacity, inefficient business services network and transportation infrastructure challenges, among others.

It is important to consider the severe constraints within which the Liberian smallholders and exporters operate.

Additionally, there have been several efforts made over the last fifteen years to improve the business environment. In 2014 the Norwegian government contributed \$150 million USD to the Liberian Government to support partnerships that would develop Forest Governance through the Forest Carbon Partnership Fund and the Forest Investment Project, fostering Liberia's REDD+ strategy. Also, the October 2018 approved Global Environment Facility, provides funding opportunity through the Capacity Building Initiative for Transparency (CBIT) to implement transparency elements of the Paris Agreement in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency and Conservation international. Prior to this, in May 2018, Conservation International implemented a grant (of initial \$1 million USD) to provide

sustainable, long-term financing for Liberia’s “protected areas”. Access to finance should also be directly linked to environmental and community rights conditions so that investment and expansion in the sector are done in a sustainable manner.

This TA expected to achieve 4 concrete results:

Table 10: Strategies to achieve TA Results

No	Strategies	Responsible Institution
1	Establish oil palm specific financing channels that are intended to increase financial access among stakeholders in this sector, including smallholder farmers	Ministry of Finance Development and Planning and MOA
2	Create financial products that are tailored specifically to oil palm producers based on needs and characteristics (including blended financial products).	Central Bank of Liberia & Financial institutions.
3	Capacity building for stakeholders especially smallholders on accessing and managing finances	Ministry of agriculture
4	Institute the financial planning culture in smallholders and create ways to pool finances that can be used as credit for members (example, savings and credit cooperative societies)	Association of Liberian farmers, Ministry of Agriculture

**Expected Result 3.1: A Financing Mechanism That Supports All Stages of the Oil Palm Sector over the next 5 Years**

Technical and financial planning, finance schemes and a need for effective education in financial management are imperative for governing oil palm expansion.

Over the next 5 years, an agricultural financing system will be established that channels credit to farmers to invest in the sustainable improvement of their farms, as indicated by the national program of support to producers. It is expected that financial institutions reduce their risk because credit is associated with an efficient production support program, whose initiatives increase the potential for farmers to repay credit. These institutions can use the farmers’ future crops and the buyers guarantee as collateral for repayment.

MFDP with the collaboration of the Central Bank of Liberia will oversee this intervention (based on interest and capacity) and the palm oil buyers will establish the financing system for the producer. Banking institutions will be encouraged to create a special fund to finance activities related to the

production of palm oil. The form of out-grower schemes will be sustained and the use of finance schemes to govern palm-oil expansion will be increased in the next 5 to 10 years.

### **Expected Result 3.2: Stakeholders demonstrate Commitment to Sustained Financing of the Palm Oil Sector**

The purpose of this is to embark on ensuring a sustainable financial system by stakeholders to support the oil palm sector. In principle, this involves stakeholders making legally binding commitments on their financial plans for strengthening the sector. For instance, financial institutions can set aside a certain percentage of their portfolio to specifically target smallholders and other oil palm producers.

The five-year NOPSAP implementation period will diversify and ensure the sustainable capacity of financial institutions deliver a range of services to a large number of commercial growers, smallholders and agribusinesses. Intercropping of oil palm with other crops by smallholders and large-scale farmers is one of the objectives to be achieved over the next 5 years. Maximizing productivity and income of smallholders is key and a dedicated integration initiative will be set up to drive this agenda. This intervention will significantly improve smallholder farmers' access to finance through both public and private partnerships.

Additionally, establishing an agricultural financing system that channels credits to farmers to invest in the improvement of their farms can be a solution. Other countries have used low-interest loans to farmers, and Government can earmark a portion of tax revenues or create a special levy to set up an oil palm development fund to benefit smallholders and local communities and promote sustainable production.

### **Expected Result 3.3: A Mechanism is established among Stakeholders for Effective Accountability, Transparency and Reporting**

The NOPSAP could be financed through investments by donors from the public and/or private sector. An example would be the creation of a fund to provide low-interest loans to growers to support the financial investments required for replanting with higher-yielding seeds and to cover the period during replanting and maturation of trees. International donors and financing agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the International Finance Corporation (IFC), and the World Bank could redirect some of their funding from balance of payments subsidies toward investments in the oil palm sector. Also, funding sources for smallholders could be tapped into for financing the NOPSAP.

There are opportunities beyond individual corporate commitments to apply the principles and practices of sustainable oil palm development at a landscape level. The Government of Liberia could provide guidance and policy support for such an approach, and international development partners could provide financial support. The GoL could also provide an enabling environment for partnerships between plantation companies and smallholders supported by global investors who invest in buyers.

### **Expected Result 3.4: The Oil Palm Sector Financing Plan addresses Food Security, Gender Equity and other Social and Human Rights Issues**

The focus of this result is to reduce poverty and improve food security and nutrition in the country through financing. Rural men and women have different access to productive resources, services, information, and employment opportunities, which may hinder women’s productivity and reduce their contributions to agriculture, food security, nutrition, and broader economic and social development goals. It is documented that the prevailing gender inequalities in ownership and control of productive resources such as land may also influence access to financial services. For instance, many smallholder farmers utilize land as a form of collateral while seeking financial support. However, women and youth are highly disadvantaged in ownership of these resources, which may compromise their ability to access financial services. The disparity in food security due to existing gender inequalities and discrimination in the agriculture sector will be improved over the 5-year period. There will be adequate engagement of women in the agricultural system and the additional challenges they face in accessing productive resources, services and employment opportunities as compared to men. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, and Ministry of Agriculture with close collaboration with MoFDP will undertake this intervention. In addition, they will have the additional support of other line ministries, local governments, farmers and CSOs.

Table 11: Strategies to improve Women Participation in Oil Palm Production

No	Strategies	Lead Institution	Collaborating Institution
1	Advocate, formulate and institute gender sensitive policies and directives meant to increase financial access among women and youth	Ministry of Gender	MOA, MFDP
2	Ensure more focus on women to form or join cooperatives that will have access to savings and credit as a core function.	Association of Liberian farmers	MOA
3	Carry out sensitization meetings for product awareness to different gender groups so as to eliminate the information barriers	Central Bank of Liberia, Financial Institutions	MFDP

**Objective 4: Provide Support to Improve Livelihoods for Smallholder Farmers and Communities**

This objective seeks to promote support for smallholders and local communities to build knowledge and capacity on sustainable agriculture practices, provide access to agricultural inputs (such as seeds, organic fertilizers, and nurseries), extension and advisory services, and access to finance.

The NOPSAP also proposes that local communities whose livelihoods are affected by oil palm production activities have access to sustainable diversified livelihoods (such as providing skills training programs, and small business opportunities).

This is to promote an overall shift in the oil palm value chain to engage directly with smallholder producers to strengthen rights, improve the sustainability of practices, ensure fair benefits, and enhance productivity and diversify their income. For instance, smallholder engagement provides an attractive way to combine the sustainability agenda with PAPD; the significant potential benefits of oil palm to rural incomes<sup>29</sup>. The large gap in yields between smallholders and commercial-scale plantations suggests an opportunity to increase productivity through sustainable intensification (e.g. by supplying improved planting material) to meet global demand for oil palm without clearing more forest.

Significant conflict and violence have been generated by oil palm plantation development that has not met the expectations of local communities regarding their fair share of benefits. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) focus on supporting communities to assert their substantive and procedural rights over oil palm cultivation. At the same time, smallholders' interests could be put at risk by sustainability initiatives targeted at the commercial plantation sector.

A smallholder-focused approach influencing the oil palm industry is challenged by the size and heterogeneity of the target group. The large number of smallholders in the oil palm sector suggests that integrating needed support services into national extension systems might couple with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) interventions to sustainably help to transform palm oil production.

Also, many smallholders are underfunded; lack the best management practices and support needed to manage oil palm plots, farms, and plantations. Most farmers have lower yields, generally 1 to 3 tons per hectare, as opposed to 6 tons per hectare by commercial outfits. The farmers produce low quality products due to the use of outdated technology. Additionally, there are limited logistical services available to connect these farmers to markets that has led to most of the oil produce to be sold at the farm-gate attracting low prices.

According to the World Resources Institute (WRI), these farmers receive no or limited training in oil palm cultivation, or processing. Also, they have no links, supervision, or support from companies or concessionaire, making them vulnerable to unscrupulous middlemen that set exorbitant fees, and little government support. Their inability to engage in agro-ecologically sound practices is a threat to global climate change and sustainability. Certifications for smallholders are difficult to obtain and hard to maintain as the fees, operational changes, and inputs are high.

#### **Expected result 4.1: Smallholders, Out-Growers, and Medium Oil Palm Farmers are actively engaged in Sustainable Farming Practices**

An important component of sustainable farming practices involves being transparent with communities on the costs of farm establishment and management, which would provide a context for learning about their expectations of benefit/revenue streams.

It is expected that all corporate policies related to social and environmental sustainability of oil palm investments will be transparent and publicly available. The NOPSAP when implemented, will clearly outline how communities and private landowners will be engaged and how their permission will be

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<sup>29</sup>Rist et al., 2010.

sought. It will ensure FPIC processes are in place to resolve issues, increase involvement and improve community access to land/resources.

Led by the Government of Liberia, the Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Extension and Research will oversee the NOPSAP implementation. In addition, the MOA or GoL will be supported by TALOPFI, Farmers Union Network, international and local NGOs. Also, stakeholders (communities, concessionaires, government and NGOs) will develop a framework that supports a good working relationship. A system will be put in place to resolve social, environmental, and economic issues such as poverty, climate change and many more. Additionally, it will increase the involvement of smallholder oil palm growers, and improvement of community access to land and resources.

Table 12: Strategies for Stakeholders’ engagement in Oil Palm Production

No	Strategies	Responsible Institution
1	Ensure a quality farmer support system that builds the capacity of smallholder farmers on sustainable oil palm practices.	Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Extension and Research; TALOPFITALOPFI
2	Ensure availability of highly skilled advisor and extension services to improving farmers knowledge and skills.	Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Extension and Research; TALOPFITALOPFITALOPFI
3	Develop and maintain efficient management system in place to support efficient extension services. This can include setting up of demonstration farms for learning and mobile plant clinics, and some digitized learning platform for information sharing.	Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Extension and Research; TALOPFITALOPFITALOPFI
4	Promote organization development through encouraging and facilitating formation of farmer groups formation that will provide spaces for farmer-to-farmer learning, and increase outreach of the dispersed smallholder farmers	Farmers union network; TALOPFITALOPFI

5	Work together with the farmers to document the existing sustainable practices and to contextualize the most efficient practice as defined by geographical locations.	Research and Academic institutions
6	Monitor, Evaluation, and learning. Set up a system to measure the performance of the Farmer Support System, monitor change and learning and promote continuous improvement	Research Institutions: Relevant NGOs

**Expected Result 4.2: Smallholder Farmers Income Earning, value addition and participation in high value markets is improved**

This result seeks to support smallholder development and improve livelihoods, and to overcome challenges in the sector. It also seeks to integrate social and environmental safeguards within oil palm development strategies and investments. Efforts should be made in identifying value addition strategies that can help smallholders access local and global markets. Further, extension services through MoA and LACRA will inform smallholders of niche markets for premium prices.

The national plan for sustainable oil palm development explores the potential of creating a viable out grower scheme model in collaboration with private sector. Further, the plan will also support the piloting of out grower production model. labor The MoA will collaborate implementation of the NOPSAP. In collaboration with TALOPFI, Farmers Union Network, international and local NGOs, government will promote sustainable oil palm markets.

The advisors selected for this task should also be given the capacity to explore and use digital technologies for farmer outreach. It is also recommended that organizational development through farmer groups presents a more reliable model for reaching out to farmers. While the goal is to get to each farmer, steps of participant verification should be put in place to ensure inclusivity especially with regards to women and youth participation.

As the production of oil palm increases, the government and other relevant stakeholders should strive to find mechanisms for creating local and export market linkages with smallholders. One modality for facilitating this approach is by tapping into viable governance structures that have been extensively used before in increasing smallholders’ access to markets. Some of these strategies include collective action, and contract farming modalities, as well as producing for future markets. The overarching role for smallholders is to ensure compliance with the requirements of target markets.

**Expected Result 4.3: community-identified areas in oil palm landscapes are prioritized for development in an integrated land use plan**

Communities in the oil palm sector are marginalized and have limited access to information about the sector. The decision-making process of granting previous oil palm concessions (prior to this strategy) did not include the participation of rural communities where large-scale oil palm plantations are developed. This exclusion has led to the unfavorable relationship between the rural communities and multi-national companies. As the legitimate owners of the land, rural communities were not properly equipped and informed on their roles, and responsibilities, and sometimes misled with false promises by companies

acquiring their land. The current model of development does not fully include the involvement of communities as key stakeholders and experience direct impacts of the oil palm sector.

Without a more inclusive adoptable out-grower model to address the concerns of other stakeholders relating to lower productivity, dependency syndrome, and the wrong community mindset, there is a risk of continued stagnation in oil palm sector growth due to the lack of adequate incentives for a transparent FPIC process. The Ministry of Agriculture with the collaboration of FDA, Cooperative Development Agency, Liberia Agriculture Commodity Regulatory Authority, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, TALOPFI, Farmers Union Network, CSO-OPWG, WAREB and NBC established MSPs will lead this intervention. In addition, IDH, GVL, GROW-Liberia, Conservation International, World Resource Institute (WRI) and Oxfam International will provide the technical and financial support to undertake this intervention. At the end of this intervention, a participatory mechanism will be in operation that will prioritize smallholders and community concerns. In summary, the Plan will be the driving force behind a coherent and inclusiveness of smallholders. Community concerns will also be incorporated into the strategy on a continuous basis. This plan will have a positive impact on people and groups working in the oil palm industry.

The community members in collaboration with Community Lands Development and Management committees and Community Assemblies should develop participatory land use plans identify areas within the community that can be used for sustainable oil palm production. This should be hugely supported by the local administration.

Table 13: Strategies for Communities’ Engagement in Land Use Activities

No	Strategies	Responsible Institution
1	To identify and legalize the areas identified as oil palm landscapes, this should be done in close collaboration with the community.	Ministry of Lands, FDA &MOA
2	Provision of financial support to be used in the development of the areas identified as oil palm production landscapes	GROW-Liberia, Conservation International, World Resource Institute (WRI)
3	To identify the best and sustainable way of developing the identified oil palm production landscapes, including capacity building and institution of infrastructure	Ministry of Agriculture, FDA

**Expected Result 4.4: Mainstreaming Gender Issues in Smallholder oil Palm Development**

Gender mainstreaming is central in the effort to alleviate rural poverty, promote household food security and nutrition and increase productivity in the agricultural sector. In recent years, there has been increased awareness of the need to integrate women and youth into mainstream development efforts. The objective behind this intervention is that the full use of productive potential of human resources

(male and female), cannot be realized if women, who make substantial contributions to food output do not have adequate access to resources, productivity enhancing inputs and services.

In the next 5 years, effort will be made to alleviate rural poverty, promote household food security, and increase productivity in the agricultural sector. Gender equality in wage gaps, employment and decision making in the Liberian oil palm sector will be raised.

The Ministry of Agriculture in close collaboration with the Ministry of Gender will spearhead this intervention with the additional help of TALOPFI, Farmers Union Network, CSO-OPWG and WAREB.

At the end of this intervention, 'gender blindness' and a lack of gender sensitive analysis geared more towards large-scale estate production will be alleviated. It is foreseen that gender equality in wage gaps, access to productive resources, employment and decision making in the Liberian oil palm sector will be raised to national level. There will be increased awareness of the need to integrate women into mainstream development efforts.

Table 14: Strategies for Gender mainstreamed issues in Oil Palm Production

No	Strategies	Lead Institution	Collaborating Institution
1	Develop and adopt a gender sensitive lens that will be used to assess issues in the oil palm value chain	Ministry of Gender	Ministry of agriculture
2	Ensure that all the strategies and activities meant to develop or strengthen the oil palm value chain are gender sensitive and respond to different needs of the different gender groups at the community level.	Farmers Union Network	TALOPFI/MOA
3	Conduct a gender sensitive evaluation to identify key areas that different gender groups need support & to concretize the current existing inequalities.	Research & Academic institutions	Ministry of Gender; MOA

**Objective 5: Develop a Conflict Resolution Mechanism and a Feedback Grievance Redress Mechanism**

Investment in the oil palm sector drives conversion of land for large scale oil palm development as government looks for economic development opportunities. Through Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), government allocates concession rights on the understanding that the companies will adhere to relevant national legislations and policies that require engaging communities to gain access to the lands. In many cases, there have been conflicts over respect for Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and Rights Based Approaches (RBA) protocols and their application to obtain community consent. This intervention is to develop or align a national conflict resolution strategy and a Feedback Grievance Redress Mechanism (FGRM) with Liberia’s Land Rights Act and Regulations.

This intervention is to develop a national conflict resolution strategy for the oil palm sector in Liberia. The availability and allocation of land to concessionaires for oil palm development has the potential to significantly affect the livelihoods of indigenous people and local communities that have had traditional use rights to these lands. Reinvestment in the oil palm sector also drives forest conversion as producers and governments look for economic development opportunities. The government allocates concession rights to companies on the understanding that the companies will adhere to forest conservation legislations, engage with communities, and sign conservation agreements with them to gain access to the lands. On the contrary, this has not always been the case. The top to bottom approach and communities' exclusion in granting concessions is one of the drivers of conflicts. Unclear policies and inefficient practices for engaging these communities in a positive and participatory manner, is leading to social conflict between stakeholders in the oil palm value chain.

### **Expected Result 5.1: Stakeholders demonstrate Commitment to Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in the Oil Palm Sector**

Conflict prevention, post-conflict peace building and the promotion of an inclusive approach and building institutions that ensure violence reduction, safety, and commitments by stakeholders on rule of law and governance is the objective of this intervention.

For communities that are affected by concessionaire, we propose a multi-stakeholder partners (MSPs) assessment to identify factors that are inhibiting their effectiveness and then based on these findings the MSPs can consider including county legislators if need be. In addition to including county legislators, the MSPs should also create linkages with other county level peace and security structures like the county security council.

Within the next 5 years, concerted efforts will be carried out to create awareness on the importance of effective and efficient conflict resolution mechanisms among different stakeholders in the oil palm sector. The Platform will utilize the Palaver Hut discussion to increase citizen's engagement with land use activities. The IRF speaks volumes about the outreach process that involves multi-stakeholder's platform monthly meetings with land development.

Gender balance: women and youth are influential when they are allowed to hold positions of trust at community level and district levels. Women's access to land will be promoted to ensure equality in access to productive resources.

The NOPSAP will also pay attention to providing a balance between oil palm production and environmental management. This will be of great relevance with regards to solving the conflicts between intensifying productions and conserving the environment.

Liberia has a progressive Land Rights Act that gives customary community rights over land with or without formal title. For oil palm development, employing the National FPIC Framework with the respective communities, while planning palm oil production initiatives will help to mitigate land conflicts which are mostly evidenced in the sector.

### **Expected Result 5.2: Peaceful Co-Existence resulting from Stakeholders Commitment to Conflict Resolution.**

Challenges for building stakeholder relations in the oil palm sector result from the failure to commit to peaceful co-existence. All the stakeholders in the oil palm industry need to foster additional discussions

with the desire to create and sustain a mutually beneficial partnership and peaceful coexistence. Conflicts in the communities can be managed by involving community leaders (elders, youth and women and people living with disabilities).

A community-level conflict resolution mechanism will be initiated within the first year. A ‘Conflict Resolution Team’ comprising of producers, processors, local communities, youths and local policy makers will be set up with the aim of eliminating disagreements and disputes among stakeholders and committing them to peaceful co-existence. The appropriate feedback redress mechanism to be used is engaging oil palm affected communities (youth group, women group, and elders), stakeholders and local civil society organization (CSOs) to listen to all parties’ grievances and find a way forward to dialogue and resolve conflict or better still manage them not to escalate into conflicts. Multi-stakeholder dialogue is an important way to amplify the voices of people that might otherwise be marginalized from broad development agendas. Through access to multi-stakeholder dialogue, CSOs can share their invaluable insights and experiences and in return influence development policies and processes. As such, access to multi-stakeholder dialogue can be considered a key component of the CSO enabling environment. Further, formulation of an early warning system across the oil palm supply chain will be instrumental in mitigating conflicts.

NBC with the collaboration of (TALOPFI) and CSO-OPWG will have the task of setting up the ‘Conflict Resolution Team’. Additionally, concessionaires and international stakeholders will provide technical and financial support. The team Members will include the following: include MOA, EPA, LLA FDA, MIA, FLY, NBC, CSO, leadership of the community.

At the end of this intervention, disagreements and disputes among stakeholders will be reduced and a framework for managing any upcoming conflicts developed.

Table 15: Strategies for Conflict Resolution among Actors

No	Strategies	Lead Institution	Collaborating Institution
1	Provide opportunities for negotiation among conflicting groups or dispute settlement facility.	CSO	NBC, MOA, FDA, LLA, multi-stakeholder partners, county legislators, county security council
2	Set up a conflict resolution team that will be mandated to quickly resolve the conflicts that have been identified by the civil society	NBC	CSO, multi-stakeholder partners, county legislators, county security council

3	Develop an early warning system to be used by all the stakeholder in palm oil	Multi-stakeholder partners, county legislators	NBC, MOA, FDA
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**Objective 6: Develop an integrated land use plan in conformity with the Liberian Land Rights Act (2018), with specific focus on the acquisition of deed for customary land**

***Land use planning and oil palm land use scenario analysis***

To allocate land for developmental purposes, it is prudent to develop an integrated land use system that facilitates communities’ ownership, developmental aspirations, and improved livelihoods systems. This objective will protect investments on customary land and utilize public and private land. Further, this objective seeks to ensure that land development is sustainable and adheres to various deforestation regulations and biodiversity conservation specification.

There is a clear need for land use planning to guide allocation of concessions, which requires a high level of expertise in socio-economic, environmental, and agriculture productivity assessment processes. In addition, implementation of REDD+ and payment for ecosystem service programs that could provide necessary incentives for forest conservation require a high degree of technical capacity for implementation. The plan should also be clear on issues related to ownership and user rights as stipulated in the LRA of 2018.

Strategic development plans will be developed based on effective land use planning procedures and processes to identify those lands most suitable for development of oil palm and other commodities and food crops. Where the necessary transportation infrastructure facilitates processing, while weighing the social and environmental risks and opportunities associated with these areas.

The allocation of land to concessions and smallholders for oil palm development has the potential to significantly affect the livelihoods of indigenous people and local communities that have had traditional use rights to these lands. Reinvestment in the oil palm sector also drives forest conversion as producers and governments look for economic development opportunities. The government allocates concession right to companies and smallholders with the understanding that they will adhere to forest conservation legislation, engage with communities, and sign conservation agreements with them to gain access to the lands. This process is leading to social conflict between communities and the plantation companies due to unclear policies and effective practices for engaging these communities in a positive, participatory manner. Further, attempts to divert expansion onto “degraded” land by concessionaires could threaten local land rights. In some instances, large commercial producers have found ways to falsely categorize arable land as degraded lands so that they are allowed to cultivate on them. It is thus imperative for the government to put in place stringent conditions to ensure compliance.

**Expected Result 6.1. Land Use Planning takes Production away from HCV&HCS Areas into Degraded Land**

The focus of this objective is to gather and make use of spatially resolved data on high conservation value (HCV), high carbon stock (HCS) forests, and important biological corridors and related ecosystem services. Actors in the oil palm sector should ensure efforts are made to achieve productivity enhancements as a way of promoting sustainable intensification. Any expansion of the sector should be

directed to degraded lands as specified by the National Forest Definition a way of revitalizing these areas and alleviating pressure on primary forests, while ensuring that this does not promote the chopping of trees by smallholders and companies to turn forest and HCV areas into degraded land.

It is expected that within the next 5 years, a national forest definition of land use based on a clear delineation of HCS/HCV forests versus agricultural land, degraded forests and other land categories will be achieved. This will be built on a national interpretation of RSPO standards.

FDA in close collaboration with Liberia Land Authority (LLA) and National Bureau of Concession will spearhead this intervention. They will be assisted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Environmental Protection Agency. In addition, international NGOs and concessionaires will provide backstop and financial assistance to drive this intervention.

Over the period of 5 years, land use plans and zoning will be undertaken and no-go areas such as HCV/HCS and other priority areas in Liberia will be defined. To ensure that this plan is comprehensive, companies are encouraged to always conduct HCV/HCS assessments in their own land to pick up high value areas that cannot be identified at a national level. In the meantime, concessionaires will be encouraged to expand their production to degraded lands as a way of revitalizing these areas and alleviating pressure on primary forests. The goal is to carry out sustainable expansion and intensification of oil palm plantations without deforestation and loss of biodiversity.

Table 16: Strategies to enhance Land Use Planning

No	Strategies	Responsible Institution
1	Develop plans in association with communities that will define appropriate land use in oil palm production	FDA, LLA
2	Appropriately zoning areas for oil palm uses either as HCV/HCS	LLA, National Bureau of concessions, EPA
3	Ensure biodiversity preservation while ensuring sustainable production in oil palm cultivation. It will involve specifying what lands to use and how best to cultivate oil palm sustainably. For instance, forest, peat land and HCV areas not to be used for oil palm development.	EPA, FDA
4	Community management of forest areas and HCV areas.	CSOs, smallholder cooperatives

## **Expected Results 6.2. Land use change monitored by the Liberia forest atlas and factored into adoptive management practices**

Without coordinated planning and effective land use change plans, there is a substantial risk of forest conversion and biodiversity losses through rapid expansion of oil palm plantations in Liberia, particularly in areas with vulnerable forest ecosystems and protected areas. An additional challenge posed by oil palm expansion in Liberia is the potential occurrence of land use conflicts and tenure disputes involving government, companies, and local communities. Hence, producing forest land cover maps is important to monitor and study the pattern that contributes to land use changes and to examine its effect on High Conservation Forests and High Carbon Value Landscapes.

It is expected that within 5 years' land use and land cover maps will be produced to monitor land use change. With the availability of land use planning and mapping systems, the focus will be monitoring and studying the pattern that contributes to oil palm changes and to examine its effect on High Conservation Value Forests and High Carbon stock Landscapes.

The Liberia Land Authority (LLA) – in collaboration with FDA, Ministry of Agriculture, and the National Bureau of Concession, the Environmental Protection Agency – will lead the planning and preparation of maps and methodologies on monitoring. Technical and financial support will be sought from international NGOs and concessionaires. It is expected that at the end of this intervention, producing land cover maps will be developed to monitor land use changes and to examine its effect on High Conservation Value Forests and High Carbon stock Landscapes. It is also expected that an effective land use change plan will be developed.

## **Expected Results 6.3: Adopt land use planning as a prerequisite for land clearing for oil palm development / expansion to prevent encroachment.**

The best land use plans and policy intentions for limiting deforestation associated with oil palm development will not be successful if they cannot be adequately enforced. On the other hand, top-down forest zoning and flawed law enforcement could be difficult to monitor thus allowing forest encroachment and exploitation by illegal planting of oil palm.

Datasets of land-cover changes in Liberia are currently being developed to enhance forest law enforcement. Capacity constraints will be addressed largely focusing on skills and training for monitoring and enforcement of forest cover change in the sector. FDA in collaboration with the Liberia Land Authority (LLA) will be in charge of this intervention. In addition, LISGIS and Liberia Forest Atlas will provide technical backstop at the same time will lead the planning, and preparation of maps and methodologies on monitoring.

The government will be responsible for covering the financial cost to conduct a mapping exercise. This will limit the risk of concessions leveraging their financial capacity to influence any mapping exercise involving their interests.

It is expected that, in a period of not more than 5 years, a complete dataset and monitoring equipment will be available to law enforcement authorities to strictly enforce the forest law regarding land use change encroachment. Within year 1, LISGIS will begin capacity building with the training of forest cover monitors on the use of satellite monitoring equipment.

## **Expected Result 6.4: Supporting communities to develop their Land Use Plan**

This is an integral part to inform their decision-making process of community members if and when they decide to concede land to external actors for oil palm activities. Having in place a community led land use plan is instrumental in reducing conflicts through ensuring consistency of developmental initiatives with community provisions. While putting this in place it is important that the entire process is informed by communities’ land ownership and FPIC. We propose the CSO to take lead on this with support from the community land committee and other relevant oil palm stakeholders.

Table 17: Strategies to address Encroachment on Land and communities developing their land use plans

No	Strategies	Responsible Institution
1	Collection of the relevant data to be used in assessing land encroachment patterns. Analyze this data and generate reports and topographic maps.	LISGIS, RSPO, Liberia Forest Atlas, satellite tools such as SPOTT
2	Map the status of land use and settlement to ensure that there is adequate protection of the areas that are not yet encroached	FDA (Liberia Forest Atlas), LLA, GoL
3	Provision of funds for carrying out benchmarking on encroachment status and collecting information to be used for decision making on protection strategies	International NGOs
4	Develop sustainable land use plans that conform to the FPIC for the community	LLA, CSO

**Objective 7: Integrate Sustainable Conservation Practices in Oil Palm Production Landscapes, in conformity with the Liberia National REDD+ Strategy and other Relevant National and International Commitments**

The aim of this objective is to develop actions to allow for sustainable forest conservation in oil palm production landscapes. This is in conformity with the National REDD+ Strategy, Liberia’s Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and relevant international commitments on biodiversity conservation. Concepts such as HCS/HCVs in oil palm development are meant to conserve biodiversity and forest. The NOPSAP should ensure a balance between biodiversity conservation, land use planning and economic growth.

The aim of this TA is to develop actions to allow for sustainable forest conservation in production landscapes, in conformity with the National REDD+ Strategy and international commitments.

The Land Rights Acts (2018) grants customary communities land ownership rights, further strengthening Community Rights Law (2009) that grants communities the right of access to forested land through a nine-step process. It ultimately guarantees communities the right to decide on the intended land use for the indicated land. This has inadvertently resulted in (some) communities opting to sell timber rights and chain saw operations, and to allocate such lands for slash-and-burn agriculture. This has ironically

resulted in deforestation, contrary to the expectation of the law that such an approach would safeguard forest land and biodiversity. They expressed concern, too, that companies are merely paying lip service to ND commitments. The rate at which the forests were being converted to plantations by commodity companies was not perceived to reflect such professed commitments. Limited adherence to ND commitments depended on the location of the company, their activities, and the size of their operations. With that in mind, smaller companies will struggle with the financial and technical capacity to implement no deforestation effectively. For larger companies (especially multinationals), the difficulties are mostly linked to existing technical expertise. The government has a legal target of setting aside 30% of its forest estate for conservation, but to date it has yet to reach 10%. The protected area network system of Liberia (comprising protected and proposed protected areas) aims at carving out conservation areas from areas available for development such as commodities production and mining. However, getting all the proposed areas to full protection status has not been achieved.

The main barriers to the identification and management of conservation areas in oil Palm production landscapes include:

Limited capacity by both producers and relevant government agencies to enforce habitat protection across the country, even in areas with sizeable presence of state institutions (e.g. EPA and FDA).

For example, companies face many barriers to their ND commitment, including communities encroaching on buffer stripes and other HCV set-asides for farming, chain saw logging in concession areas, hunting, and burning of charcoal in concession areas. Government agencies do not currently have the capacity to address these challenges. It is thus important to involve local communities, making them co-responsible for proper management of natural resources.

The recently adopted REDD+ Strategy (2016) and the TFA2020 Marrakesh Declaration offer practical mechanisms to implement a ND regime in Liberia. These are not yet backed by enabling legislation. A major challenge, though, is in ensuring a level playing ground for all companies. Otherwise, companies that feel that they are disadvantaged in implementing a ND commitment will be compelled to rush to cut down as much forests as they can before legislations are passed to support the no deforestation pledge.

Liberia lacks a national land use plan that would make provisions for the adaptation of the national forest definitions to delineate HCS/HCV forests versus agricultural land, degraded forests and other land categories based on a national interpretation of RSPO standards. In line with section 9 of the NFRL which calls for the establishment of Protected Forest Areas Network, together with conservation corridors, and incorporating existing national forests, FDA is conducting a series of studies (biological baseline study and socioeconomic study of the Krahn-Bassa proposed protected area, biomonitoring is ongoing in Sapu, Wonegizi and Gola etc.)

To address these challenges, the NOPSAP recommends the following:

- The implementation of the Liberia National FPIC Framework and HV-HCS guidelines to resolve the challenges. Oil Palm producer would face in piloting sustainability best practices.
- Producers should avoid development on any land that has been deliberately cleared or logged in advance for commodity (e.g. oil palm) development.
- Develop and implement a national land use plan that will guide the identification and conservation of HCV-HCS areas in in production landscapes.

- Conclude and implement a zero-net deforestation commitment in line with on-going national and regional initiatives (e.g. TFA2020/APOI).
- Government of Liberia to provide an incentive mechanism to encourage producers to adopt and improve on management of conservation areas in their production landscapes.
- Ensure that Oil palm producers' responsibilities and commitments in future smallholder schemes adequately support the associated smallholders in observing conservation best practices.
- Provide a financial mechanism for identifying, managing s and reporting on conservation activities within production landscapes.
- Develop a coherent guideline to address conservation in Oil Palm landscapes.
- The enactment of a Carbon Rights Regime within the next 5 years will be a mechanism to channel new investment into Energy Security in Liberia. This can also help Liberia to meet its voluntary greenhouse gas reduction targets as well as their national renewable energy targets while promoting greater use of renewable energy.

Table 18: Strategies for the Improvement of Carbon Regime

No	Strategies	Responsible Institution
1	Apply a given methodology for HCV and HCS for all concessionaires and ensure compliance with the RSPO principles on the issue.	FDA
2	Conduct a nationwide assessment to identify HCV and HCS at the concession level.	FDA
3	Prevent clearance of high carbon stock and high conservation value forest in agriculture	Ministry of Agriculture and EPA
4	Monitor and report happenings in HCV/HCS areas around oil palm landscapes	EPA, NBC and FDA

**Expected Results 7.1: A national definition is developed for Forest and HCV/HCS, and their application in the Oil Palm Sector is clarified**

The existing body of law in Liberia was benchmarked against the High Conservation Value (HCV) and High Carbon Stock (HCS) approaches with the aim of assessing the extent to which national legislation already safeguards natural ecosystems, biodiversity, and community rights.

The High Conservation Value (HCV) and the High Carbon Stock (HCS) approaches are critical tools used to avoid deforestation and safeguard biodiversity, environmental and social values in responsible commodity production. Unfortunately, HCV and HCS were not captured in the validated forest definition. The definition only considered parameters such as area, tree height and canopy cover. However, Liberia has been able to identify high carbon stock forests but has not yet completed the process of delineating all forestlands that are at risk for deforestation or appropriate for land development.

Within the next 2 years, efforts will be made to capture the national definition of HCV/HCS in the validated forest definition. At the end of year 4, the process of delineating all forest lands will be completed.

FDA with the collaboration of line ministries, and agencies will spearhead this intervention. In addition, concessionaire, local communities and CSOs, small and medium enterprises, and other organizations engaged in oil palm cultivation will provide needed assistance.

It is expected that at the end of this intervention, The HCV and HCS approaches will mitigate environmental impact and improve forest stewardship. At the end of the fifth year of execution of this intervention, this will safeguard biodiversity, improve environmental and social values in responsible commodity production and avoid deforestation.

#### **Expected Results 7.2: Producers are effectively engaged in Conservation in Sustainable Oil Palm Development, and their experiences shared with Stakeholders**

The private sector plays an enormous, multi-faceted role in the management of Liberia's forests such as income generation to local communities. Therefore, producers will (re)affirm their commitments to zero-net deforestation in oil palm development in Liberia will be implemented within a year

FDA with the collaboration of line ministries, and agencies will spearhead this intervention. In addition, concessionaire, local communities and CSOs, small and medium enterprises, and other organizations engaged in oil palm cultivation will provide needed assistance.

It is expected that within 2 years, greater public participation in the sector between government, the private sector, communities, and other stakeholders will be achieved. At the end of this intervention, conditions for private sector engagement will be enhanced thereby improving conditions for the private sector to contribute to community-based enterprise development.

#### **Expected Results 7.3: A Sustainability Action Plan is developed for Conservation in Oil Palm Landscapes**

A draft sustainable development plan that will build local capacity for sustainable forest conservation that will result in long-term viability of forest and ecosystem conservation and institutionalize environmental requirements.

Within the first year, a plan that will build local capacity for sustainable forest conversation will be drafted achieving sustainable development plan of Liberia.

FDA with the collaboration of line ministries and agencies (e.g. EPA, MIA, LLA, MOA, MOJ, MME, LISGIS, NBC) will spearhead this intervention. In addition, producers, local community and CSOs, small and

medium enterprises, and other organizations engaged oil palm cultivation will provide needed assistance.

It is expected that the palm oil sustainable development plan will be completed enhancing local capacity for sustainable conservation practices that will result in longer-term viability of forest and other ecosystem conservation and institutionalize environmental requirements.

**Expected Results 7.4: Incentives and benefit-sharing mechanism is developed to facilitate conservation in oil palm landscapes**

This intervention is an incentive-based forest conservation mechanism, in which payments for environmental services are made and contribute to environmental protection. Forest conservation incentives are expected to combat deforestation. By the end of this intervention, incentives for communities and local stakeholders to promote sustainable forest conversation will be identified. FDA with the collaboration of line ministries and agencies will spearhead this intervention. In addition, concessionaire, local communities and CSOs, small and medium enterprises, and other organizations engaged in oil palm cultivation will provide needed assistance. It is expected that incentives for conservation will boost forest conservation. Some of the incentives include finding ways of adopting payments for ecosystem services that will ensure smallholders are rewarded for their conservation methods. This calls for a consultative approach between stakeholders, community members, and experts in environmental payment schemes.

Table 19: Strategies for Incentives and benefit sharing to facilitate Conservation in oil palm production landscapes

No	Strategies	Lead Institution	Collaborating Institution
1	Develop a framework that can be used to strategize on how to incentivize producers to adopt conservation practices in oil palm production landscapes.	FDA / MOA	Research / Academic institutions, MFDP, NBC, MIA
2	Identify environmental services provided by the producers and how they can be incorporated into an ecosystem payment scheme	FDA / MOA	MFDP, NBC, MIA
3	Create awareness for producers and other stakeholders on the benefits of environmental services, and the possibility of getting paid for these services	FDA; MOA	Oil palm cooperatives and other producers, MIA, NBC

**3 IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**



4	Co-creation and piloting of conservation best practices by producers and associated communities on incentives and benefit-sharing partnership	GoL	CSOs, oil palm producers
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### 3.1 Approach

The oil palm sector of Liberia is characterized by complex supply chain that involves producers (smallholder & large scale), middleman / intermediaries and processors. The National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan of Liberia for sustainable oil palm production is a result of extensive dialogue between the National Oil Palm Platform of Liberia (NOPPOL), the oil palm sector stakeholders and the oil palm working group. NOPPOL will engage the various stakeholders mentioned under each objective to ensure the development of actions specific plans for implementation under the National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan. Each objective and activity will have a government line ministry, agencies, and non-governmental organization to coordinate the activity and report on the progress.

The NOPPOL will monitor and provide updates on the progress and impact of the indicators in the implementation of the NOPSAP. There are key overarching issues such as gender, youth and smallholder inclusion that need more attention in the implementation and monitoring of the plan. NOPPOL will carry on awareness and disseminate the results of the various objective to stakeholders in the oil palm sector and the broader public.

### 3.2 Jurisdictional Approach

The jurisdictional approach will bundle public and private sector incentives to reduce deforestation at the counties and districts level and make the production of palm oil profitable and sustainable. The Liberian Land Authority (LLA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) will lead the jurisdiction approach. The EPA and FDA implementing the REED+ should provide incentives to subnational jurisdictions. The lead entities should engage all stakeholders at the jurisdictional level. The EPA, FDA and LLA should implement policy at county and district levels to reduce deforestation and land conflict for sustainable oil palm production.

### 3.3 Geographic Scale

The National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan covers the production, processing, and commercialization of the palm oil in the 15 counties of Liberia. Anyone involved with palm production, processing and commercialization in these counties should operate in compliance with the Nation Oil Palm Strategy.

### 3.4 Implementation Timelines

Implementation timelines are presented in the table below:

Table 20: Implementation timeline of the objectives

Objective	Expected Results	Strategies for achieving the expected result	Timelines				
			YR1	YR2	YR3	YR4	YR5
1. Compliance with National Standards for the Liberian Oil Palm Sector.	1.1 Actors along the Liberian Oil Palm Value Chain Demonstrate Commitment to National and International Sustainability Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Extension officers should be employed to educate smallholder farmers on the different fruit storage periods (3,7,14, and 21 days) on yield, organoleptic appreciation and free fatty acid level of crude palm oil produced</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ The free fatty acid (FFA) level of palm oil indicator of quality for selling palm oil in export and industrial domestic markets could be employed. The quality of palm oil could be categorized based on its FFA level as high quality (1-5%), good quality (5-10%) and poor quality (above 10%).</li> </ul>					
	1.2 Actors along the Liberian Oil Palm Value Chain Demonstrate Compliance with all Applicable Local, National and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Bulk of the emissions from oil palm are associated with the drainage of peak soil, sector requires stopping the expansion of oil palm plantations on carbon-rich peat soils and drastically reducing oil palm related deforestation while keeping Liberia in the high forest cover category.</li> </ul>					

	International Laws and Regulations	✓ Improve the governance and enforcement of laws, including the moratorium on protected areas					
		✓ Increased productivity across all sizes, including smallholder farms and expansion of plantations should only take place through increased production or ensuring that large parts of existing lands by concessions are fully developed or on marginal or already degraded land but taking into considerations the risk of actors chopping trees in a bid to label some areas degraded.					
		✓ To ensure accountability and respect of rights from all the players within the oil palm value chain. This will include cancelling of business licenses for non-compliant players.					
	1.3 Environmental, Social and Corporate Terms and Approaches Specified in RSPO Standards are Clearly Defined and Implemented for the Liberian Context	✓ Provide relevant information to stakeholders on environmental, social, and legal issues to be used in decision making					
		✓ Conduct workshops and fairs to allow for stakeholders' participation in understanding the principles of RSPO					
		✓ Provision of relevant information to be used by stakeholders					
		✓ Develop and enforce commitments that are in sync with the principles of RSPO					

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ provide technical training and information to producers about the process and benefits of certification</li> </ul>				
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Establishment and proper functioning of a national quality infrastructure, which has consistent monitoring and inspection, including creating an enabling environment for smallholders</li> </ul>				
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Carry out related activities including product certification, inspection and testing</li> </ul>				
	1.4 Fair partnerships between mills and independent smallholders and their communities	✓				
		✓				
	1.5 Gender and Smallholder Issues are mainstreamed into Local and National Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop and enforce gender sensitive policies</li> </ul>				
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Create spaces for marginalized groups (women and youth) to participate in the oil palm value chain</li> </ul>				
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ensure gender sensitivity and inclusivity of women in certification and social auditing process</li> </ul>				
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop and enforce smallholder inclusive policies</li> </ul>				

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Development of financial and technical support mechanisms for independent smallholders (both women and men)</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop and test of smallholder inclusive business models with existing mills (e.g. FAIR company community partnership)</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ensure equal benefit sharing between smallholder farmers and companies</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Observe rights of laborers working in oil palm plantations</li> </ul>					
2. Develop an enabling regulatory framework for the oil palm sector of Liberia.	2.1 The Liberia Oil Palm Sector is Governed by Enabling Laws and Regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Articulate the interest of the oil palm farmers in the process of developing legislation and regulation</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ strengthen the regulation of the oil palm sector to ensure regular monitoring for compliances</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Review and enforce existing legislative frameworks in the oil palm sector and propose for changes in the outdated regulations.</li> </ul>					
	2.2 Administrative Structures for the Effective Enforcement of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Apply a given methodology for HCV and HCS for all concessionaires and ensure compliance with the RSPO principles on the issue.</li> </ul>					

	Regulatory Frameworks are Established	✓ Conduct a nationwide assessment to identify HCV and HCS at the concession level.						
		✓ Prevent clearance of high carbon stock and high conservation value forest in agriculture						
	2.3 Actors in the Liberian oil palm sector adequately aware of relevant laws and regulations to enable them take informed decisions and actions	✓ Conduct a comprehensive reform to address long standing systemic weaknesses in laws, policies and regulations governing following areas mentioned above, especially impunity, conflict of interest, and discretionary power among executives. This includes revising the terms of conflicting laws/regulations of public agencies responsible for governing and awarding concessions or permits to avoid duplication of functions.						
		✓ Carry on massive sensitization and awareness campaigns to increase actors in the sector access to relevant information and develop their technical capacity to meaningfully engage with related activities. This includes providing clear and timely information on existing legal and regulatory frameworks.						
		✓ Improve the participation of civil society organizations and other stakeholders in decision making processes and monitor to enhance compliance in the areas mentioned above. Also employ strategy to enhance the dissemination of information nationwide.						

<p>3. Develop a 5-Year Financing Mechanism to Guide Sustainable Palm Oil Development in Liberia.</p>	<p>3.1 A Financing Mechanism That Supports All Stages of the Palm Oil sector over the Next 5 Years</p>							
	<p>3.2 Stakeholders Demonstrate Commitment to Sustained Financing of the oil Palm Sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Establishment of oil palm specific financing channels that are intended to increase financial access among stakeholders in this sector, including smallholder farmers</li> <li>✓ Create financial products that are tailored specifically to palm oil producers based on their needs and characteristics (including blended financial products).</li> </ul>						
	<p>3.3 A mechanism is established for effective among stakeholders for accountability, transparency, and reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Capacity building stakeholders especially smallholders on accessing and managing credit or finances</li> <li>✓ Institute the financial planning culture in smallholders and innovatively creating ways to pool finances that can be used as credit for members (example, savings and credit cooperative societies)</li> </ul>						
	<p>3.4 The Oil Palm Sector Financing Plan Addresses Food Security, Gender Equity and Other Social and Human Right Issues</p>							

	<p>3.5 The Oil Palm Sector Financing Plan Addresses Food Security, Gender Equity and Other Social and Human Right Issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Advocate, formulate and institute gender sensitive policies and directives meant to increase financial access among women and youth</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ensure more focus on women to form or join cooperatives that will have access to savings and credit as a core function.</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Carry out sensitization meetings for product awareness to different gender groups to eliminate the information barriers</li> </ul>					
<p>4. Provide Support to Improve Livelihood for Smallholder Farmers and Communities.</p>	<p>4.1 Smallholder palm oil farmers are to engage in sustainable farming practices, including out-grower schemes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ensure a quality farmer support system exists that builds the capacity of the small holder farmers on sustainable oil palm practices. Ensure availability and highly skilled advisors &amp; extension services so improving farmer knowledge and skills can be effective. This also will require an efficient management system in place to support this. This can include setting up of demonstration farms for learning and providing training through extension services.</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Promote organization development through encouraging and facilitating formation of farmer groups formation that will provide spaces for farmer-to-farmer learning, and also increase outreach of the dispersed smallholder farmers</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Work together with the farmers to document the existing sustainable practices and to contextualize the most efficient practice as defined by geographical locations.</li> </ul>					

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Monitor, Evaluation and learning. Set up a system to measure the performance of the Farmer Support System, monitor change and learning and promote continuous improvement</li> </ul>						
	4.2 Capacity Building of Smallholder Farmers to Improve Productivity and Income Earning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Increase access of extension services among smallholder farmers to</li> </ul>						
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provide training options through organization development mechanisms such as farmer groups</li> </ul>						
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Explore the possibility of integrating use of digital technology in disseminating information among farmers.</li> </ul>						
	4.3 Community-Identified Areas in Oil Palm Landscapes Are Prioritized for Development in an Integrated Land Use Plan	To identify and legalize the areas identified as palm oil landscapes, this should be done in close collaboration with the community.						
		Provision of financial support to be used in the development of the areas identified as oil palm production landscapes						
		To identify the best and sustainable way of developing the identified oil palm production landscapes, including capacity building and institution of infrastructure						
	4.4 Perfect Alignment of Strategy (Plan) With the NSAP							

	4.5 A Strategy is Developed for Mainstreaming Gender Issues in Smallholder oil Palm Development	✓ Develop and adopt a gender sensitive lens that will be used to assess issues in the oil palm value chain						
		✓ Ensure that all the strategies and activities meant to develop or strengthen the oil palm value chain are gender sensitive and respond to different needs of the different gender groups at the community level.						
		✓ Conduct a gender sensitive evaluation to identify key areas that different gender groups need support & to concretize the current existing inequalities.						
5. Develop a Conflict Resolution Mechanism for the Liberia Oil Palm Sector.	5.1 Stakeholders Demonstrate Commitment to Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in the Oil Palm Sector	✓ Institution of conflict prevention and resolution centres						
	5.2 Stakeholders Demonstrate Commitment to Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in the Oil Palm Sector	✓ Provide opportunities for negotiation among conflicting groups or dispute settlement facility.						
		✓ Set up a conflict resolution team that will quickly resolve the conflicts that have been identified by the civil society						

6. Develop an integrated land use plan that protects ownership, and user rights in conformity with the Liberian Land Rights Act (2018), with specific focus on the acquisition of deed for customary land.	6.1 Land Use Planning Takes Production Away From HCV&HCS Areas into Degraded Land	✓ Develop plans in association with communities that will define appropriate land use in oil palm production					
		✓ Appropriately zoning areas for oil palm uses either as HCV/HCS					
		✓ Ensure sustainable production of oil palm while ensuring preservation of biodiversity. It will involve specifying what lands to use and how best to cultivate oil palm sustainably. For instance, forest, peat land and HCV areas not to be used for oil palm development.					
		✓ Community management of forest areas and HCV areas.					
	6.2 Land Use Change Is Monitored Over Appropriate Periods, and factored into Adaptive Management Practices	Regularly collecting information on farming practices among oil palm producers					
		Conduct soil tests and biodiversity studies to validate different changes.					
	6.3 A Mechanism Is Developed to	✓ Collection of the relevant data to be used in assessing land encroachment patterns. Analyze this data and generate reports and topographic maps.					

	Address Land Use Encroachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Map the status of land use and settlement to ensure that there is adequate protection of the areas that are not yet encroached</li> </ul>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Provision of funds for carrying out benchmarking on encroachment status and collecting information to be used for decision making on protection strategies</li> </ul>					
7. Integrate sustainable conservation practices in oil palm production landscapes, in conformity with the Liberia National REDD+ Strategy and other relevant national and international commitments	7.1 A National Definition Is Developed for Forest and HCV/HCS, and Their Application in the Oil Palm Sector Is Clarified	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Develop a framework that can be used to strategize on how to compensate producers for environmental services</li> <li>✓ Assess and profile the existing environmental services provided by the producers and how they can be incorporated into a payment mechanism</li> <li>✓ Sensitize farmers on the benefits of environmental services and the possibility of getting paid for these services</li> <li>✓ Co-creation and piloting of FAIR company community partnership</li> </ul>					
	7.2 The Private Sector is Effectively Engaged in Forest Conservation in Sustainable Oil Palm Development, and their Experiences Shared with Stakeholders						
	7.3 A Sustainability Action Plan for the Forest Conservation in Oil						

	Palm Landscapes Developed						
	7.4 Incentives and Benefit-Sharing Mechanism is Developed to Facilitate Oil Palm in a Forest Conservation Landscape						

### **3.5 Financing and Benefit-Sharing**

The National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan will produce a substantial benefit for both oil palm growers, processors and stakeholders engaged in income-generating activities relating to oil palm. A task group on finance headed by the Ministry of finance and Development Planning will assemble to provide the costing of the achievement of every objective in the strategy. The costing of the objectives will help us determine the resources needed to for the implementation of the National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan. The costing of the activities will be implemented in the last week of June.

### **3.6 Monitoring, Evaluation and Verification Mechanism**

The successful implementation of the NOPSAP requires continuous monitoring and learning about what works and what does not work. The Monitoring, reporting and verification mechanism shall guide the implementation of the strategy on a regular basis.

#### **Monitoring**

##### **Outcomes / Result and Indicators Tracking**

1. Progress toward achieving outcomes / result will be measured by collecting quantitative and qualitative data on the indicators (see Table 22)
2. Every year a set of indicators in Table 22 will be revisited and refined as necessary

#### **Implementing Agencies**

1. In addition to providing data on the various indicators, ministries, and agencies task with the responsibility to carry on a specific role with provide report of progress to the NOPPOL. The report will include both narrative and quantitative update on progress made on the assigned indicator.
2. NOPPOL should developed reporting guidelines to help Ministries and Agencies provide information that will capture progress on the NOPSAP.

#### **Evaluation**

The National Oil Palm Strategy and Action Plan will consider opportunities for third party evaluation. The third-party evaluation will look at the major results and areas of investment. The findings will inform policy decisions for investment in the activities of the NOPSAP. The evaluation will inform changes to our current approaches or outcomes.

Table 21: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Objectives	Expected Results	Implementation		Financing Resources in Thousand					Total
		Goal & Indicators	Means of Verification	YR1	YR2	YR3	YR4	YR5	
1. Compliance with National Standards for the Liberian Oil Palm Sector.	1.11 Actors along the Liberian Oil Palm Value Chain Demonstrate Commitment to National and International Sustainability Standards	☑ Number of actors adhering to national and international standards	☑ Reports and signed commitment documents	30	15	10	-	-	
	1.12 Actors along the Liberian Oil Palm Value Chain Demonstrate Compliance with all Applicable Local, National and International Laws and Regulations	☑ Number of actors who have put in place from their activities national and international standards	☑ Survey data and reports	60	15	10	-	-	
	1.13 Environmental, Social and Corporate Terms and Approaches Specified in RSPO Standards are Clearly Defined and Implemented for the Liberian Context	☑ Number of producers implementing the RSPO specifications in their activities	☑ Survey data and reports	60	25	15	-	-	
	1.14 Fair partnerships between mills and independent smallholders and their communities	☑ At least one framework document that specifies interaction between mills and smallholders	☑ Reports; submitted frameworks	40	25	15	-	-	

	1.14 Gender and Smallholder Issues are mainstreamed into Local and National Practices	☑ Number of gender sensitive policies updated	☑ Reports from stakeholders;	40	20	15	-	-	
	1.15 Gender and Smallholder Issues are mainstreamed into Local and National Practices	☑ Number of gender sensitive policies updated	☑ Reports from stakeholders;	40	20	20		-	
		☑ Number of female producers incorporated in the oil palm business	☑ National documents:	20	20	10	-	-	
			☑ Survey data	15	20	7	-	-	
<b>Obj1-Subtotal</b>		☑	☑	<b>305</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>567.000</b>
2 Develop an enabling regulatory framework for the oil palm sector of Liberia.	2.7 The Liberia Oil Palm Sector is Governed by Enabling Laws and Regulations	☑ Number of laws applicable to the palm oil sector	☑ Reports and national documents	100	100	75	55	25	
	2.8 Administrative Structures for the Effective Enforcement of Regulatory Frameworks are Established	☑ Number of structures put in place	☑ Reports	100	50	40	20	20	

	2.9 Actors in the Liberian oil palm sector adequately aware of relevant laws and regulations to enable them take informed decisions and actions	☑ Number of different actors who are aware of the prevailing regulations	☑ Reports	100	50	35	20	20	
		☑ Number of practices that have complied with the prevailing practices	☑ Survey data	155	120	110	100	80	
<i>obj2-Subtotal</i>		☑	☑	<b>455</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>145</b>	1,375.000
3. Develop a 5-Year Financing Mechanism to Guide Sustainable oil Palm Development in Liberia.	3.12 Stakeholders Demonstrate Commitment to Sustained Financing of the Palm Oil Sector	☑ Number of commitments from stakeholders with their support to finance	☑ Reports	25	20	20	10	5	
	3.13 A mechanism is established for effectiveness among stakeholders for accountability, transparency and reporting	☑ At least one mechanism has been established to ensure accountability	☑ Reports	25	20	20	10	5	
	3.14 The Oil Palm Sector Financing Plan Addresses Food Security, Gender Equity and	☑ At least 30% of financial plan are	☑ Reports	25	20	20	10	5	

	Other Social and Human Right Issues	targeted to women and youth	☑	-	-	-	-		
			☑ Survey data	25	20	20	8	5	
<b>Obj3-Subtotal</b>		☑	☑	<b>100</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>317.500</b>
4. Provide Support to Improve Livelihood for Smallholder Farmers and Communities.	4.11 smallholder palm oil farmers are to engage in sustainable farming practices, including out-grower schemes	☑ Number of sustainable farming practices adopted	☑ Survey data	170	150	76	30	25	
	4.12 Capacity Building of Smallholder Farmers to Improve Productivity and Income Earning	☑ Number of smallholder capacity built	☑ Survey data	240	200	149	100	50	
		☑ Number of trainings dedicated to smallholders	☑ Repots	150	50	25	20	20	
	4.13 Community-Identified Areas in Oil Palm Landscapes Are Prioritized for Development in an Integrated Land Use Plan	☑ Number of identified community areas	☑ Reports	70	50	25	20	20	

	4.1 A Strategy is Developed for Mainstreaming Gender Issues in Smallholder Palm Oil Development	☑ At least one strategy developed that addresses gender issues	☑ Reports	70	30	20	20	20	
<b>Obj4-Subtotal</b>		☑	☑	<b>700</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>1,800.000</b>
5. Develop a Conflict Resolution Mechanism for the Liberia Oil Palm Sector.	5.1 Stakeholders Demonstrate Commitment to Peace-Building and Conflict Resolution in the Oil Palm Sector	☑ Number of commitments for conflict resolution in palm oil	☑ Reports	500	250	200	200	100	
<b>Obj5-Subtotal</b>		☑	☑	<b>500</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,250.000</b>
6. Develop an integrated land use plan that protects ownership, and user rights in conformity with the Liberian Land Rights Act (2018), with specific focus on the acquisition of deed for customary land.	6.7 Land Use Planning Takes Production Away From HCV and HCS Areas into Degraded Land	☑ Number of land use plans taking production away from HCV and HCS	☑ Reports	110	50	40	10	5	
			☑	-					

			☑ Survey data	100	50	40	10	5	
	6.8 Land Use Change Is Monitored Over Appropriate Periods, and factored into Adaptive Management Practices	☑ Number of land use changes used by producers	☑ Reports	100	50	30	10	5	
		☑ Number of adaptive practices developed	☑ Survey data	150	75	20	10	5	
	6.9 A Mechanism Is Developed to Address Land Use Encroachment	☑ At least one mechanism developed to prevent encroachment	☑ Reports	200	100	20	10	5	
<b>Obj6-Subtotal</b>		☑	☑	<b>660</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>1,210.000</b>
7. Integrate sustainable conservation practices in oil palm production landscapes, in conformity with the Liberia National REDD+ Strategy and other relevant national and international commitments.	7.9 A National Definition Is Developed for Forest and HCV/HCS, and Their Application in the Oil Palm Sector Is Clarified	☑ At least one definition developed and used among stakeholders	☑ Reports	100	15	10	10	10	
	7.10 The Private Sector is Effectively Engaged in	☑ Number of private sector	☑ Reports	150	100	100	75	50	

	Forest Conservation in Sustainable Oil Palm Development, and their Experiences Shared with Stakeholders	stakeholders engaged in ways of ensuring sustainable production	☑ Survey data	217	150	100	75	50	
	7.11 A Sustainability Action Plan for the Forest Conservation in Oil Palm Landscapes Developed	☑ At least one sustainability action plan developed	☑ Reports	101	100	100	75	50	
	7.1 Incentives and Benefit-Sharing Mechanism is Developed to Facilitate Oil Palm in a Forest Conservation Landscape	☑ At least 2 mechanisms developed that ensure equal benefit sharing and incentives that ensure palm oil is produced while at the same time ensuring there is forest conservation	☑ Reports	200	150	100	75	50	
<b>Obj7-Subtotal</b>				<b>768</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>2,212.500</b>
<b>Obj-Total</b>				<b>2,720</b>	<b>1,615</b>	<b>1,087</b>	<b>673</b>	<b>425</b>	<b>8,732.000</b>
Management Unit Cost				408	242	163	101	64	1,309.800
<b>Total Financial Cost</b>				<b>3,128</b>	<b>1,857</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>773</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>10,041.800</b>

## STAKEHOLDERS

No	Institution	Name
1	Fauna & Flora International	Patrick Epie-
2	Cooperative Development Agency	David J. Boimah
3	Cooperative Development Agency	Mickey J. Dixon-
4	MOC (Standards Task group lead NOPPOL)	Melvin A. Tokpah
5	EPA	Edward G. Wingbah
6	MOA	John M. Momoh
7	EPA	Benjamin Karmorh, Jr.
8	TALOPFI/Local Farms Inc.	Franklin Jackson
9	MOA	Aurelia M. Jones
10	SAMFU	Wynston Benda-Henries
11	MOA/NWLOPF	Z. Edmond Greaves
12	TALOPFI	Charles B. Allen
13	MOA	Sam R. Yoryor, III
15	MOA	Keturah K.T. Woods
16	MOA	Randolph Kolleh
17	MFDP	Jimmy N.C. Bokay
18	SESDev	Daniel B. Krakue
19	NBC	Sargee M. Doeco
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