



Funded by the  
European Union



REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

# THE CASTRAP NEWSLETTER

A biannual newsletter of the Liberia national component of the West Africa Competitiveness Programme  
First Edition Issue No.001 ( April - October 2021 )



## IN THIS ISSUE:

- 5 CASTRAP Develops Partnership Framework with the NSL to Promote and Upgrade the National Quality Infrastructure
- 6 CASTRAP Engages Target Beneficiary Groups and Stakeholders
- 7 CASTRAP Builds Competencies of 50 Enumerators and 5 Agriculture Officers in Data Collection Methods
- 7 CASTRAP conducts Baseline Survey
- 10 Up & Close With CEO Of Agro-green (In The Project Area)

## Implementing Organizations







Welcome to the first edition of the biannual newsletter of the Liberia national component of the West Africa Competitiveness Programme - The Cassava Transformation Project. This newsletter presents updates on the activities and the progress of the project. For further information about CASTRAP, visit: <https://cerathdev.org/cassava-transformation-project>



## OVERVIEW OF WACOMP

The West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) is a partnership initiative between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the European Union (EU). It is aligned to support the implementation of ECOWAS regional policies and programmes including the West Africa Quality System Programme (WAQSP).

WACOMP was adopted under the 11th European Union Development Fund (EDF) Regional Indicative Programme for a total amount of €120m, and highlight a

commitment to the Economic Partnership Agreement between the EU and West Africa.

WACOMP seeks to support several selected value chains at the national and regional level, so as to promote structural transformation and better access to regional and international markets while taking into account social and environmental concerns.

### *Some Selected Value Chains Of The WACOMP*



The principal objectives of WACOMP are to strengthen the competitiveness of West African countries, and to enhance their integration into the regional and international trading system.

The programme will work to:

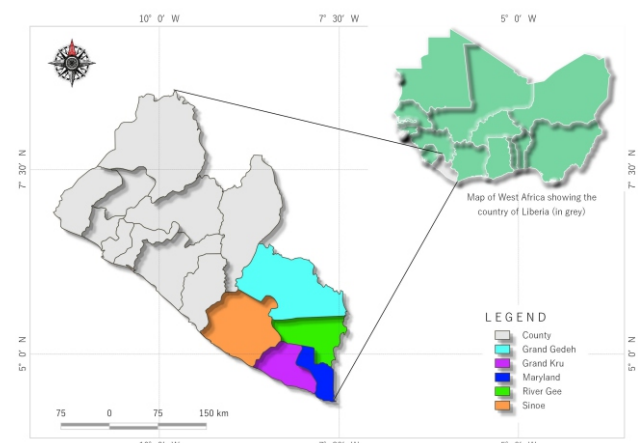
- improve performance, growth and contribution to the industry,
- improve regional trade and exports of selected value chains,
- and improve the business climate at national and regional levels.

## WACOMP IN LIBERIA

WACOMP in Liberia seeks to improve the competitiveness and regional integration of Liberia's cassava sector through a value chain approach. Cassava is the second most consumed crop in Liberia, and estimated to be cultivated by 65% of Liberia's farmers. This notwithstanding, a myriad of factors along its value-chain impedes the competitiveness of Liberia's cassava sector. These factors include access to quality inputs, low technical skills of essential value chain actors, limited access to finance, low entrepreneurial skills, absence and weak organization of essential value chain actors and their linkages, limited infrastructure, unstructured markets, and weak public sector support.

In Liberia, WACOMP targets the South Eastern counties of Sinoe, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, River Gee and Maryland. The South East Region of the country is estimated to be the poorest and with also a comparatively smaller population.

The Programme has 16 National components and 1 regional component. While each country is individually responsible for the implementation of its component, the ECOWAS Commission, with the support of the West Africa Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU/UEMOA) Commission, is responsible for the implementation of the regional components and for the coordination of WACOMP.



*Map of the project landscape in the South East of Liberia*

Enhancing the cassava value chain in the South Eastern Region can lead to a significant revival of the food processing industry, among others, and provide socio-economic opportunities including job creation, food and nutrition security, and poverty reduction. It can also contribute to the empowerment of women and youth, who constitute the majority of small producers, carrying out 80% of activities in rural areas.

## ABOUT CASTRAP

The Cassava Transformation Project (CASTRAP) is the Liberia component of WACOMP. The goal of CASTRAP is to enhance the competitiveness and the regional integration of Liberia's cassava sector through a value chain approach focused on sustained production, value addition, entrepreneurship, and sustainable markets.

CERATH Development Organization in partnership with Rural Integrated Center for Community Empowerment, Conservation Alliance Liberia, and Center for Enterprise Learning are implementing the project in Liberia's South Eastern counties of Sinoe, Maryland, Grand Gedeh, River Gee, and Grand Kru.

### CASTRAP Objectives and Expected Outcomes

#### Objective 1

Strengthened efficiency of actors engaged in the cassava value chain to improve access to inputs, and markets



#### Expected Outcomes

- Strengthened and efficient farmer cooperatives and other value chain actors: One integrated production, processing, and commercialization system (IPPCS) established in each county.

#### Objective 2

Enhanced production, processing, and commercialization of the cassava value chain



#### Expected Outcomes

- Increased cassava value addition with commercialization in the project landscape.
- Reduction in post-harvest losses.
- Improved food and nutrition security.
- Increased awareness and adoption of climate-smart practices, quality standards, and gender equality and social inclusion principles.

#### Objective 3

Cassava value chain enhanced to be financially sustainable, and commercially viable



#### Expected Outcomes

- Increased cassava value chain connectivity in the project landscape.
- Increased inclusive employment and entrepreneurship within the cassava sector of Liberia's South Eastern Region.
- Increased access to financing for cassava enterprises.

#### Objective 4

Policies, programs, and incentives to stimulate the commercialization of the cassava sector advocated for and implemented



#### Expected Outcomes

- Increased collaboration between sector partners particularly bakeries and upstream value chain actors resulting from advocacy activities.
- Improved legal framework and capacity of the national standards laboratory (NSL) to offer conformity services (testing, inspection, certification, quality award, and metrology).



## CASTRAP IN FOCUS

### 1. CASTRAP Develops Partnership Framework with NSL to Promote and Upgrade the National Quality Infrastructure

In collaboration with the National Standard Laboratory (NSL) under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI), CASTRAP has developed a partnership framework and workplan towards the development and upgrade of the National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) of Liberia. CASTRAP's partnership with NSL will facilitate Liberia's participation in regional and international trade particularly for businesses operating along the cassava value chain.

Liberia's NQI is inept as the country lacks the institutional and legal framework as well as the adequate physical infrastructure for the effective operation of an NQI. The National Quality Policy and the National Standards Act which will institute the Liberia Standards Authority (LiSA) are yet to be ratified. CASTRAP is supporting NSL to ratify these, and to nationalize the ECOWAS Standards (ECOSTANDS), and ultimately attain International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certification.

From April 2021, the CASTRAP team, through a project inception meeting began processes towards the concretisation of a partnership between CASTRAP and NSL. Subsequent meetings with NSL, including one with the Deputy Minister for Industry and Inspector General, MOCI, Hon. Thomas Goba, in July 2021, have been held to discuss details of the partnership towards the development and upgrade of the NQI. The CASTRAP and NSL teams, together, have finalised an activity roadmap, agreed milestones, and financing modalities.



CASTRAP team in a meeting with the Director of NSL, Stephen Mambu, and the Deputy Minister of Commerce and Industry, Hon. Thomas Goba

It is expected that through the partnership, NSL shall push for the passage of the National Standards Act, position itself as the country's foremost quality infrastructure body to nationalize and benchmark regional and international standards. This will also entail equipping NSL's laboratories to deploy calibration and verification services essential for the cassava value chain, as well as, establish information network to promote quality awareness amongst cassava value chain actors.



A non-functional food quality testing equipment at NSL

## 2. CASTRAP Engages Target Beneficiary Groups and Stakeholders



To create awareness about CASTRAP and to further guarantee the project's demand-driven approach across the project landscape, the CASTRAP team in June 2021, commenced engagements with project beneficiary groups and local administrators and leaders at the county level.

As at October, 2021, the project team has engaged over 800 farmers and other cassava value chain actors in 61 communities within 16 districts across the 5 project counties. While women constitute about 32% of this number, persons with disabilities (PWDs) constituted 4.4%.

The essential cassava value chain actors were generally excited about the prospect of CASTRAP supporting them to access improved cassava planting materials, knowledge on good climate-smart agronomic practices and market linkages. Opinion leaders and stakeholders have endorsed the project and pledged their full support to ensure its success.

"I am glad that you did a scoping assessment before writing the proposal for the Cassava Transformation Project. It is really a great news for the South East, especially Sinoe where a lot of cassava get spoilt on the farms due to no market linkages, roads, and value addition...The office of the county agriculture coordinator is in full support and will do her part to make sure the project is a success"

– Godwin C. Necollinh, Deputy Agriculture Coordinator for Sinoe County



Engagement with a farmer Cooperative



### 3. CASTRAP Builds Competencies of 50 Enumerators and 5 Agriculture Officers in Data Collection Methods

CASTRAP organized a capacity-building workshop for 50 project enumerators, 5 field officers, and 5 District Agriculture Officers (DAOs) in the five project counties. The training workshop focused on building the competencies of enumerators, the CASTRAP County Field Officers, and DAOs in data collection methods and data capture procedures towards the CASTRAP baseline survey.

The training employed conceptual and practical sessions that allowed the trainees to understand and to demonstrate competency in data collection.



*Training of Enumerators and Agriculture Officers*

### 4. CASTRAP conducts Baseline Survey

To broaden and provide the CASTRAP team and other stakeholders' understanding of the local context of the project, the team conducted a project baseline study across the project landscape. The baseline survey is a vital activity for the implementation of CASTRAP.

#### **Objective**

The main objective of the survey was to map out and establish baseline information in the project environment as a foundation for developing a demand-driven approach that addresses constraints while leveraging on existing opportunities along the cassava value chain in the project landscape.

The baseline survey also provided some data towards CASTRAP's cassava value chain service delivery gaps assessment in the project landscape. The gaps assessment is another vital activity of the project which entails a facts-finding venture to appraise what services and infrastructure exist or are non-existent in the project landscape in relation to the cassava value chain.





The results of the assessment are expected to serve as a guide to determining the entry points for intervention, recognizing differences that may pertain to the 5 project counties. The activity, therefore, is pivotal in establishing a county-based strategy for CASTRAP implementation.

The cassava value chain actors interviewed during the baseline survey included 1600 cassava producers; 25 farmer associations / groups / cooperatives; and 23 processors (including 11 community processing associations, 1 enterprise, and 11 individual micro-processors). Transporters (22) and market actors (23) were also interviewed. Also, as part of the survey, 15 key experts relevant to the cassava sector were interviewed. These interviews were essential as they provided further insights and served as basis for further research on specific aspects of the findings through supplementary data collection.



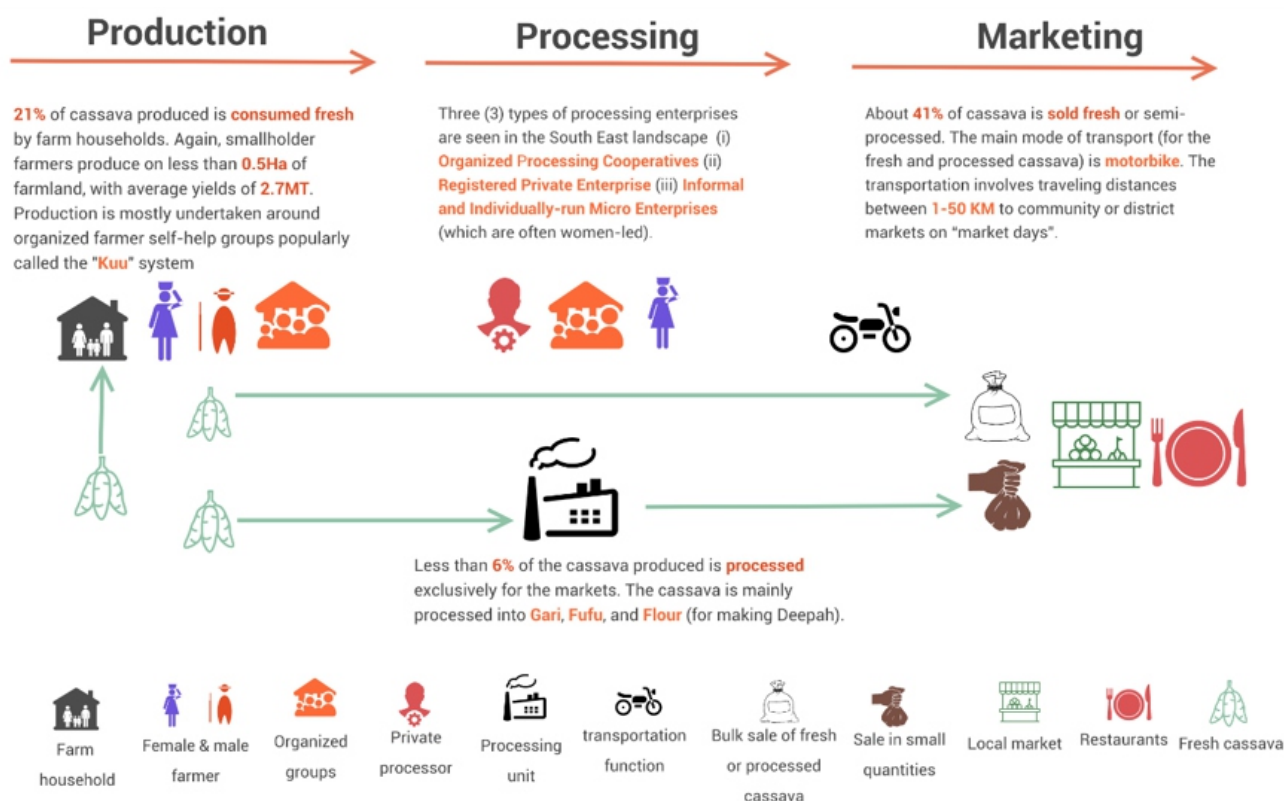
*Baseline data collection of the Cassava Transformation Project*



*Baseline data collection of the Cassava Transformation Project*

## Key findings of the Study

- (i) The cassava value chain (CVC) in the South East is not well-organized, mostly characterized by smallholder subsistent production.
- (ii) Farmers, with limited access to improved planting materials, source traditional varietal planting materials from their own farms.
- (iii) Most farmers also double as traders selling off excesses from their farms at community or district markets.
- (iv) Only about 6 percent of fresh cassava is processed, mainly, into gari, fufu and flour for deepah.
- (v) The prices of processed products vary across the 5 counties depending on the perceived quality of products.



*The Cassava Value Chain In The South East Of Liberia*



## 5. UP & CLOSE WITH CEO OF AGRO-GREEN

J. Winston C. Johnson



*"I hope CASTRAP supports Agro Green Inc. to build its capacity to set up a quality management system (QMS) that helps improve the Company's products to enable it to compete..."*

CASTRAP team had a "Question & Answer (Q&A)" chat with J. Winston C. Johnson, an "agri-preneur" processing cassava into "SuperGari" Atieke, "Deepah", Fufu and Tapioca in Maryland County. Mr. Johnson's company Agro-Green Inc was identified during CASTRAP's baseline survey as a processor with the potential to become competitive on the national and regional markets by setting up a quality management system (QMS) that improves the company's brand.

**Q:** Could you tell us about yourself?

**A:** My name is J Winston C Johnson, an agribusiness entrepreneur since 2019. I had always dreamt to start my own business since 1997 and today, I am glad to say my dream has come to fruition. During my undergraduate studies at the University of Liberia in 1997, my economics lecturer requested the entire class to develop a business plan that each student would eventually like to venture into after graduation. My business proposal was singled out as one of the finest individual presentations. This subsequently, motivated me to start my own company after graduation, guided by the business plan I wrote in school. In the year 2019, I relocated to my hometown, Gbawaken, in Maryland County and founded Agro Green Inc.

**Q:** Could you tell us a bit about your company?

**A:** Agro-Green since its establishment has been producing a number of cassava-based products including Super Gari, Atieke, Fufu, powerstarch, deepah, and tapioca. The Company also offers value-added training to local farmers and youth seeking to enter into the agribusiness space as entrepreneurs.



**Q:** At the company level, who are you employing?

**A:** My business now employs 15 persons – 11 females and 4 males from the community. The business has trained over 30 local producers who are now processing their cassava into gari and other products rather than just selling raw cassava as was previously the case. The business, on a daily basis, hires 10 to 15 local community dwellers as waged employees to support the activities at the processing centre.

**Q:** What are your expectations of CASTRAP?

**A:** I am positive about the growth of my company with the required technical support from CASTRAP. I hope CASTRAP supports Agro Green Inc. to build its capacity to set up a quality management system (QMS) that helps improve the Company's products to enable it to compete favorably on both the local and regional markets. I am also expecting CASTRAP to facilitate the creation and strengthening of market linkages that expand our market for our products locally, regionally, and internationally. This will help increase revenues while also lowering unemployment in Maryland County and Liberia at large.

## PROJECT KEY ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Profiles of key actors and stakeholders in the implementation of CASTRAP.



**Government Of Liberia  
(GoL)**

CASTRAP is implemented in cooperation with the GoL through the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI), the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MOFDP), and Local administration systems at different levels.

MOA is the public entity responsible for the holistic development of the agricultural sector. MOA's county coordinators and offices support the project team with community entry, and technical assistance.

MOCI is the public entity responsible for industrialising Liberia's largely agrarian economy and the facilitation of trade of Liberia-made products unto the regional and international markets. The key entity within MOCI, for CASTRAP, is the National Standards Laboratory.

MOFDP is the lead Ministry of WACOMP in Liberia, and Local administration systems including local leaders will be engaged as champions of CASTRAP.



**The National Standards  
Laboratory (NSL)**

The NSL under MOCI is the leading national agency in the development of the National Quality Infrastructure (NQI) that will offer and ensure conformity and quality of service and product delivery. Through partnership with NSL, CASTRAP has commenced activities towards establishing standardization of Liberian-made cassava products.



**Central Agriculture Research  
Institute of Liberia (CARI)**

CARI is the lead agriculture research entity in Liberia that is spearheading research into improved planting materials and cultivars for cassava. As key stakeholders in CASTRAP, they are contributing to the improvement of access to climate-smart practices and planting materials.





**Cooperative Development Agency  
of Liberia (CDA)**

CDA is the lead national agency responsible for organizing farmers and non-farmers into cooperatives. CASTRAP is collaborating with CDA to develop, structure, and consolidate cassava farmer associations and cooperatives.



**National Cassava Sector  
Coordinating Committee (NCSCC)**

The NCSCC comprises all vital players in the cassava sector. The Committee is spearheading work towards a national legislation to ensure that at least 10% of flour used by commercial actors (mainly bakeries) is Liberian-made cassava flour. CASTRAP will collaborate with the NCSCC to develop/adapt an advocacy plan for this intended promotion.

## AT A GLANCE

Donor	European Union
Implementing Organizations	CERATH Development Organization (Lead) Rural Integrated Center for Community Empowerment Conservation Alliance Liberia Center for Enterprise Learning
Target Beneficiaries	Smallholder Farmers/Cooperatives; Agribusinesses and Agri Focused Entrepreneurs; Financial Institutions and Sector Regulatory Agencies (The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry)
Duration	April 2021 – April 2024
Budget	€ 5, 625, 000

## CASTRAP'S CONTRIBUTION TO SGDs



## WACOMP'S COUNTRY INTERVENTION



Benin

**Amount:** €5m  
**Lead Ministry:** Ministry of Finance  
**Implementing Partner:** GLZ  
**Selected Value Chains:** Soya, ICT



Burkina Faso

**Amount:** €7.5m  
**Lead Ministry:** Ministry of Trade, Industry and Handcraft  
**Implementing Partner:** Chamber of Commerce  
**Selected Value Chains:** Honey, Cotton, Renewable energy



Cape Verde

**Amount:** €5m  
**Lead Ministry:** Competitiveness Unit (Office of Prime Minister)  
**Implementing Partner:** UNDP  
**Selected Value Chains:** ICT; Renewable energy, Culture, Tourism & Leisure



Cote D'Ivoire

**Amount:** €9m  
**Lead Ministry:** Ministry of Regional Integration  
**Implementing Partner:** Chamber of Commerce  
**Selected Value Chains:** Tropical fruits; cassava, cashew, textile & garment, rubber & plastics, ICT



The Gambia

**Amount:** €4m  
**Lead Ministry:** Ministry of Trade, Industry and Employment (MOTIE)  
**Implementing Partner:** UNIDO;  
**United Purpose Selected Value Chain:** Onion



Ghana

**Amount:** €9m  
**Lead Ministry:** Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Trade  
**Implementing Partner:** UNIDO  
**Selected Value Chains:** Tropical Fruits; Cassava & Derivatives, Cosmetics and Personal Care products



Guinea

**Amount:** €5m  
**Lead Ministry:** Ministère De L'industrie Et Des Pme  
**Implementing Partner:** UNIDO  
**Selected Value Chain:** Pineapple



Guinea Bissau

**Amount:** €4m  
**Lead Ministry:** Ministère de l'Industrie et des PME, Cellule de Gestion du Fonds européen de Développement (CGFED)  
**Implementing Partner:** UNIDO  
**Selected Value Chain:** Mango



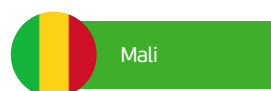
Liberia

**Amount:** €5m  
**Lead Ministry:** Ministry of Finance and Development Planning  
**Implementing Partner:** CERATH Development Organization  
**Selected Value Chains:** Cassava



Mauritania

**Amount:** €4m  
**Lead Implementing Ministry:** Ministère de l'Économie et de l'Industrie (MEI)  
**Selected Value Chains:** Poultry; Skin, Hide & Leather; Gum Arabic



Mali

**Amount:** €5.5m  
**Lead Ministry:** NAO, Ministry of Industrial Development and Investments Promotion, Ministère du Développement Industrie  
**Selected Value Chain:** Tropical Fruits; Cereals



Niger

**Amount:** €5m  
**Lead Ministry:** Ministère des Finances, Ministère du Commerce extérieur et de la Promotion du Secteur privé  
**Implementing Partner:** Ministère du Commerce et de la Promotion du secteur privé (MCPSP)  
**Selected Value Chains:** Skin, Hide & Leather



Nigeria

**Amount:** €10m  
**Lead Ministry:** Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade & Investment  
**Implementing Partner:** GLZ  
**Selected Value Chains:** Ginger; Tomato/Pepper; Textiles & Garments; Skin, Hide & Leather



Senegal

**Amount:** €9m  
**Lead Ministry:** Ministère de l'Économie, des Finances et du Plan, Ministère du Commerce, Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances  
**Implementing Partner:** ITC  
**Selected Value Chains:** Mango; Onion; ICT



Sierra Leone

**Amount:** €5m  
**Lead Ministry:** National Authorising Office, Ministry of Trade  
**Implementing Partner:** UNIDO  
**Selected Value Chains:** Cassava & Derivatives, Cocoa, Palm Oil



Togo

**Amount:** €5m  
**Lead Ministry:** l'industrie Ministère du commerce de l'industrie du développement du secteur privé et de la promotion de la consommation locale  
**Implementing Partner:** GLZ Selected Value Chain: Pineapple



## FUNDING ORGANIZATION & IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS



European Union

CASTRAP is financed by the 11th European Union Development Fund under the West African Competitiveness Programme.



CERATH Development Organization is a non-profit entity focused on catalyzing development within rural and urban poor communities in Africa.



RICCE is a not for profit right based organization working to empower rural communities in Liberia. RICCE emphasize participation in decision making and the sustainable use of natural resources.



CAL is an organization that serves as a catalyst for biodiversity conservation and improved socio-economic conditions of fringe communities. Its vision is to empower communities in Africa to lead in biodiversity conservation and create opportunities for economic growth and improved human well-being.



Center for Enterprise Learning

Ghana is focused on transforming ideas into impactful businesses, and supporting businesses to launch, scale and accelerate. CEL is focused on providing a cocktail of context-based solutions to businesses in Africa particularly within the agricultural and green space.



The West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) aims to support a number of selected value chains at national and regional level to promote structural transformation and better access to regional and international markets, while taking into account social and environmental concerns. The WACOMP consists of one regional and sixteen national components (15 ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania). The West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) is financed under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF).

[www.wacomp.ecowas.int](http://www.wacomp.ecowas.int)

## NATIONAL COMPONENT



WACOMP Liberia targets the cassava value chain in the South Eastern Region. The Cassava Transformation Project (CASTRAP) is the Liberia National component of the WACOMP. The CASTRAP seeks to enhance the competitiveness and regional integration of Liberia's cassava sector through a value chain approach focused on sustain production, value addition, entrepreneurship, and sustainable markets. The project is being implemented in the South Eastern counties of Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Grand Kru, Maryland, and Sinoe.

## DISCLAIMER

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of CERATH Development Organization and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union neither ECOWAS.

## CONTACT

### LIBERIA OFFICE



3rd Floor, KIA Motors' Building,  
Tubman Boulevard, Congo Town,  
Monrovia, Liberia



+231 (0) 777 184 858 / +231 (0) 886 257 528

### GHANA OFFICE (HEADQUARTERS)



No 7 Baiden Avenue Westlands, Accra



+233 (0) 302 949 725 / +233 (0) 200 450 147



@Cerath Development Organisation



[info@cerathdev.org](mailto:info@cerathdev.org)



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