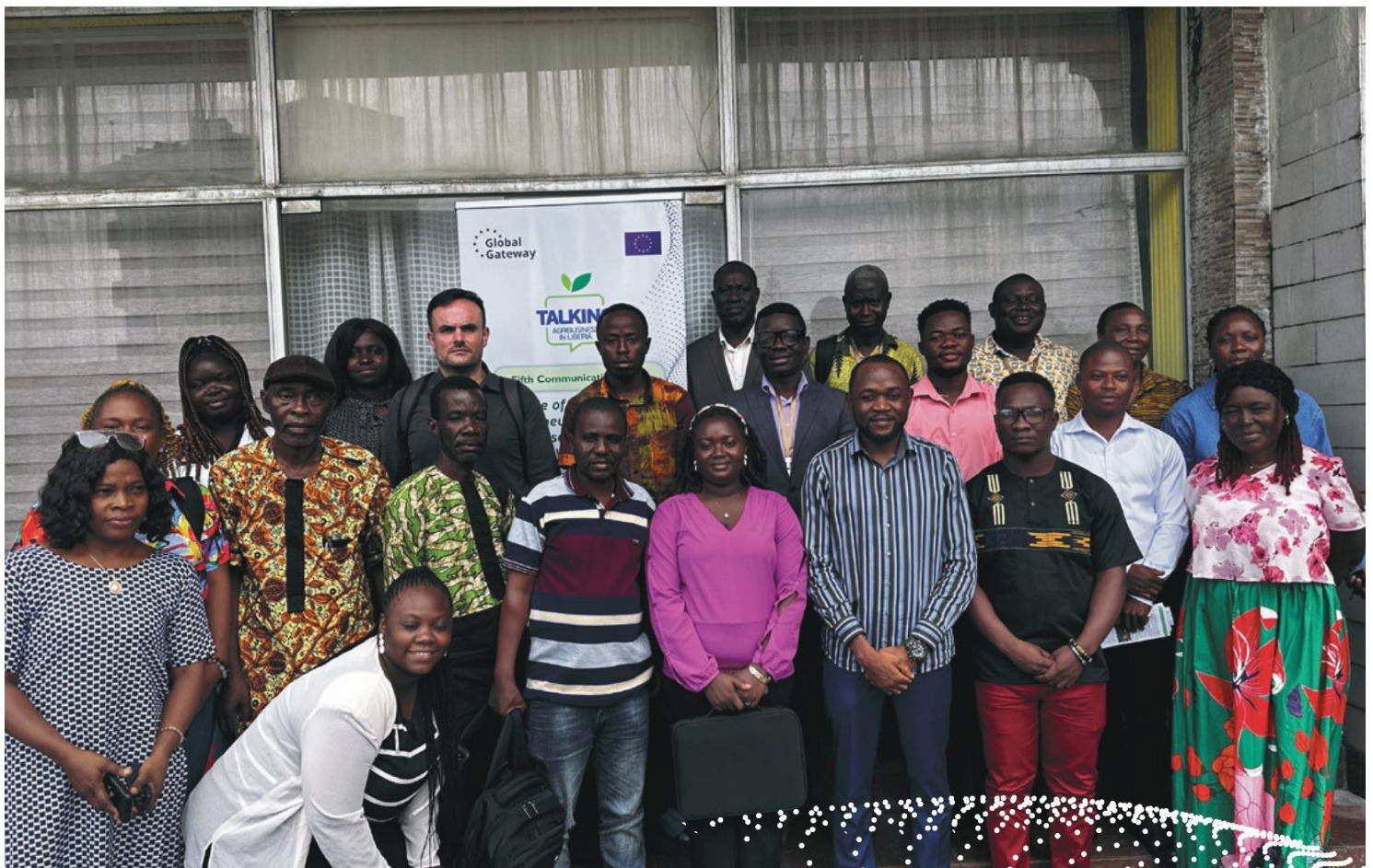


# Talking Agribusiness in Liberia Project

## Output 5: Event Report

The Role of the Private Sector/Entrepreneurs  
in Agricultural Mechanisation in Liberia's Rice  
Value Chain



CERATH Development Organisation

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### **Disclaimer**

This work was implemented under the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project as part of the West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP). WACOMP is financed under the 11th European Development Funds (EDF). The views expressed herein are not to be taken to reflect the official position of EU or ECOWAS.

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. Its overall objective is to strengthen competitiveness of West African countries and enhance their integration into the regional and international trading system. Specifically, the programme will work to: (i) Improve the performance, growth and contribution to industry, regional trade and exports of selected value chains, and (ii) improve the business climate at national and regional levels.

The WACOMP consists of one regional component and sixteen national components (15 ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania)

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### **Cover Photo**

*Participants at the Fifth Communication Event of the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project [Photo Credit: CERATH Development Organisation (CDO)]*

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

CERATH Development Organisation extends profound gratitude to the Almighty for His divine guidance and wisdom in the successful implementation of the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia (TaAL) project. We also extend our heartfelt gratitude to the European Union (EU) for its ongoing funding of the TaAL project under the West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP). Your unwavering support and dedication have been instrumental in advancing our shared vision of transforming Liberia's agricultural sector.

We gratefully acknowledge the Government of Liberia, particularly the Ministries of Agriculture and Commerce and Industry, for their essential contributions, support, and attendance at the communication event. Our gratitude also goes to the National Rice Federation of Liberia and all of the speakers who gave their remarks at the TaAL 5 communication event. We are also grateful to all of the participants of the TaAL 5 communication event for their presence and essential contributions.

We thank all participants who provided valuable information for this research (post-harvest rice actors, rice farmers, service providers and supporters participating in rice value mechanisation). Finally, we want to express our heartfelt appreciation to the research team for their dedicated services. Your collaboration and commitment are the driving forces behind the progress we celebrate today, thank you all.

## **ACRONYM**

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
CASTRAP	Cassava Transformation Project
CDO	CERATH Development Organisation
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EDF	European Development Fund
EU	European Union
LNRDS	Liberia's National Rice Development Strategies
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoCI	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
NADP	National Agriculture Development Plan
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
PPP	Public-Private Partnerships
RETRAP	Rural Economic Transformation Project
TaAL	Talking Agribusiness in Liberia
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Association
WACOMP	West Africa Competitiveness Programme

## BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) through the West Africa Competitiveness Programme (WACOMP) has committed funds for the implementation of the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia (TaAL) project. WACOMP aims to strengthen the competitiveness of West African countries and enhance their integration into the regional and international trading system. It consists of one regional and sixteen national components including Liberia. The Liberia national component, the Cassava Transformation Project (CASTRAP), began in 2021.

The Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project is complementary to and implemented along with CASTRAP. The project is focused on the agri-/food business value chain and seeks to disseminate information and raise awareness in Liberia on:

- i. opportunities for business performance and growth (competitiveness),
- ii. regional (trade) integration of Liberia's agri-/food value chains, and
- iii. an improved environment for agri-/food businesses to thrive in accordance with the objective of the WACOMP.

The implementation team is expected to organise six (6) communication events preceded by respective thematic background research on agribusiness topics validated among stakeholders in Liberia. The events are to create platforms for (1) deliberations by stakeholders on the requirements for the competitiveness of agribusinesses in Liberia, regional (trade) integration of Liberia's agribusinesses, and the role of policies and different actors; and (2) participatory forums for key conversations among vital stakeholders and wider audiences toward raising awareness of the opportunities for growing Liberia's agribusiness sector.

The Fifth Communication Event of the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project aimed to foster dialogue, disseminate knowledge, and promote innovative solutions to the challenges facing Liberia's agricultural sector. This event provided a platform for presenting the TaAL research on "**The Role of the Private Sector/Entrepreneurs in Agricultural Mechanisation in Liberia's Rice Value Chain.**" Additionally, it facilitated discussions on the role of the private sector and entrepreneurs in adopting agricultural mechanisation and their strategic collaboration with the Government of Liberia. The event provided the opportunity to strengthen partnerships by building and reinforcing collaborations among government agencies, private sector entities, and international partners.

There were 35 participants in attendance from government ministries and agencies, development partners, agricultural associations, agribusiness enterprises, and the media (See Appendix B for list of participants).

## PROCEEDINGS FROM THE WORKSHOP

### Program Opening, Welcome Address, and Purpose of Gathering

The welcome address was presented by Leroy N. S. Kanmoh, Country Director for CERATH Development Organisation (CDO) Liberia, who also outlined the purpose of the communication event. He welcomed all participants on behalf of CDO. Leroy N. S. Kanmoh gave a brief overview of the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia (TaAL) project, which is a communication-based initiative aimed at raising public awareness of the potential for business performance and growth, regional trade integration of Liberia's agri-value chain, and a better agribusiness environment. He then introduced the event's theme, which was "The role of the private sector/entrepreneurs in agricultural mechanisation in Liberia's rice value chain."



*Leroy N.S. Kammoh, Country Director- CDO Liberia, delivering a welcome address*

Leroy N. S. Kanmoh noted that the Agricultural Development Plan incorporated the value chain approach into its strategies. He highlighted the importance of the rice value chain in Liberia, as rice is the country's primary food. Mechanisation is useful in the rice value chain, he stated. He believed that in order for the private sector to progress in the rice value chain, they needed to understand their part in the process of how mechanisation may be an effective instrument. He emphasised that the employment of tools such as a cutlass was prevalent across the rice value chain and maintained that mechanisation was critical for Liberia's rice production to become self-sufficient.

Leroy N. S. Kanmoh stated that knowing the opportunities and challenges was critical to make an impact so key stakeholders such as the European Union, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the National Rice Federation of Liberia would be making important



remarks. He emphasised that participants should pay rapt attention to the important element of the research presentation. He concluded by stating that he would be glad to have participants express their opinions, ask questions, and make recommendations to improve the research.

## **Opening Remarks from the EU, Representatives of the Government of Liberia and National Rice Federation of Liberia**

### **Remarks from the European Union**

Ramon Vivanco Mugarra, the European Union (EU) representative, indicated that he was giving the remarks on behalf of the ambassador of the European Union to Liberia. He stated the Fifth Communication Event supported by the EU, focused on the role of private sector entrepreneurs in agricultural mechanisation in Liberia's rice value chain. He informed participants that the private sector, agriculture, and the rice value chain are top priorities for the European Union. In view of that, he stated that the EU would undertake a private sector development program beginning in 2025, with a 25 million Euro contribution. He explained that they intended to have a significant impact on the growth of Liberia's private sector. He went on to explain that the program would address agricultural challenges, particularly the cassava value chain. In parallel, they were conducting and financing various agricultural interventions because it was one of their top objectives, he remarked.

He also stated that the rice value chain is an important priority for the European Union. As a result, he revealed that they had funded a feasibility study to develop and structure the rice value chain in Liberia by collaborating with the European Investment Bank and the French Development Agency. He asserted that they intended to provide a loan to the Liberian government for the development of the rice value chain. Ramon Vivanco Mugarra stated that the research revealed a low mechanisation in the rice value chain. He emphasised the importance of repair and after-sales services for mechanisation.



*Ramon Vivanco Mugarra, EU Representative, delivering his speech at the event*



He stated that the study had created a concept note for a rice mechanisation service business hub that would give services to rice value chain stakeholders. He suggested that the rice mechanised service business hub should adopt a public-private partnership model because Liberia's rice sector had limited access to financing.

Capacity building in terms of repair, maintenance, and the development of curriculum and training materials to create the necessary skills is a big challenge in agriculture mechanisation, he stated. The European Union sponsored a Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centre run by private sector organisations to solve the constraint of poor mechanisation and after-sales servicing and repair. He noted that the program might serve as a model for large-scale development of new talents in repair and after-sales services. He also stated that one option that should be considered further is to establish a company that specialises in importing commonly used machinery spare parts and providing after-sales services. Ramon Vivanco Mugarra concluded by wishing all participants a memorable event.

### **Remarks from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI)**

Andrew Paygar, the deputy minister for industry at MoCI, delivered a statement on behalf of the ministry. He began by thanking CDO for their outstanding efforts in carrying out the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project, which sought to involve important stakeholders in the agribusiness sector. He also conveyed the ministry's gratitude to the European Union for its ongoing support of the Liberian government through various projects and programs. He stated that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) recognised the importance of the private sector in promoting agricultural growth and employment creation in Liberia. Agricultural mechanisation is a key strategy for increasing efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness throughout the value chain, and the private sector played an important role in investing resources and leading the development, production, and



*Andrew Paygar, Deputy Minister for MoCI, delivering an opening remark*

commercialisation of agricultural value chain products, he stated. He did, however, mention that the strategy could not be implemented unless the government created an enabling environment by developing the necessary regulatory framework and infrastructure to support private sector growth, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), in carrying out various activities associated with value chain development.

He added that private sector entrepreneurs faced various limitations in the agricultural value chain, which severely limited the industry's potential to grow and generate chances for equitable economic growth. He identified several limitations, including insufficient technical capacity, restricted access to money, and limited market access. He stated that MoCI was committed to addressing some of the issues raised. He stated that they had identified important targets through the ARREST agenda, such as increasing access to finance for private sector enterprises, providing necessary trade facilitation services, and upgrading the regulatory framework to favourably influence the agricultural value chain. In this regard, he noted that MoCI was actively trying to streamline business processes and create a more conducive climate for SMEs to operate by providing the required assistance and infrastructure. The ministry aimed to empower the agribusiness sector and facilitate the commercialisation of products.

He stated that MoCI aimed for a vision of essential policy tools such as the National Industrial Policy and the National Food Quality Policy to considerably benefit private sector entrepreneurs and boost the adoption of agricultural mechanisation technologies. In terms of recent achievements, he was delighted to announce that the ministry had been working with donors and implementing partners to strengthen the capacity of technical institutions that offered support services required for the private sector to effectively perform its role. He stated that unilateral funding from the European Union would cover a comprehensive refurbishment of the Liberia Standards Authority to improve its ability to carry out its purpose. Finally, he encouraged all participants to have fruitful discussions and share their views throughout the session. He stated that the recommendations and outcomes of the discussions would be extremely useful in guiding future efforts to promote agricultural growth and job creation in Liberia. On behalf of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, he wished all participants a fruitful and productive discussion.

### **Remarks from the National Rice Federation of Liberia**

Mohammed Kamaru, president of the National Rice Federation of Liberia, delivered his remarks on behalf of his federation. He expressed his delight at attending the communication event and seeing colleagues from the rice value chain. He stated that the federation had a number of experiences in terms of strategies in the rice sector, including the pro-poor reduction strategy, the poverty reduction strategy, the pro-poor agriculture agenda, and the rice agenda. In 2022, he indicated that there were collective discussions and meetings in which the federation decided to meet with the Ministry of

Finance and was mandated to develop a mechanisation strategy. Because mechanisation is the way forward for food security in any nation, they drafted a \$15 million budget for five years but did not receive the necessary support.

He stated that the National Rice Federation of Liberia had the responsibility to ensure food security because they were the driving force. He claimed that they had invested heavily in the rice value chain and would require additional support. He stated that the federation had members in all 15 counties and had prepared initiatives to secure rice food security in Liberia. He stated that the only thing preventing them from implementing their plans was financial support. The private sector needed to be supported so that it could take the lead in securing food security. He praised the European Union's



*President of the National Rice Federation of Liberia giving a remark at the event*

efforts to explore the rice mechanisation industry and urged for assistance in putting the findings into action. The government intends to plant rice on more than 50,000 hectares across the country, he said; however, assistance was needed to get this done. He praised the government's efforts to support various initiatives in the rice value chain but called for more assistance to improve the sector.

Mohammed Kamaru stated that when it came to the database of their members, they facilitated the activities of half a million rice producers, processors, aggregators and transporters in the country. They thus carried realistic data to make sure that the quantity of rice that was needed in the country would be provided. He stated that the main issue in the value chain was quality seeds. He ended by thanking the participants for their attention.

### **Remarks from Ministry of Agriculture**

The Ministry of Agriculture's Kollie B. Dogba made a presentation on the ministry's behalf. He began by thanking the organisers for inviting the ministry to participate in the event. He noted that the issue

of the study, the involvement of the private sector in agricultural mechanisation in Liberia's rice value chain, was critical to the paradigm change that the Agricultural Ministry was undertaking. He pointed out that the government published the National Agriculture Development Plan on July 10, which will guide the sector's development over the next five years. He added that the research was consistent with the goal of the National Agricultural Development Plan.

He reiterated that the government of Liberia intended to put on production 50,000 hectares of lowland for irrigated rice production over the next five to six years. He asserted that the involvement of mechanisation in large-scale concession rice production and processing initiatives was in the right direction. He stated that it was not only mechanisation but also the focus on the creation of mechanisation of a production cluster for both production and processing. He defined agricultural mechanisation as incorporating machines and implements/ tools into the agricultural value chain to reduce or eliminate drudgery and labour-intensive tasks to ensure that production levels were enhanced, and livelihood in rural areas were improved. Mechanisation according to him was also a channel to improve women's participation in agriculture and a catch to be able to pool youth into the agricultural value chain for national development. But at the stand of the ministry, he mentioned that mechanisation was expensive and it was difficult for an individual to own a machine.



He mentioned that mechanisation was not new as it had been in for some time. He mentioned that some stakeholders had misused the intent of purpose and failed to decentralise the subsidy on mechanisation given by the government to farmers and farming groups that need those services most. He emphasised that the RETRAP project was about 85 percent with the construction of five mechanisation hubs across the country. He mentioned that the RETRAP project had supported the

construction of about five mechanisation hubs across the country. Those hubs, according to him, would provide storage facilities, workshops, setups, maintenance areas, and some machinery and equipment including tractors, harvesters, threshers, and other equipment. He stated that the main objective of situating mechanisation hubs near production zones was to make sure that farmers got easy access to the services and that in return, farming initiatives were optimised. The mechanisation hubs are expected to be sustainable, with the development of antecedent craftsmanship, breeding grounds for new fabricators, and innovation of agricultural and industrial equipment.

He stated that the Ministry of Agriculture was looking for innovative partners to operate the mechanisation facility, which would provide low-cost services to farmers while also ensuring that it was lucrative enough to be sustainable for the long term. He emphasised that the unique methodology applied not only to rice, but also to the 17 value chains that the MoA concentrated on. According to him, the private sector had an incentive to cooperate with the mechanisation centre because various investment's criteria, such as the SWOT analysis, net present value, and internal rate of return, were all worthwhile. He stated that they intended to provide the best information possible to stimulate investment in the mechanisation centre. He stated that the ministry was open to receiving public feedback in order to improve and implement the National Agriculture Development Plan (NADP).

Finally, he made a scenario utilising an electric circuit. He illustrated that in the circuit, farmers were the generators because they provided rice on which the public relied (farmers understood the importance of standardising rice processing and consequently the need for mechanisation). The wires in the circuit, he said, represented labour, whereas the bulbs represented mechanisation (mechanisation drives farmers). He pointed out that the technicians and private sector workers had to connect the wires and bulbs to the generator for there to be light. He thanked the organisers for the invitation and requested that the findings be shared.

## **PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS**

Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey, Project Lead for the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project, presented the event background research findings on the role of the private sector/entrepreneurs in agricultural mechanisation in Liberia's rice value chain. She explained the research's context in relation to the WACOMP and the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project, which aims to raise awareness of opportunities for competitiveness and regional integration of trade in Liberia's agri-food value chain, as well as to create a better environment for businesses to thrive, in accordance with the WACOMP's goal. She emphasised that the primary objectives of the Talking Agribusiness in Liberia project is to conduct research on six (6) validated agribusiness issues and to plan events to inform stakeholders about study findings and enable stakeholder involvement. According to Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey, the first four event outputs, titled The Status of Youth Engagement in Agribusiness, Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in Liberia-Involvement of Agro MSMEs, Fisherfolk Access to Financial Services in Liberia: A Demand-Side Exploration of Liberia's Agri-/Food Value Chain Financing Space,



and Children's Perspective on The Liberian Food System, had already been completed. The Output 5 topic, The Role of the Private Sector/Entrepreneurs in Agricultural Mechanisation in Liberia's Rice Value Chain, was the topic of discussion.

Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey believed that increased access and effective use of agricultural technologies were necessary to address agricultural productivity concerns and promote agricultural and economic transformation in Liberia. She emphasised that Liberia's National Rice Development Strategies (LNRDS) sought to boost production in smallholder rice farms through a value chain approach that included mechanisation as a strategic component. In keeping with the importance of mechanisation and the value chain approach, she stated that the Liberian government had prioritised mechanisation in the six-year National Agriculture Development Plan (NADP), including the development of mechanisation centres across agroecological zones. She stated that, given the importance that private actors played in facilitating agricultural value chain actors' access to agricultural technologies, the research sought to document their role in the mechanisation of the rice value chain in Liberia.



*Presentation of research findings by the project lead*

She pointed out that the research's goal was to investigate the role of the private sector/entrepreneurs in agricultural mechanisation access and use in Liberia's Nimba and Lofa Counties' rice value chains. She stated that the research objectives were to 1) identify the various agricultural mechanisation technologies employed by various rice value chain actors, and 2) determine how rice value chain actors obtained agricultural mechanisation technology and services. Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey reported that data was collected through focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Stakeholders included farmer cooperatives (12 focus group discussions), Agricultural Mechanisation Distributors,



Marketers, Fabricators, and Service providers (30 key informant interviews), and post-harvest value chain actors (30 key informant interviews), she said. She added that the study took place in Liberia's Lofa and Nimba counties. She emphasised that the counties were purposefully chosen as two of the three counties that made up Liberia's traditional rice farming zone since they had the highest rice production, which was mainly produced in highland areas by smallholder farmers. She stated that Lofa County was the fourth most populous county in Liberia, and Nimba County was the second most populous.

She stated that simple hand tools and engine-powered equipment (machines)/mechanised technologies were employed in various stages along the rice value chain. She added that they used technology such as a cutlass, mattock, axe, hoe, shovel, 'harvesting knife', tarpaulin, spraying can, and stitching needles in their various tasks. She believed that these were utilised in conjunction with motorised equipment or advanced tools such as the tractor, power tiller, irrigation technology, rice mill, thresher, sewing machine, and (tool) sharpening machines by a large number of farmers. She explained that harvesting in Liberia's rice value chain was primarily a manual job carried out using a hand tool and a knife. Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey stated that farmers recognised the benefits of a mechanised value chain and asserted that, while basic tools demanded more energy (effort), machines lessened the drudgery of work, increased productivity and earnings, produced higher-quality rice, and minimised labour difficulties.



***Presentation of research findings by Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey, the project lead***

According to Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey, the rice mill was the most important mechanised equipment in the value chain, while the power tiller was in high demand. She stated that there was evidence of advancements in the mechanisation of the rice value chain, specifically in terms of the sorts of agricultural mechanisation equipment used by value chain players compared to what existed, for

example, in 2019. She did, however, indicate that participants noticed that there was additional important mechanised equipment that would improve the productivity and efficiency of the value chain. She pointed out that there were three main actor blocs via which rice value chain actors, notably farmers who were also processors, had access to mechanised technology in Liberia. She stated that the first was access to mechanised technology through the government of Liberia and development programmes, and the second was the role of private actors/entrepreneurs in agricultural mechanisation in Liberia's rice value chain. She defined the third as a "value-chain situationship" in which value chain actors shared the use of their machinery with other value chain players. She stated that value-chain situationship was the preferred entry path among farmers, both those who had obtained access, frequently through cooperatives and farmer groups, and those who had not benefited.

Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey noted that important actors in the agricultural value chain, such as enterprises, farmer cooperatives, and groups, could obtain free or heavily subsidised technology from donor-funded programs via the government of Liberia and development partners. She added that in the context of access, potential technology users were sometimes needed to submit applications to government agencies, intergovernmental development entities, or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who distributed mechanised technology with the use of screening processes. She stated that it was widely acknowledged that a large number of farmer cooperatives and groups were either unaware of or unable to meet the requirements.

She went on to say that private enterprises frequently had commercial motivations to supply and promote technologies to rice value chain actors, and that their functions played a critical role in value chain actors' access to agricultural mechanisation technology. She noted that through those functions, the private sector, particularly firms involved in technology sales and marketing, played a critical role in guaranteeing the (re)distribution of mechanised technology across the country. She stated that by



*Presentation of research findings by the project lead*

providing services like machine station operation, machinery rental, and machinery repairs/maintenance, private actors ensured that rice value chain actors who would not otherwise access mechanised technology could access and use it.

Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey said that local manufacturers (fabricators) primarily made hand tools and some machinery for primary processing. She said that private actors in repairs and maintenance, such as fabricators, ensured that accessible machinery could be used when it broke down by expanding repair and maintenance services. She stated that repairs and maintenance was an important potential for the creation of viable public-private partnerships (PPPs) in the mechanisation agenda. She stressed that repairs and maintenance could help both agricultural value chain development and the expansion of the private sector in agricultural mechanisation. She stated that value chain actors who had received a specific technology from the government or a donor, or who had fully paid for a technology, could rent it to other value chain players.

She stated that 'renting out' to other value chain actors was viewed as a favour by a value chain actor to his neighbours rather than a business, despite the fact that the user must pay a charge to use those resources. The fee was charged to keep the technology operational. She noted that cooperatives that had not been given access to machinery by donors or the government typically rented from other cooperatives or friends. Cooperatives that owned power tillers leased them to other cooperatives that did not. She stated that access through the government of Liberia and development programmes appeared to be the most typical option for rice farmers in Liberia to obtain mechanised technology. She stated that, despite the availability of all of the access models for agricultural machines, a majority of rice value chain actors lacked access to specific machinery, often across an entire area.

Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey ended by pointing out that various problems, such as poor income, unaffordable equipment, trouble obtaining machine spare parts, and a lack of experience in machine operation, all contributed to agricultural machine inaccessibility. She stated that the provision of service payment through entrepreneurs distributing and directly marketing technology to value chain actors, as well as the 'situationship' access model, had the potential to boost agricultural machinery accessibility in Liberia even though access through the government of Liberia was prevalent.

## **QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND DISCUSSIONS**

To achieve rice self-sufficiency, a participant advised that donors (NGOs and the government) and fund managers (managers and directors of various programs and initiatives) in the rice value chain visit the field to collect accurate data. She emphasised that they should not simply sit in their offices since they would be unable to monitor what others were doing, resulting in the failure to attain their aim



of rice self-sufficiency. She suggested that assisting smallholder farmers could help to minimise the selling price of rice by lowering production costs.



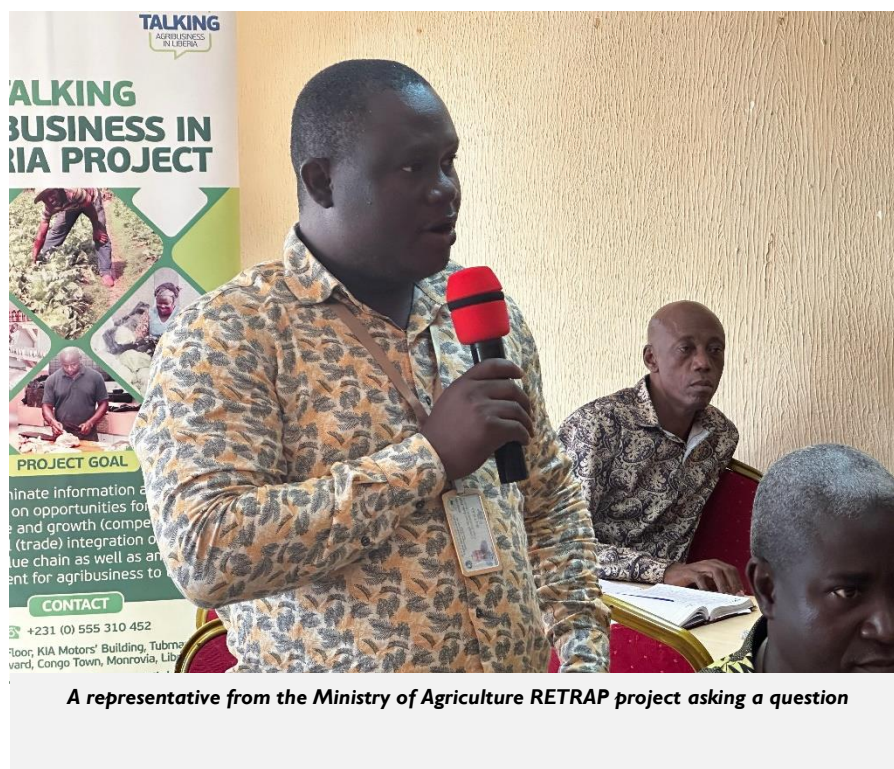
*A Participant of the event giving a suggestion*

A participant recalled working on a project with the Ministry of Agriculture, where they had a service to contract in the rice value chain. From there, he explained that they had organised farmer cooperatives. The co-operatives took on the obligation of cultivating rice in exchange for a service fee to enhance sustainability. He enquired whether the research considered such model. *Maame Kyerewaa stated that the research did not come across the model as specified, but the model served as an entry point for public-private partnership.*



*The project lead addressing a question raised*

Moses G. Solue from the Ministry of Agriculture RETRAP project enquired about how the sample size was determined. He noted that the research was critical to the RETRAP project at the Ministry of Agriculture, which aimed to establish a mechanisation service centre in the country. He enquired as to whether the investigation discovered why there had been slow progress in the use of mechanisation in the country, in order to figure out how to accelerate it. He also enquired about the study's recommendations. *Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey spoke about the sample size, stating that the study used qualitative research using focus group discussions (12 focus group discussions, each with 15 participants) and key informant interviews (60 value chain actors). She stated that the gender composition was 70% female and 30% male. On the topic of delayed mechanisation advancement, she identified infrastructure and electricity as major constraints to progress.*



Nathan N. Zoney from the Ministry of Agriculture RETRAP project asked the cause of the slow progress of mechanisation and how to deal with the slow progress of mechanisation in Liberia. *Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey identified infrastructure and power as major barriers to mechanisation. She emphasised that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) focused on communities with infrastructure and electricity, leaving out those with poor infrastructure. As a result, some communities were unable to receive mechanisation.*





*A representative from the Ministry of Agriculture RETRAP project asking a question*

A participant proposed that the study's recommendations be incorporated into the NADP's implementation strategy, particularly in terms of the stakeholders who have been captured. He stated that the study would assist them in monitoring NADP on a yearly basis, as well as all centres of distribution.



*Kollie B. Dogba, Representative from MoA, giving a suggestion*



Abigail Michaels Abolurin from Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) stated that while certain rice value chain actors are aware of mechanisation projects, others were unaware of them. Also, she claimed that there was virtually a repetition in the work of stakeholders because multiple projects focused on literally the same concepts in the same counties, resulting in duplication of efforts and the inability to reach other groups of people. She suggested stakeholder collaboration in terms of disseminating information about operational districts. *Maame Kyerewaa stated that the last communication event would focus on "contributions of recently concluded agribusiness and food systems related projects."* She believed the research would focus on donor-funded projects, particularly equality of access. She emphasised the importance of effective communication channels. To further strengthen communication channels, she suggested that infrastructure should be in place to enable CSOs to disseminate over multiple communities rather than focusing on one community in particular.



**A Representative from Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) giving a suggestion**

A participant from Concern Worldwide enquired about the function of finance and marketing in rice value chain development, believing that those aspects were critical to value chain development in Liberia. *Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey declared that financing and marketing were key issues in the rice value chain, but this was not the focus of the research. She added that further investigation into such issues would be necessary.*

Fatu Finda Jalloh from Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) added that certain farmers received more equipment than others due to the difficulty of reaching certain localities. She stated that partners disliked visiting hard-to-reach communities, leading to the repeated empowering of the same people. She suggested that projects be directed to rural areas where farmers may have an impact rather than focusing on urban areas. *Maame Kyerewaa stated that the last communication event*

would focus on "contributions of recently completed agribusiness and food systems related projects." She believed the research would focus on donor-funded projects, particularly equality of access. She emphasised that CSO focused on communities with infrastructure and electricity, leaving out others with little infrastructure. This meant that some communities did not have access to mechanisation.

Abel P. Varney from Agro Links Enterprise Inc. enquired about any plans to engage young people. He described how the Ministry of Agriculture distributed tricycles to young people to stimulate their interest in the agricultural value chain while enhancing transportation in rural towns. He enquired about outreach strategies for hard-to-reach communities. He gave an example of a funded project that empowered 500 farmers in 10 communities. He described a case in which 10 cooperatives with 50 farmers formed a group that would have access to VSLA schemes. He concluded by asking if there were any plans to expand the study outside Lofa and Nimba Counties, where the research was conducted. *Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey stated that during the first communication event, "The Status of Youth Engagement in Agribusiness," the then-representative of the Ministry of Agriculture mentioned that the youth would engage in the project about which they were enlightened at the very beginning. Concerned about reaching out to hard-to-reach groups, she emphasised that CSO focused on neighbourhoods with infrastructure and electricity while ignoring communities with little infrastructure. This meant that some communities did not have access to mechanisation. She then advocated for improvements to Liberia's infrastructure, including roads and electricity. Regarding plans for reaching outside Lofa and Nimba Counties, she stated that she would not make any promises at the moment.*

Josephine Francis from Farmers Union Network of Liberia stated that, despite the fact that research had been conducted for the past 20 years, which resulted in increased production, stakeholders needed to come to the table to begin a dialogue for the rice value chain to succeed. She noted that both government ministries (Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Commerce and Trade) and the private sector had a role to play. She stated that the private sector needed to do more to limit imports by enhancing the quality of rice they produced. She advocated for the strengthening of agricultural cooperatives. She stated that, despite donors like USAID and the EU bringing in several machinery into the country, their impact has not been felt. She recalled that in 1977-78, when the government took steps to enhance rice output, Liberia was able to sell rice to Egypt and reduce rice imports by 38%. *Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey called for more collaboration between the private and public sectors.*

A presenter enquired as to what the private sector could do to boost agriculture in addition to what it had already done to provide lessons for other projects such as RETRAP. He also enquired about new ways to encourage young people to become involved in agriculture. He noted that rice sufficiency involved not only giving rice to schools and hospitals, but also reducing rice imports. He noted that,

while certain rice facilities in Liberia were of excellent standard, there was a lack of support, poor quality of local rice due to variety mixing resulting in a poor market, and a disconnect between processors and smallholder farmers. *On the subject of youth engagement, Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey stated that during the first communication event, "The Status of Youth Engagement in Agribusiness," the then-representative of the Ministry of Agriculture mentioned that the youth would participate in the project about which they were informed at the very beginning. Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey stated that the national standard laboratory, which regulates that quality of Gari, a cassava value added product, could support improve the quality of rice produced in Liberia.*



Hemson C. Dorbor from the National Rice Federation of Liberia (NRFL) noted that there were various ways and opportunities accessible in the rice value chain, but the communication route made knowledge transmission challenging. He advised that the National Rice Federation served as the primary mechanism for communicating information about opportunities in the rice value chain. He also stated that because access to machinery was a challenge for rice value chain actors, mechanisation hubs should contain a variety of machines in recommended quantities to avoid shortages when machinery is required. *Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey highlighted the necessity of communication channels.*



***Hemson C. Dorbor from the National Rice Federation of Liberia (NRFL) making a suggestion***

Mohammed Kamaru from National Rice Federation of Liberia (NRFL) stated that the federation was working to address the major issue of rice quality. He added that all of the models described in the presentation were observed in Liberia. He used the example of a mechanisation centre being constructed, which would be fully equipped with previously bought equipment. They were, however, concerned about the centre's sustainability because it would be privately run but value chain actors were unwilling to pay for mechanisation. *Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey noted that the national standard laboratory could help improve and regulate the quality of rice produced in Liberia. Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey concluded by stating that CERATH Development Organisation had all presentation and event reports for the five research conducted on its website for participants to access the required information.*

## **CLOSING REMARKS**

Leroy N. S. Kanmoh, Country Director for CERATH Development Organisation (CDO) Liberia, offered the event's closing remarks. He thanked all of the participants for their valuable feedback and recommendations. He pointed out that their opinions would be used to further improve the research and communication initiative. He stated that the presentation and event report would be publicised and shared with all participants.

## APPENDIX A: PROGRAMME OUTLINE

Time	Main Activity	Responsible Party
8:30 am - 9:00 am	Arrival & Set-up/ Breakfast	CERATH
9:00 am - 9:05 am	Opening Prayer	CERATH
9:05 am - 9:10 am	Welcome Address & Purpose of Gathering	Leroy N. S. Kanmoh, Country Director- CERATH Liberia.
9:10 am - 9:20 am	Opening remarks from the European Union Delegation	Ramon Vivanca Mugarra Representative, EU Delegation to Liberia
9:20 am - 9:30 am	Opening remarks by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry	Hon. Amind Modad, Minister of Commerce and Industry
9:30 am - 9:40 am	Statement by the Ministry of Agriculture	Hon. J. Alexander Nuetah Minister of Agriculture
9:40 am - 10:25 am	Presentation of findings from the research on “The Role of the Private Sector/Entrepreneurs in Agricultural Mechanisation in Liberia’s Rice Value Chain”	Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey, Project Lead
10:25 am - 10:55 am	Questions & Answers	Julius Jeh
10:55 am - 11:00 am	Closing remarks	CERATH
11:00 am - 11:05 am	Closing prayer	CERATH
11:05 am - 11:15 am	Group Photo	All
11:15 am Onwards	Lunch	All



## APPENDIX B: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

No.	Name	Organisation
1	Abel P. Varney	Agro Links Enterprise Inc.
2	Abigail Michaels Abolurin	Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD)
3	Alfred Kollie	Spoon TV/Radio
4	Andrew K. Macgona Sr.	Green Gold Liberia Inc
5	Andrew Paygar	Ministry of Commerce and Industry
6	Anthony N. Williams Jr.	ELBC/ LNTV
7	Caroline Goucoo	OK FM
8	Chris Wonnah	Agro Tech Liberia
9	Ciara Begley	Concern Worldwide
10	Delov Gonsantlo	CARE International
11	Emmanuel F. Broione	NRFL
12	Fatu Finda Jalloh	Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) YEWCED
13	Francis P. Kpandoh	Agro Links Enterprise Inc.
14	Grace M. Lloyd	CERATH Development Organisation (CDO)
15	Hemson C. Dorbor	National Rice Federation of Liberia (NRFL)
16	Joseph N. Kodah Sr.	Kodah Enterprise Inc.
17	Josephine Francis	Farmers Union Network of Liberia
18	Joshua Toteh	Agro Tech Liberia
19	Katherina Hopkins	BASA Development Initiative (BDI)
20	Kebbeh Koilor	Agro Links Enterprise Inc.
21	Kelvin N. Doesieh	World Bank
22	Kollie B. Dogba	Ministry of Agriculture
23	Leroy Kammoh	CERATH Development Organisation (CDO)
24	Maame Kyerewaa Brobbey	CERATH Development Organisation (CDO)
25	Mohammed Kamaru	National Rice Federation of Liberia (NRFL)
26	Moses G. Solue	Rural Economic Transformation Project (RETRAP)/ Ministry of Agriculture (MOA)
27	Nathan N. Zoney	Rural Economic Transformation Project (RETRAP)/ Ministry of Agriculture (MOA)
28	Nelly K. Powell	COSBY International Incorporated
29	Ramon Vivanco Mugarra	European Union

No.	Name	Organisation
30	Tandiwe Mugombi	Welthungerhilfe (WHH)
31	Tarnow N. Jike	Rural Economic Transformation Project (RETRAP)/ Ministry of Agriculture (MOA)
32	Thelma R. Zayzay	CERATH Development Organisation (CDO)
33	Trokon Flahnma	Spoon TV
34	Wegce M. Taylor	Sane's Healthline
35	Yassah J. Kollie	Community of Hope Agriculture Project (CHAP)



## **WACOMP**

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The West Africa Competitiveness Programme 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 component and sixteen national components (15 ECOWAS Member States and Mauritania)

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### **Disclaimer**

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