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Review of the Draft Liberia Agricultural Sector Investment Plan (LASIP II) for 2018 – 2022 with a Focus on Component 4 of the Malabo CAADP Results Framework

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Background and Introduction

Dramatic change has been happening in Africa for at least the past decade. Agricultural transformation in Africa is leading to tangible impacts on economic growth, poverty reduction and reducing under nutrition. Much of the progress can be attributed to the revived focus on agriculture as a driver of inclusive economic growth through the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). The CAADP was initiated through the 2003 Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa (AU 2003), and sought to achieve Millennium Development Goal one (MDG-1) to halve the turn of the century levels of extreme poverty and hunger by 2015.

The main goal of the 2003 CAADP is to help African countries attain higher rates of inclusive economic growth through agriculture, forestry, and fisheries sector-led development that eliminates hunger, reduces poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition and enables the expansion of agricultural exports. Despite some progress, the growth has been unequal and not sufficient to significantly reduce food insecurity, malnutrition, and poverty. What is more, according to a review of progress (AU/NEPAD 2016), it was realized that (i) increased growth was not only dependent on the proportion of income allocated to the agricultural sector; (ii) encouraging private sector investment and growing trade called for a favorable business environment that extended beyond the powers of the ministry of agriculture, and (iii) multi-sectoral intervention and coordination were required to simultaneously remove constraints and barriers to growth and create an enabling environment for transformation.

In 2014, the 23rd AU Assembly adopted the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods.

Key Findings

- The frank self-assessment of the LASIP I recognizes that the LASIP I was not fully implemented and did not have the impact necessary to lift the country out of lingering poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition.
- The August 2017 draft LASIP II recognizes that a myriad of policies and strategies exist but have not been able to address these challenges
- Recent crises have severely affected the implementation of the LASIP I, with the context not very different to prior to 2010.
- It is recommended that the LASIP I be revised to align with the Malabo and SDG 2 commitments and updated to address current changes rather than starting with a new (unfocussed) set of activities
- While the component on food security and nutrition contains some commendable proposed interventions, it is unfocussed and not linked to the other components in ways that will ensure delivery on national, Malabo and SDG 2 targets.
- Much of the LASIP II draft reads as an annual work plan rather than a strategic set of priorities that will focus delivery on important, well-coordinated multi-sectoral actions.
- The governance structures needs strengthening to ensure coordination and delivery.



The enhanced 2014 Malabo Declaration reaffirms the central commitments of the 2003 Maputo Declaration, but shifts away from the single-sector scope of the 2003 Maputo CAADP. This 2014 Malabo focused CAADP approach pays attention to irrigation, mechanization and post-harvest losses and waste, while including areas of infrastructure, natural resources, land tenure, trade and nutrition elements that go beyond the mandate of the Ministry of Agriculture. Rather, the Malabo-aligned country-specific NAIPs provide a prioritized set of strategic agriculture, food security, and nutrition-centered initiatives as part of, and within the framework of, a nation's broader economic and social development agenda.

Since the 2003 Maputo Declaration, the execution of CAADP's evidence-based planning and implementation focus has brought technical credibility to African development processes, both at the continental and country level, instilling greater confidence from public, private, and international investors and leading to more targeted actions. The CAADP process involves (i) stock taking of the current policies and programmes in the country, and (ii) an analysis of the trends with regard to development, whilst (iii) identifying future growth opportunities that will help the country achieve both the CAADP and the nationally defined targets, and then determining the basket of interventions to achieve these. In this way, the second generation (2014+) Malabo aligned NAIPs provide the vehicle to link national development frameworks to multi-sectoral action to:

- i. Further the commitment to the CAADP process;
- ii. Increase investment finance in agriculture, forestry, and fisheries;
- iii. End hunger, improve food security, and reduce malnutrition;
- iv. Eradicate poverty through agriculture;
- v. Increase intra-African trade in agriculture commodities and services;
- vi. Improve resilience to climate variability; and
- vii. Enforce mutual accountability for actions and results.

The Purpose of This Analysis

The Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Security Policy (FSP) seeks to conduct food security policy analysis and provide support to government policy and related reforms. This includes identifying a range of possible improvements with regard to agriculture, food security, and nutrition policies as well as to the design of the CAADP NAIPs. This support is intended to increase the probability that countries will be in a position to

deliver fully on (a) the 2014 AU Malabo Declarations¹ related to food security and nutrition (FSN) related SDG commitments, and (b) key FSN-related international, African, regional and Malawi domestic policy and statutory obligations and commitments.

Within this context, the authors have developed a methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of development planning in terms of the alignment and linkages of (i) international, African and regional commitments and (ii) national transversal development imperatives (including, but not limited to, the country-specific constitution, vision, medium term growth and development strategy, and cross-cutting inter-governmental, financial and development legislation), (iii) the quality of the NAIPs in attaining the Malabo and SDG2 targets related to food security and nutrition and (iv) assessing the gender equality components against commitments.

It is against this framework that the August 2017 second draft of the Liberian Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (LASIP II 2018-2022 (MoA 2017)) was reviewed. This policy brief reports on the findings of the review in order to provide (i) focused inputs into the finalization of the NAIP, (ii) insight and lessons for other countries engaged in the design of their second CAADP NAIPs, and (iii) a framework for the application of the above-mentioned evaluation methodology in Liberia and other countries in Africa. The policy brief is set out in four sections covering four areas: (i) the conceptual framework; (ii) content; (iii) governance and implementation modalities; and (iv) monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Overview of the Draft NAIP for Liberia

The current strategic (long term) vision for the agricultural sector in Liberia is generally to promote a sustainable agricultural transformation agenda through industrialization and agricultural value addition that ensures environmental health, inclusive growth, and job and wealth creation for Liberians. It is asserted that to a large extent, Liberia can achieve its strategic vision when it recognizes the tremendous market and business opportunities that this Economic Community presents and strategically positions itself with the appropriate investments in productive, human, and institutional capacities.

Taking advantage of the four suggested strategic areas identified in the ECOWAS Agricultural Policy

¹ This includes the Malabo Declaration on Nutrition Security for Inclusive Economic Growth and Sustainable Development. <http://www.g20ys.org/upload/auto/f20d5372b44d38f099213d39bad3d251f90369dc.pdf>

(ECOWAP), the second generation of the Liberian Agriculture Sector Investment Plan (LASIP II, 2018-2022) claims to sets out an agricultural transformational agenda for the country, hinged on five (5) broad strategic objectives or investment programs:

- To sustainably and reliably access adequate, nutritious, and needed food for utilization (assumed to mean nutrition) for healthy lives;
- To develop and support competitive value chains and market linkages;
- To strengthen agricultural research and development to enhance sustained productivity growth;
- To adopt agricultural practices that maintain the ecological and biological integrity of natural resources; and
- To improve governance and institutional capacity.

This review will focusses on the adequacy of the draft LASIP II in terms of component 4 of the Malabo CAADP results Framework, namely *ending hunger, improving food security and reducing malnutrition* and the policy, programme and institutional elements required to achieve these targets. It is noted that the August 2017 draft LASIP II is not complete, missing essential elements to complete this analysis, including the governance structure, monitoring and evaluation framework, and performance appraisal sections.

Assessment of the Conceptual Framework

The frank self-assessment of the LASIP I (FAO 2017; MoA 2017) recognises that the LASIP I was not fully implemented and did not have the impact necessary to lift the country out of lingering poverty, food insecurity, and malnutrition. It acknowledges that: “These myriad of policies, strategies, and plans are geared towards contributing to the elimination of hunger and malnutrition, improving food and nutrition security, reducing poverty, and improving the livelihoods and incomes of Liberians. Some progress has been made through the implementation of these policy initiatives. However, a lot remains to be done to consolidate and sustain the gains in the improvement of livelihoods”. Yet, the draft LASIP II does not address these critical shortcomings. Instead, it lacks a clear strategy to overcome these shortcomings in a period of recovery from numerous significant shocks and crises (including the Ebola outbreak).

The LASIP II is commendably contextualized within the ECOWAP and the broader vision of the vision for the Liberian agriculture sector. The strategic elements of the 2010 ECOWAP are listed on page 3 of the draft LASIP,

namely: (i) the promotion of strategic commodities for food security and sovereignty; (ii) promotion of a global environment conducive to agricultural development; and (iii) reduction of food vulnerability and the promotion of sustainable access to food. However, the LASIP II does not go far enough in addressing the second and third elements of the 2010 ECOWAP. These are essential elements for achieving the Malabo commitments.

Liberia has implemented the following policies and strategies to reduce poverty, end hunger and malnutrition, achieve food security and nutrition (SDG2), and provide decent work and economic growth (SDG7), various policies, plans, strategies:

- Statement of Policy Intent for Agriculture of October, 2006;
- Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2007;
- Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS), 2008;
- Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (FSNS), 2008 and 2015;
- Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender Issues in Agricultural Programs and Projects, 2011; and
- Agenda for Transformation (AfT), 2013.

These are supported by:

- National Nutrition Policy, 2009;
- National Health and Social Welfare Policy and Plan, 2011-2021;
- National Health Policy and Plan, 2011;
- Essential Package of Health Services, 2013;
- Essential Package of Social Services, 2014 draft;
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Sector Strategic Plan, 2011-17; and
- Environmental Health annual work plans.

The purpose of the NAIPs is to present a focused set of multi-sectoral priority areas that will simultaneously achieve multiple development goals through agriculture-led growth. The NAIPs are not meant to be agriculture sector plans nor the implementation strategy for agriculture sector plans. They offer an opportunity to align multiple sector strategies in a focussed and prioritised plan of action to get traction for economic growth and national development, ensuring job creation, food security and improved nutrition.

The draft LASIP II lacks a cohesive, focussed executive strategy to overcome the identified challenges and bring convergence to these strategies, driven by a strategically focussed theory of change. It misses the opportunity to bring together the poverty, agriculture, food security and nutrition related strategies that already exist and misses a

strategic opportunity to align with the broader development agenda of the country.

The five broad strategic objectives of the LASIP II broadly align with the three areas of the 2008 Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy (FAPS). The FAPS is an important component in addressing poverty reduction, with agriculture being an important entry point for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. The national development goal (as set out in the Poverty Reduction Strategy of 2008), is: “*Shared, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth and development; food and nutrition security; employment and income; and measurable poverty reduction*” (IMF 2008). This, as well as the FAPS vision aligns with the Malabo commitments, seeking “A revitalized and modernized agriculture sector that is contributing to shared, inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development of Liberia”. However, the LASIP II is not positioned as a strategic plan to further the FAPS and the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (FSNS).

The first purpose of the FAPS is to improve national food and nutrition security by increasing food availability and adequacy from self-reliance production; making food accessible to the population; promoting best practices in food utilization and improved nutrition; contributing to resettlement and reintegration programs; and supporting rural employment and self-reliant wage work to spur local economic development.

The LASIP II seems to ignore the LASIP I (GoRL 2010) and the review recommendations from the review of the LASIP I, presenting a very extensive list of disconnected projects that threaten to stretch an already weak implementation capacity. In view of the multiple disruptions to the implementation of the LASIP I, one wonders why the LASIP II does not simply draw on the LASIP I, updating it to align with the SDGs, the Malabo commitments, the current context and the agricultural transformation agenda of the country that fits neatly with these international and national development agendas.

The Ministry of Agriculture is the custodian of the FAPS, the FSNS and the LASIP. There is considerable overlap in the programmes included in each. Moreover, there is additional duplication of objectives and activities set out in the Liberia Agriculture Transformation Agenda (2017 – 2022). It is unclear how these four strategies relate and a coordination plan is lacking. Such duplication of purpose and implementation is not helpful in the current context of Liberia and a recognition that implementation of the LASIP I was weak and uncoordinated.

There is no indication of evidence-based planning in the draft plan except for the identification of the priority

commodities. These same priorities are the core of the Liberia Agriculture Transformation Agenda (LATA) for transforming Liberia through agriculture, agro-processing and manufacturing (2017 – 2022). The LATA (MoA undated) sadly seems to be developed alongside the LASIP II. Yet, the contents of the draft LATA has significant potential for the LASIP II if integrated as the key strategy to achieve the vision for the agriculture sector, combined with the commendable food security, nutrition and emergency-preparedness elements of the LASIP I. The agricultural transformation focus of the LATA supports current international and continental calls for transformation of the agricultural sector in Africa from a subsistence to prosperous engine of inclusive growth.

A far more focussed, coordinated and strategic action is needed to allow for the concentration of budgets, human capacity and oversight on a plan of action that is guided by a clear theory of change to achieve the Malabo commitments expediently. There is potential for the various activities in the LASIP II to reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition but not enough attention is paid to these elements. The plan remains largely production focussed, missing opportunities for nutrition-sensitive value chain development.

Assessment of the Content and Programmatic Areas

This assessment focuses on component 4 of the CAADP Results Framework and Malabo commitments. For this reason, the assessment will focus on the first strategic objective of the plan.

The first notable problem with this first objective and component is the misalignment of the expected outcomes and the policy instruments proposed. Component 1 on food and nutrition security (should be correctly stated as food security and nutrition as per the name of the national strategy) is to sustainably and reliably access adequate, nutritious and needed food for utilization for healthy lives. The expected outcomes of this component (investment priorities) include:

1. A reliable food and nutrition security information and monitoring system is established and utilized;
2. A system of prevention and management of chronic and acute food insecurity and malnutrition is established and implemented;
3. Productive capacity and incomes of poor and vulnerable farmers improved;
4. Nutrition and food access improved; and
5. Coordination and implementation mechanism enhanced.

However, the plan presents the policy instruments to support this as:

- Tax incentives: tax holidays or reductions for agribusinesses; tax reduction or elimination from imports of agricultural inputs;
- Subsidies: production input subsidies; and
- International trade restriction: possible quotas that limits some specific imports.

These policies do not serve the objectives of component 1 and do not provide a link between existing policy and strategy frameworks.

The list of proposed activities under component 1 is presented in Table 1. The related actions from LASIP I are presented in Table 2. This second list presents a far more focused and strategic approach to addressing Liberia's well-articulated and enduring food insecurity and malnutrition problems.

The establishment of a comprehensive data base for food security and nutrition information was one of the priorities of the LASIP I.

The LASIP II activities are rather vague, presenting a list of actions. The lack of strategic focus is illustrated in action 29 "to provide and expand other social safety nets". How will a target for this activity be set? How will it be budgeted for? The LASIP I programmes are far more focused. They name specific beneficiaries and make a clear contribution to achieving the Maputo targets. Will a little effort to update and align with the Malabo and SDG2 commitments, these same programmes could be the basis for LASIP II.

In fact, the LASIP I programmes tick many boxes in terms of the Malabo commitments, including diversification of production, reduction of the import gap for rice, emergency preparedness, and social safety nets to ensure inclusive development and improve nutrition. It also presents a balanced between short- and long-term solutions to challenges. The proposed programmes commendably focus on malnutrition in all its forms and not only in under-nutrition, although a sub-component does seek to address this problem directly. However, these nutrition-focused programmes are not linked and implemented in a comprehensive way through the other components of the LASIP. It is essential to seek how each sub-component can leverage improvements in nutrition.

Likewise, the attention to land tenure is commendable but the what and how is not detailed. Passing a Land Act does not guarantee increased productivity. More attention to the design of the Act and how it will enhance

productivity is needed. However, the right to food is not addressed in the LASIP. The element of gender is missing. There is mention of women in a few places in the document, but efforts to address gender equity are not included despite the existence of the 2011 Strategy for Mainstreaming Gender Issues in Agricultural Programs and Projects.

Table 1. List of Proposed Activities in Component 1 of the Draft LASIP II

No.	What activities are proposed to bring about change?
1	Establish a FSN information and early warning system
2	Establish food reserves and nutrition response system at the national and county (16) levels.
3	Improve land security system and e-registration of farmers (socioeconomic and farm level farm data)
4	Develop Land Policy, land rights and land authority Act and support enactment into law
5	Undertake land suitability assessments for crops and pasture and produce maps of this
6	Link famers to markets through facilitating take-off contracts and establishing warehouse receipt systems
7	Link actors and appropriate technologies
8	Build warehouses/storage facilities at strategic positions and along the value chains
9	Provide regular market information regarding shortages and surpluses to improve distribution
10	Train and educate producers on good agronomic and animal husbandry practices, extension staff on post-harvest handling and build capacity of producers, agro-processors and traders in post-harvest handling
11	Form research-extension-farmer-processor linkages to help address post-harvest challenges
12	Introduce nursery operations and the capacity to manage these
13	Encourage and support value addition
14	Facilitate linkages to domestic and international markets
15	Facilitate linkages to credit markets
16	Build financial management skills for extension staff and farmers
17	Introduce other non-traditional crops and livestock production activities
18	Encourage off-farm income generating activities, especially for off-seasons
19	Provide farm-level, hygienic local markets
20	Improve agricultural markets and marketing
21	Train women on proper nutrition
22	Improve adult literacy for women and access to education for girls
23	Diversification of food production for nutritional and economic resilience
24	Increase access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene practices
25	Reduce morbidity from common communicable diseases by improving facility and community health services

26	Improve educational opportunities that integrate nutrition, agriculture and food security
27	Expand school feeding to deprived and vulnerable communities
28	Provide targeted food assistance programmes
29	Provide and expand other social safety nets
30	Develop and implement a workable communications strategy

Table 2. List of the Related Component in LASIP 1

No.	What activities are proposed to bring about change?
1	Promote policies toward the reduction of distribution of free food and inputs
2	Start and enhance rice seed production through the private sector
3	Improve production knowledge and skills, planting materials, and other inputs and expand application of integrated plant nutrients and pest management methods aimed at rice, cassava, corn, and vegetables.
4	Develop and implement a special fertilizer distribution and utilization program for poor farmers
5	Encourage diversification in the production and consumption of food crops such as vegetables
6	Improve pre- and post-harvest activities to minimize losses and increase yield.
7	Promote value addition activities in the food crop sub-sector.
8	Promote health programs in coordination with the expansion of lowlands.
9	Complete the development and begin implementation of a multi-sector nutrition strategy and program to complement the pro-poor, agricultural transformation by directing direct nutrition-focused interventions
10	Promote child growth, take essential nutrition actions, save acutely undernourished children, address the food and nutrition needs of those affected by HIV, and improve nutritional caring practices.
11	Promote the local production and consumption of micronutrient-dense food crops (e.g., fruits and vegetables) and animal products, fortify foods with micronutrients as appropriate, enforce food standards, diversify diets, and increase access to safe water, sanitation, and proper housing.
12	Improve emergency preparedness, response, and contingency. Maintain national grain reserves and appropriate humanitarian programs, collect food security information, and conduct regular vulnerability analyses.
13	Support the very poor with productive safety nets such as food- or cash-for-work, vouchers and school feeding.

Without a clear theory of change, outcome and impact indicators and targets as well as an accompanying monitoring and evaluation framework, it is difficult to judge if the proposed plethora of food security and nutrition-related LASIP II activities will achieve the necessary change and impact. Suffice to say that the

activities are not focused and far too broad to provide a strategic plan of action for the NAIP. Many of the listed activities are simply steps in the implementation process and should form part of an annual work plan rather than be presented in the NAIP strategy. Many miss the real issue of how the action or interventions will be carried out. The specific approach to for example strategic reserves, enforcing food standards, promoting dietary diversity and promoting the use of appropriate transportation facilities for efficient handling of agricultural produce to reduce postharvest losses are missing. Mention is made of innovations and technology adoption (page 14) without details of the what and how.

The NAIP should not be seen to replace national programmes but is a tool for focusing attention on priority programmes to drive the transformation and economic growth necessary to achieve development goals. It is therefore not necessary to include all the activities of the agriculture sector in the NAIP. Instead, the NAIP is an opportunity to bring the strategic priorities from agriculture, food security, and nutrition together in a multi-sectoral strategy coordinated by a multi-sectoral institutional arrangement.

Governance and Implementation Modalities

One of the self-reflection comments (page 2) refers to the poor and ineffective collaboration and coordination among project implementing partners and the ineffectiveness of the project management unit (PMU) in harmonizing projects and consistently track results. It is therefore essential that the LASIP II addresses these elements by presenting a sharply focused plan with concise activities that are strongly coordinated at the executive and operational level. No mention is made of (i) the inter-ministerial Food Security and Nutrition Technical Committee (FSNTC) chaired by the Minister of Agriculture that has broad cross-sectoral participation from government and partners, (ii) the Food Security and Nutrition Stakeholders' Forum established through the Food Security and Nutrition Strategy and (iii) the Agricultural Coordination Committee (ACC) comprising technical representatives of stakeholder institutions shall also be established. That provides technical inputs relative to coordination, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the policy and strategy. The FSNTC is meant to play the role of the highest decision-making body in the implementation of the FAPS, providing overall policy direction and guidance for implementing the FAPS. However, the LASIP reports that this committee is dysfunctional.

It is essential that these existing bodies are strengthened and take the leadership for coordination and

accountability of the LASIP rather than creating additional platforms and fora. A project-focused PMU is not ideal. This function should be assigned to a team from the Ministry that reports directly to the FSNTC on a regular basis. This team and function need to be adequately resourced. More attention is needed to set out the executive and operational coordination and accountability structures necessary to deliver on this plan. Clear roles and responsibilities are necessary.

Assessment of the Monitoring and Evaluation Elements

This element of the plan is not able to be fully evaluated, as it has not been elaborated in the August 2017 draft plan. However, the expected impacts presented on page 7 are not impacts at all. These are outcomes. It is essential to translate these expectations into concrete impacts to guide the theory of change development, inform the target setting, and assist in the design of the monitoring and evaluation framework. Ideas for these should be drawn from the CAADP Biennial Review mechanism. This will have a dual benefit of simultaneously delivering on the NAIP and the Biennial review targets.

Conclusions and Recommendations

While the draft LASIP II contains a number of commendable elements, it fails to address the issues identified from the self-reflection of the weaknesses and failings of the LASIP I. A critical reflection is needed in the finalization of the NAIP to avoid trying to replace the functions of the Ministry of Agriculture with this plan, but it is essential to identify the most crucial key priorities that would help the country address the enduring food insecurity and malnutrition problems that persist post the LASIP I. It is strongly recommended that the LASIP I should be the basis for the LASIP II rather than starting over with a new plan. Updating and aligning the LASIP I would allow a more strategic focus and continuity for more rapid progress towards the national, Malabo and SDG goals.

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