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WORKING PAPER

Coalition Building in the Liberian Cocoa and Rice Sectors

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Case study commissioned by the Food System Economics Commission

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ACRYNOMS

Acronym	Word/Phrase
CARI	Central Agricultural Research Institute
CBI	Centre for the Promotion of Imports
CDA	Cooperative Development Agency
CI	Conservation International
DMDI	Diaconia Microfinance Deposit-taking Institution Inc.
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAOSTAT	Food and Agriculture Organization Corporate Statistical Database
FBOs	Farmer Based Organizations
FDA	Forestry Development Authority
FSEC	Food System Economics Commission
GAPs	Good Agricultural Practices
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoL	Government of Liberia
ICCO	International Cocoa Organization
IFC	International Finance Corporation
LACRA	Liberia Agricultural Commodity Regulatory Authority
LADA	Liberia Agribusiness Activity
LASIP	Liberia Agricultural Strategic Investment Program
LATA	Liberia Agricultural Transformation Agenda
LBC	License Buying Company
LCC	Liberia Cocoa Corporation
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoCI	Ministry of Commerce
NC3P	National Cocoa Public Private Partnership Platform
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NIC	National Investment Commission
NSL	National Standards Laboratory
PPP	Public Private Partnership
SDI	Sustainable Development Institute
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
IDH	Sustainable Trade Initiative
TA	Technical Assistance
UN	United Nations



UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WCF	World Cocoa Foundation



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Liberia envisions economic transformation, wealth creation, food security, and poverty reduction through sustainable growth in its agriculture sector. Smallholder agriculture, the primary economic activity, ensures food and nutritional security for citizens. However, achieving these goals necessitates improved multi-stakeholder coordination and a strategic action plan. Liberia's National Cocoa Public Private Partnership Platform (NC3P platform) was established to address these challenges within the cocoa value chain.

The NC3P cocoa sector platform, a multi-actor coalition, aims to guide the design and implementation of development and private sector interventions in Liberia's cocoa sector. Developed by IDH, the Sustainable Trade Initiative, it was a key objective of the Liberia Cocoa Improvement Programme (LICSIP) project. Solidaridad implemented the project with funding from the European Union (EU). While LICSIP funding has ended, the platform's steering committee seeks additional funding to sustain operational costs.

The NC3P platform uses a participatory and inclusive approach to develop a national cocoa sector development strategy roadmap and support its coordination and monitoring. In interviews, approximately 25 NC3P platform members¹ cited various reasons for joining, such as accessing sector information, contributing to the shared cocoa sector strategy, and aligning organizational activities with the national vision. They also aimed to participate in the coalition supporting the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and Liberia Agricultural Commodity Regulatory Authority (LACRA) in implementing the strategy.

Although the NC3P platform has recently initiated its strategy's implementation, it has already helped members achieve several objectives, including better coordination and alignment with sector needs. However, complete participation in supervising strategy implementation remains pending due to funding challenges. Notably, the platform played an unanticipated role in preventing sector nationalization, ensuring competitiveness, and facilitating open communication among sector actors.

Preventing sector nationalization was vital as it could hinder pro-poor and environmentally sustainable goals, reducing farmers' income and discouraging investments. The platform's actions

¹ For this study 35 actors and stakeholders were interviewed. 25 individuals belonged to organizations that were platform members and 10 belonged to non- member organizations.



aligned with the principles of good governance, fostering sector development and government revenue. Lessons from the platform's experience are valuable for achieving the Food Systems and Environment Commission's objectives by promoting inclusive, sustainable, and healthy food systems.

Interviewed participants widely agreed that a platform approach could benefit other agricultural value chains in Liberia, particularly the rice sector. Learning from the NC3P platform, the proposed Liberia Rice Sector Platform (LRSP) could boost productivity, inclusivity, and environmental sustainability. This approach could enhance economic opportunities and competitiveness across various sectors, countering monopolization or nationalization tendencies.



INTRODUCTION

The Food System Economics Commission² (FSEC) has commissioned the development of this case study on Liberia's National Cocoa Public-Private Partnership Platform (NC3P platform) as part of its effort to gain a deeper understanding of the political economy surrounding coalition-building initiatives within the agricultural sector. This case study aims to analyze the NC3P platform in Liberia, utilizing it as an exemplar of successful coalition building among various actors and stakeholders within the country's cocoa sector. The study's primary objectives include the identification and documentation of lessons derived from the triumphs of coalition building within the NC3P platform. Furthermore, it intends to evaluate the significance of coalition building among stakeholders aspiring to revolutionize specific sectors of Liberia's food system, all while assessing the beneficiaries and potential drawbacks in terms of environmental sustainability and profitability. This investigation culminates in an overarching view of Liberia's food system and offers recommendations on how analogous coalition-building approaches can mitigate constraints and challenges present in other agricultural domains.

The study adhered to a comprehensive three-phase methodology spanning four months. The methodology encompassed the subsequent steps:

1. Preliminary desk research
2. Establishment of an outline and interview framework
3. Execution of interviews, involving the collection of data from key members and observers of the NC3P platform. This entailed conducting 20 individual interviews in Monrovia.
4. On-site visits to rural locales outside Monrovia to engage in 15 face-to-face interviews with stakeholders situated in the field.
5. Compilation of a succinct summary report
6. Presentation of the study's findings

This report is structured into four distinct sections. Commencing with an introductory segment, the first section furnishes a concise overview of Liberia's food system and the intricate cocoa value chain within the nation. The second section subsequently provides a detailed elucidation of Liberia's National Public-Private Partnership Platform (NC3P platform). Transitioning to the third section, an exposition of outcomes from a swift questionnaire survey study is presented, focusing on the

² The Food System Economics Commission (FSEC) is an independent academic commission set up to equip political and economic decision-makers with tools and evidence to transform food and land use systems. Convened by EAT, PIK, and FOLU, the FSEC builds on the vanguard of integrated assessment modelling and evidence-based policy design to study and synthesize knowledge on the inclusion, health, and environmental dimensions of the transformation of food systems. The Commission's overarching objective is to further the transition to healthy, inclusive, and sustainable food systems by providing a comprehensive assessment of the economics of current food systems, their unaccounted costs (defined as environmental, dietary health and social costs) and the distributional impacts of the transition; and by rigorously assessing evidence and providing new tools to support policy design. A key theme of the FSEC work on political economy is the importance of coalition building among stakeholders. To understand the political economy of coalition building, FSEC commissioned this, and other case studies related to the food system.



assimilation of insights into coalition building from the NC3P platform. Concluding the report, the fourth section extrapolates the applicability of the accrued insights to different agricultural sectors within Liberia.



Figure 1: Picture of a cocoa tree on a smallholder's cocoa farm outside of Gbarnga

OVERVIEW OF LIBERIA'S FOOD SYSTEM & COCOA SECTOR

Liberia's aspirations for economic transformation, wealth generation, food security, and poverty reduction hinge upon the development of its agricultural sector. The cornerstone of Liberia's economic activity lies in smallholder agriculture, a pivotal contributor to both food security and nutritional well-being, with simultaneous ramifications for the environment. The nation is endowed with extensive tracts of fertile land, a favorable tropical climate, accessible coastal regions, valuable mineral resources, untouched rainforests, and copious rainfall. These attributes collectively create a substantial potential for a marked expansion of the agricultural output. Moreover, Liberia possesses well-defined prospects for value addition, enabling the creation of refined goods within key sectors such as rubber, rice, cassava, vegetables, cocoa, and fisheries. Realizing this potential would not only foster further comprehensive economic growth but also amplify nutritional advancements within the country's food system.

Liberia has a population of 4.8 million people with more than 70% of its population, below the age of 35 (FAO, n.d.), thus, providing a potentially strong labor force. The economy depends significantly on agricultural, fisheries, and forest product exports. Agricultural production is however dominated by smallholder production, with women contributing to more than 50% of the labor force, in Liberia's agricultural sector (FAO, n.d.).



Table 1: Liberia Food Systems Facts

Geography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land area 96,320 km² (LISGIS, 2011) • Water area 15,049 km² (LISGIS, 2011) • Annual rainfall averages from 3,810 mm to 4,320 mm along the coast (LISGIS, 2011) • Presently it is estimated that Liberia’s Forest area is 69% of total land area (FAO, n.d.) • As of 2000, 96% of Liberia was natural forest cover (Source: Global Forest Watch) • From 2001 to 2019, the main driver of annual deforestation was shifting agriculture (Source: Global Forest Watch) • From 2002 to 2020, the total area of humid primary forest in Liberia decreased by 5.9% (Source: Global Forest Watch)
Demography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total Population 4.8 million (LISGIS, 2011) • Urban population (% of total population): 48% (LISGIS, 2016) • Rural population (% of total population) 52% (LISGIS, 2016) • Population growth rate 2.43% (LISGIS, 2011)
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GDP: USD 2.5 billion (FAO, n.d.) • GDP per capita (current 20xx USD): 2,097 (FAO, n.d.) • Gini Index: 0.320 (FAO, n.d.) • Poverty head count ratio at national poverty lines (51%) (LISGIS, 2016) • Vulnerable and informal employment rates 74.2% and 67.9% nationally. (LISGIS, 2016) • Employment in agriculture 45.81% (LISGIS, 2011)
Food and Nutrition Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food Consumer Price Index 225.9 (FAOSTAT, 2016) • Stunting children under 5 years 30% (FAOSTAT, 2016) • Prevalence of under-nourishment 37.5% (FAOSTAT, 2016) • Prevalence of obesity in adults 18 years and above 14.2% (FAOSTAT, 2016)
Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average area of rice (staple) cultivated 0.85 ha: average yield of 1.26 MT/HA (LISGIS, 2011) • Value added per worker in agriculture, forestry, and fishing 1,023 (FAOSTAT, 2016)

Identified Issues within Liberia’s Food System

Liberia is faced with key sustainability issues such as:

- Limited staple food production
- Low adoption of sustainable and resilient production practices



- Poor dietary diversity and food insecurity
- Limited private sector and youth involvement in the food and cash crop value chain

In terms of staple food products and production inputs, Liberia is heavily import dependent. The nation's import dependency strongly impacts its key economic variables including and especially that of foreign exchange, prices & inflation rates. This makes Liberia's population vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition risks, which increases during times of global food price spikes, such as the COVID 19 global pandemic.

Food availability, accessibility, and utilization continue to be major challenges in Liberia, due to high poverty rates, low production, and low productivity (FAO, n.d.). The key drivers of Liberia's low domestic production of staple food crops are:

- High levels of poverty
- Production constraints: lack of finance, inputs, and extension services
- Low productivity
- Lack of basic infrastructure: roads, electricity, transportation, price information dissemination systems
- Inadequate agricultural policy & regulation frameworks
- Growing urbanization
- Underdeveloped value chains with weak actor linkages

Improving the sustainability of Liberia's food system will require improved coalition building, multi-stakeholder coordination & planning, coordinated implementation of a shared strategic development action plan, that seeks to enhance the commercialization of Liberia's agricultural sector. Such a strategic development plan will greatly support the Liberian economy to not only sustainably grow its agricultural sector, but also to become more resilient and respond to the growing domestic food and livelihood demands, adjusting to key global technology and climate change shifts.

Presently, Liberia's agricultural cash crops are rubber, oil palm and cocoa. Rubber is its most important cash crop accounting for 17.5% of Liberia's foreign exchange earnings (Nguri et al., 2020). Rubber, however, is largely a plantation crop and the sector is dominated by multinational rubber plantations, such as the Firestone Rubber Plantation. Among Liberia's top three cash crops, cocoa holds the most potential to deliver inclusive growth, because of its inclusion of Liberian smallholder farmers within its supply chain.

Importance of sustainably growing Liberia's Cocoa Sector

Liberia's cocoa sector is composed of smallholder owned cocoa farms. These smallholder cocoa farms are usually anywhere from 1 to 3 hectares. Prior to Liberia's civil conflict³ in the 1970s and

³ Liberia has faced two civil wars from which it is rebuilding; the first was from 1989 to 1997 and the second from 1999 to 2003. During the wars many fields were abandoned and some crops, such as coffee have not recovered.



early 1980s, Liberia's cocoa sector was steadily growing, despite its exports being nationalized and a monopoly. It had only one agricultural commodities marketing body which was owned by the Government of Liberia (GoL); the name of the body was the Liberian Produce Marketing Corporation (LPMC). LPMC was the sole body that managed all of Liberia's export sales of cocoa beans to foreign cocoa buying firms, including European and American based Chocolate producers and Cocoa Processors.

Liberia's main cocoa belt regions are the following counties: Nimba, Lofa and Bong. Its secondary cocoa growing areas are Cape Mount, Bomi, Gbarpolu, River Gee and Grand Gedeh. It is estimated that there are 30,000 smallholder cocoa farmers in Liberia. However, many think this estimate is conservative. But there has not been a comprehensive definitive survey on this issue to date. On average, Liberia smallholder cocoa farms yield 200 kg of cocoa per hectare. It is estimated that 30% of cocoa exported from Liberia is procured from neighboring countries, like Cote D'Ivoire. Farmers receive 32% while traders receive 60% of the cocoa value. Of people employed in Liberia's agriculture sector 12.6% of them are employed in Liberia's cocoa sector. (MOA LATA, 2016)

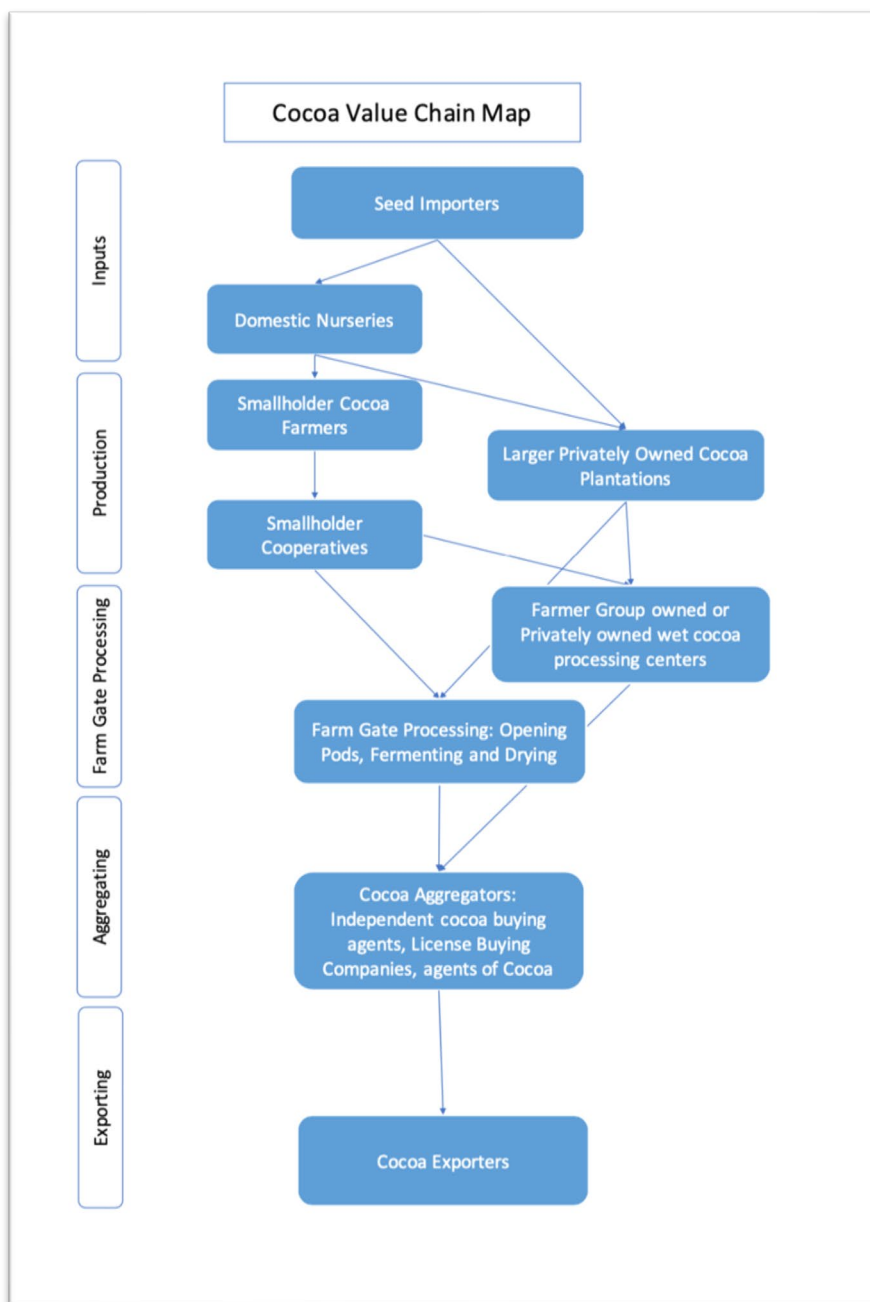


Figure 2: Map of Liberia's Cocoa Value Chain Actors

Figure 2 shows the high-level summary of Liberia's cocoa value chain. It outlines several key actors within the value chain: domestic nursery service providers (usually NGO and development project supported enterprises) smallholder farmers, cocoa aggregators (cooperatives and independent cocoa traders or buying agents), and cocoa exporting companies. The following key actors are not included in the map:



1. government entities, Liberia Agricultural Commodity Regulatory Authority (LACRA), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), Forestry Development Authority (FDA), Ministry of Commerce (MoCI), Central Agriculture Research Institute (CARI), National Standards Laboratory, that regulate and set the policies and the regulatory framework of the sector and
2. coordination bodies: such as the NC3P Cocoa Sector Platform and Cocoa Technical Working Group

There are numerous opportunities and significant constraints for the cocoa sector to deliver inclusive growth in Liberia; these are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Table of Liberia Cocoa Value Chain's Strengths & Opportunities and Constraints & Risks

Cocoa Value Chain's Strengths & Opportunities
Favorable worldwide supply-demand dynamic
Forecasted positive increase in market demand and trading prices, with the potential impending global shortage of cocoa
Liberia possesses the ideal climate and soil for cocoa production
Vast untapped lands
Regional cocoa growing culture with high level human resources expertise in neighboring Ivory Coast and Ghana
Cocoa Value Chain's Constraints & Risks
Lack of quality cocoa seeds and nurseries
Lack of domestic price transparency
Lack of regulation and oversight, that protects smallholder farmers and ensures that they receive a fair price for their cocoa pods
Absence of technical farming capability
Long maturity period of cocoa tree - lasting 3 - 5 years (optimal)
Unstable supply of steady buyers due prevalence of one-time buyers who overpay and disrupt a stable contract purchase/sale system
Only basic cocoa processing capability (fermenting and drying)
Minimal access to finance, especially with loan products designed to serve the cocoa sector, with elongated periods (3 - 5 years) between planting and harvest - i.e. without cash flow

Source: (Kazadi & Ryan, 2016)

The challenge of coordination in Liberia's Cocoa Sector and other Food System sectors
 Both Liberia's food system sectors and its cocoa industry have faced considerable challenges in coordinating their sector development interventions over the past two decades following the civil conflict. During the Ellen John Sirleaf administration, numerous agricultural sector development strategy papers were commissioned and authored. These strategies were funded by donors and development projects and typically entrusted to international consultants. These consultants would commence the process by conducting desk research before arriving in the country for brief



interactions with sector actors and stakeholders. Subsequently, they would return to their home countries to finalize the development strategy documents. However, this process often led to the production of development strategy documents characterized by the following shortcomings:

- **Lack of Original Thought:** Many of these papers merely replicated ideas from sector development activities in other countries, lacking originality.
- **Limited Understanding of Local Context:** The strategies often failed to demonstrate a deep understanding of the local context within Liberia.
- **Minimal Involvement of Field-based Actors:** Due to constraints in travel, international consultants frequently neglected to engage with crucial field-based actors and stakeholders such as smallholder producer groups and rural entities.
- **Lack of Buy-in from Liberian Stakeholders:** Most significantly, the proposed strategies did not secure the support and buy-in of Liberian sector actors and stakeholders.

Consequently, a majority of these sector development strategy papers, once drafted, encountered barriers to implementation. In many instances, they did not progress to the stage where implementation designs were discussed within sector-specific convening bodies.

Around 2016, during the latter part of the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf administration, various ministries of the Liberian government, with support from the Tony Blair Foundation, initiated efforts to enhance collaboration among sector actors and stakeholders. This was achieved through the establishment of Sectoral Technical Working Groups. These groups had a dual mandate:

- **Regular Information Sharing:** Providing sector actors and stakeholders with recurrent, usually monthly, opportunities to assemble and exchange information concerning activities and concerns within their respective sectors.
- **Collaborative Issue Resolution:** Offering a platform for actors and stakeholders to convene and collaboratively address critical issues impacting their organizations and businesses.

This marked a significant shift towards a more inclusive and participatory approach to sector development, aiming to overcome the limitations observed in the earlier strategies.



These Sectoral Technical Working Groups were started in multiple agricultural sectors:

Sector	Entities that Led Coalition Building Interventions	Outcomes
Cocoa	AGI, ACDI VOCA, USAID CNFA LADA, MOA	Cocoa Sector Platform built on this pre-existing structure
Cassava	AGI, Cassava Producers Association	N/A
Rice	USAID CNFA LADA	Was used to collect input to design USAID CNFA LADA's initial intervention strategy within Liberia's rice value chain
Fisheries	AGI, USAID CNFA LADA	N/A
Vegetables	USAID CNFA LADA	Was used to collect input to design USAID CNFA LADA's initial intervention strategy within Liberia's vegetables and agro inputs value chain
Oil Palm	AGI, UNDP	UNDP's Oil Palm Platform built on the Oil Palm Technical Working Group's pre-existing structure

The Cocoa and Oil Palm Technical Working Groups were the longest lasting and most consistently convened. The Cocoa Technical Working Group was still functioning when the NC3P platform was launched.



History of coalition building within Liberia's Cocoa Sector

During questionnaire interviews, many cocoa sector actors and stakeholders were critical of the Cocoa Technical Working Group's approach. They said that the Cocoa Technical Working Group:

- Lacked a clear vision for the sector
- Lacked clear targets and clearly identified desired outcomes
- Lacked structure: it did not follow a clear and mapped process
- Lacked a clear plan to ensure alignment and full coordination of its members

Origin Story and An Overview of the NC3P Platform

The NC3P platform is a multi-actor coalition that seeks to assist and guide the design and implementation of development interventions within Liberia's cocoa sector. The goal of the NC3P platform is to improve alignment & coordination of the cocoa sector actors' activities, supporting the creation of a more sustainable and inclusive Liberian cocoa industry.

The NC3P platform activity was developed by IDH⁴, the Sustainable Trade Initiative. It was one of the Strategic Objectives of the Liberia Cocoa Improvement Programme (LICSIP) project, which was implemented by Solidaridad, with key funding from the European Union (EU). The platform intervention started at the beginning of 2019 and the platform itself is still ongoing, although its funding under the LICSIP project has ended. Currently, the NC3P platform's steering committee is seeking additional funding to fund the cost of the platform's Secretariat and to fund the regular platform steering committee, plenary, and technical committee meetings. The formal implementation of the platform's developed sector strategy roadmap has just recently officially started with a launch event held in December 2021.

The process of designing and launching the NC3P platform

The following seven steps process was used to design, launch, and manage the NC3P platform:

- Step 1: Identify and engage existing stakeholders and come to a shared vision
- Step 2: Development and signing of the letter of intent document
- Step 3: Formation of NC3P platform
- Step 4: Development (drafting) of the Liberia sector development strategy roadmap document
- Step 5: Agree and have the NC3P platform's steering committee ratify the developed Liberia sector development strategy roadmap
- Step 6: Platform members and observers begin to implement identified activities in the Liberia sector development strategy roadmap
- Step 7: Consistently have regular NC3P platform steering committee and plenary meetings, to monitor implementation of the Liberia sector development strategy roadmap

⁴ "IDH, The Sustainable Trade Initiative is an organization (Foundation) that works with businesses, financiers, governments, and civil society to realize sustainable trade in global value chains. IDH believes in action-driven coalitions will drive impact on the Sustainable Development Goals and create value for all." (Source: <https://www.idhsustainabletrade.com/about-idh/>)



This process was delayed due to two unexpected events: a) an unexpected attempt by key actors to nationalize⁵ Liberia's cocoa sector a few months after the start of the platform develop activities in the middle of 2019 and b) the outbreak of the global COVID 19 pandemic.

Platform's mandate

The NC3P platform was established with a mandate to employ a participatory and inclusive approach in the development, coordination, and monitoring of a sector roadmap strategy. This approach was chosen to ensure comprehensive engagement and support from sector actors and stakeholders. The originally envisioned roles and responsibilities of the NC3P platform encompassed:

- **Facilitating Information Sharing:** One of the primary goals was to encourage the exchange of information among sector actors and stakeholders.
- **Enhancing Alignment:** This involved achieving better alignment among sector actors and stakeholders, leading to various positive outcomes, such as an increase in convened meetings and dialogue sessions between them, as well as improved communication among donors and other participants.
- **Offering Implementation Guidance:** The platform aimed to provide implementation guidance to sector actors and stakeholders seeking sustainable business growth or successful interventions. For instance, if a new development project aimed to intervene in Liberia's cocoa sector, it could utilize the cocoa sector platform as a resource. The project could seek advice from the platform regarding areas in the cocoa value chain that require additional intervention support and request recommendations on potential entry points.
- **Supporting Policy and Regulation Development:** The platform was designed to assist in the formulation of more appropriate policies and regulations for the sector.
- **Enabling Accountability:** Another key function was to empower the platform to hold sector actors and stakeholders accountable for their commitments.

The activities of the NC3P platform commenced on April 11, 2019, with a Consultative Workshop held at the Corona Hotel in Monrovia, Liberia. This workshop was attended by all key sector actors and stakeholders, who were invited to collectively shape a shared vision for the sector. The workshop aimed to lay the foundation for collaborative efforts and a united direction moving forward.

⁵ What nationalization means in this context:

Key leaders within the Government of Liberia both Lawmakers and appointed government representatives, crafted a draft regulatory document that proposed to give LACRA the power to both become the sole marketing entity for Liberian cocoa and have the right to commercially license out (outsource) this role to a third party. Therefore, if this newly proposed regulation were to be implemented LACRA could license out this sole marketing role to a private foreign company at agreed upon commercial terms and said company would be the sole exporter of Liberian cocoa.



The shared vision that was developed and finalized by the NC3P platform members and observers is as follows:

“A sustainable and economically viable cocoa sector, that brands Liberia as a source of high-quality, environmentally friendly, and ethically introduced cocoa beans & cocoa related products. Targeting that Liberia's cocoa sector will become a 100% sustainable cocoa producer by 2030”

Operation of the Platform

The activities defined in the NC3P platform’s sector development strategy roadmap is implemented by platform members and supervised by a governance structure made up of bodies four (4) bodies: the Steering Committee SC, the General Assembly GA (also referred to as the plenary), the Technical Committees TCs and the Secretariat, which are detailed below. The NC3P’s platform’s sector development strategy roadmap was formally launched in December 2021.

Table 3: Initial Proposed NC3P Cocoa Sector Platform's Governance Structure

Liberia Cocoa Public Private Partnership Platform (NC3P - Cocoa Sector Platform)	
Secretariat	National Steering Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Structure: MOA is the Chair of the steering committee, CARI and LACRA are the Co-chairs, 1 elected Private Sector representative, 1 elected producer group representative, 1 elected financial institution representative, and 1 elected CSO/NGO representative</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Elections are held at the start of every year for non Chair and co-chair representative positions</i>• <i>The Steering Committee meets once a quarter: end of every quarter</i>• <i>Role: Responsible for the management of the platform, developing the Green Forest Friendly Cocoa Roadmap, & are accountable for progress of the roadmap commitments.</i>
	General Assembly Body (Plenary) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The Plenary convenes twice a quarter: start and end of every quarter</i>• <i>Role: The Plenary is responsible for: coordinating & monitoring the roadmap implementation, and holding annual elections for non chair & co-chair representative positions for the steering committee.</i>
	National Technical Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Role of Technical Committees:</i><ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Brainstorm: To brainstorm and recommend to the Cocoa Sector Platform's Steering Committee (management body) roadmap commitments (interventions) that will help achieve the shared national cocoa sector vision</i>• <i>Advisory: To support the Cocoa Sector Platform by supporting stakeholders in achieving a swift and smooth implementation of the roadmap commitments</i><i>The technical committees are divided by thematic areas and convene as needed throughout the year.</i>

The Steering Committee is the ultimate decision-making body for the roadmap and consists of high-level representatives from public, private, and civil society organizations. Representatives are at the Minister level (government) and country director level (companies and organizations having signed the Letter of Intent). Steering Committee members meet once a quarter.

Mandate:

All members of the Steering Committee hold themselves and each other accountable for the implementation of the NC3P’s cocoa sector development roadmap and as such, have the mandate to review, amend and approve all strategic decisions of the roadmap.



Specifically, they are responsible for:

- Validating the proposals made by the Technical Committees
- Ensuring that the Technical Committee's proposals are implemented within the timeframes specified in the cocoa sector development roadmap
- Leveraging the findings from the roadmap to inform relevant national policies and action plans

The Technical Committees (5) have the mandate to provide guidance and recommendations to the Steering Committee on the design of strategies, policies and action plans resulting from the developed cocoa sector development roadmap commitments. They provide their expertise and ensure a swift progress against the set activities. More specifically, they will:

- Continue to recommend specific interventions for the cocoa sector development strategy roadmap to the NC3P platform's steering committee
- Continue to translate the selected activities in the roadmap into detailed recommendations for companies and government, building synergies with existing projects, programs, and initiatives
- Ensure progress on the activities set out in the sector development strategy roadmap
- Contribute to the monitoring of the implementation of the sector development strategy roadmap

The General Assembly (also known as the Plenary body) is the structure in charge of monitoring the overarching strategy of the Technical Committees, enhancing collaboration, and creating synergies between them. It brings together all the Chairs of the Technical Committees and key representatives from the public sector, private sector, civil society organizations, farmer organizations, and research institutions having signed the Letter of Intent. The key mandate of the General Assembly is to validate any proposal of the platform prior to its approval by the steering committee. General Assembly members meet once a quarter.

Members of the Cocoa Sector Platform

Members

The NC3P platform's membership consists of both official members, who have signed its Statement of Intent commitment document, and non-voting members, who are called observers. Usually, organizations opt to become observers due to internal bureaucratic constraints that do not allow their in-country leadership to sign formal documents committing their organization to become official members of a coalition. However, NC3P platform observers regularly came to meetings and for some, they are more active and attended more platform meetings than formal platform members.

NC3P platform members and observers are composed of the following types of organizations: GoL entities, Donors & Multilaterals, NGOs, and development projects, CSOs, domestic and foreign private sector entities (cocoa traders and exporters), smallholder cocoa farmers. An official list of NC3P platform members is included below in Table #4.



Table 4: List of NC3P platform members and observers

Organization
Forestry Development Authority (FDA)
Liberia Agricultural Commodity Regulatory Authority (LACRA)
National Investment Commission
Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)
Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)
Ministry of Finance and Development Planning (MFDP)
Cooperative Development Agency (CDA)
Forestry Development Authority (FDA)
Executive Mansion/ Office of the President of the Republic
Theobroma/Ecom
Pricelinks
Arjay Farms
Redimere Chocolate
Becky's Agro
Vademco
Green Tech
AYA Group
LEXIM
Liberia Cocoa Corporation
Liberia Cocoa Exporters Association
Tradelink, Inc.
Atlantic Cocoa
SUSCOM AG LIBERIA LTD
Hinterland Resources, Inc.
Kingfisher
Theobroma
Gbelegey Farmers Cooperative
Tarpelesseh Farmers Cooperative
Intofawor Multipurpose Cooperative
Cooperative from Bong County
Fauna & Flora International
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSP)
Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL)
Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL)
Welt Hunger Hilfe
Conservation International
Sustainable Development Institute



GROW
SPARK
Vademco

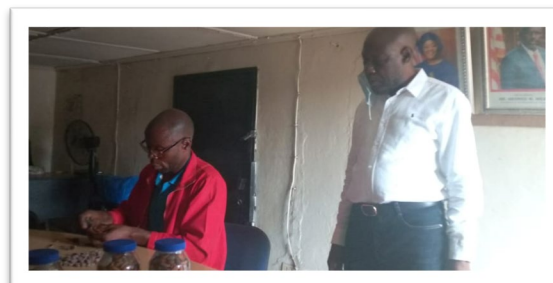


Figure 3: Image of Mr. Tijane Darrah of Hinterland Resources Inc., a Liberian owned and operated cocoa exporting company

What is the Cocoa Sector Development Strategy Roadmap?

The Cocoa Sector Development Strategy Roadmap is the main output of the Liberia NC3P cocoa sector platform body. It is its guiding document that was developed using a participatory approach. The strategy document outlines the key pathways and activities that when implemented will sustainably grow Liberia's cocoa sector, while both delivering favorable poverty reduction outcomes and protecting Liberia's natural forest areas.

The platform's roadmap has three pathways:

- I. Sustainable Production & Quality Control
- II. Investments & Cocoa Marketing
- III. Environment & Climate Change

The roadmap also has an extensive list of core ethical commitments that highlights the shared values of the platform's actors and stakeholders.

The roadmap document was an outcome of numerous meetings convened by both the platform's secretariate and the platform's technical working groups. The platform's lead coordinator then compiled aggregated information to develop a draft roadmap document that was then polished by the platform's steering document.

Reason for joining the platform

The result from the questionnaire shows that members of the NC3P platform joined the platform for the following reasons:

- They recognized the need to improve coordination in Liberia's cocoa sector
- All development projects and NGOs stated that, they joined or were observers of the NC3P platform, because they wanted to better align their organizations interventions with the agreed upon needs of the sector



- They wanted the opportunity to provide more detailed input in a shared cocoa sector development strategy roadmap
- They desired to be a part of a body that supported the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and LACRA in supervising the implementation of a shared strategy roadmap (action plan)

In addition, some actors and stakeholders specifically highlighted that they were seeking to share their insights with MoA and LACRA regarding cocoa policy and regulations related issues.



Figure 4: Hinterland Resources Inc's Quality Control specialist performing quality testing on newly received cocoa beans.

Ways in which the platform helped the member achieve its objectives

Many actors and stakeholders interviewed said that the NC3P platform has indeed assisted them in achieving the following objectives of their organizations:

- Improving sector coordination in Liberia's cocoa sector
- Better aligning their organization's interventions to a shared sector wide vision and strategic sector development plan
- Providing input to a shared strategic sector development plan
- Coordinating the movement to lobby the Government of Liberia key actors, LACRA and certain lawmakers, to cease its efforts to nationalize Liberia's cocoa sector
- Creating an open line of communication to better communicate cocoa sector policy and regulation change recommendations

The EU delegation to Liberia's agricultural project officer stated that the EU's interest in being a platform observer was to, "gain more information on Liberia's agricultural sectors specifically cocoa."

With these objectives being met, almost all actors and stakeholders did express that:

"For their more ambitious objectives, the NC3P platform, has yet to assist them in achieving those objectives."



However, they do recognize that the NC3P platform has only recently officially launched the implementation of its cocoa sector development strategy roadmap.

Ways in which the platform failed to help the member achieve their objectives

All sector actors and stakeholders recognized that it is too early in the platform sector development strategy roadmap's implementation phase to conclude that the platform has "failed to help achieve one of their objectives."

However, one sector actor, Liberia Cocoa Corporation, a private sector actor, did share that he preferred the approach of the Cocoa Technical Working Group, more so than the approach of the cocoa sector platform. He thinks that the Cocoa Technical Working Group thus far has been more impactful. His reasons why he prefers the approach of the Cocoa Technical Working Group are:

- The Working Group was not procedural, he did not like the procedural approach of the NC3P platform
- The Working Group is more individual (organizational) focused, at the working group organizational pain points were focused on instead of sectoral constraints

He also stated that:

"I believe that the cocoa technical working group was more impactful. Its meetings had tangible outputs, while the NC3P platform has had no tangible outputs but the sectoral development roadmap document and assisting the sector actors to fight back the potential nationalization of the sector."

He then shared that under the Cocoa Technical Working Group the Government of Liberia was able to get donor support to pay the country's International Cocoa Organization (ICCO) dues, for one year. ICCO dues are annual membership fees that each ICCO member country's governments pay to receive full membership benefits and representation within the ICCO organization. The Government of Liberia has for many years been unable to pay Liberia's annual ICCO membership dues.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND SHORTCOMINGS OF THE COCOA SECTOR PLATFORM

Relevance for the Sector

All actors and stakeholders agreed that the intended purpose of the NC3P platform is a worthy one and that there is a need for a cocoa sector coalition body to offer those services. Many platform members and observers interviewed, praised the platform for using a more formal, structured, and participatory approach in developing a cocoa sector development roadmap, that outlines an actionable plan to deliver sustained growth to Liberia's cocoa sector.

Successes - Major Victories

The platform has already achieved a few successes in its short time of operation. They are outlined below:



- Helped to onboard Liberia's new agricultural minister, The Honorable Ms. Jeanine Cooper
 - Fought off the attempt of the nationalization, and potential monopolization, move within the sector
 - Improved sector coordination. A few recorded outcomes that prove an improvement in sector coordination are the following:
 - An increase in convened meetings and dialogue sessions between sector actors and stakeholders
 - Improved communications among donors and other sector actors & stakeholders
 - A decrease in duplication in donor partner and development project interventions, where development projects and iNGOs are doing the same types of interventions with the exact same producer groups (beneficiaries)
 - More efficient use of investment capital and other resources (such as Technical Assistance) in the cocoa sector's ecosystem
 - Produced a shared and agreed upon sector development strategy roadmap document, that includes cocoa producer groups' inputs and insights
 - Structured a coalition that had a formal governance structure and operational framework
- Shortcomings*

Actors and stakeholders recognized that the platform has just formally launched the implementation of its sector development roadmap strategy document; as such they find it normal that it has not achieved all its objectives. They did, however, express that there are some areas where they believe the NC3P platform has underachieved. These areas are as follows:

- The platform rollout and launch activities took a long time, although this was understandable considering the following two unforeseeable events: nationalization attempt and the COVID 19 pandemic
- Lower than expected participation from the private sector companies (cocoa exporters specifically). This might have been caused by meeting fatigue. In the past private sector actors have complained about too many meetings called by international NGOs and development actors, that are followed up with very little action.
- Both a lack of discussions on the access to finance constraints faced by private sector actors and a lack of access to finance related interventions in the sector development roadmap strategy document
- Failure to mobilize funding resources for GoL entities, LACRA and MOA, specifically
- Lack of secured funding for NC3P platform activities following the project funded by the EU and implemented by Solidaridad
- Securing serious (formalized) funding commitments for the implementation of activities on the sector development strategy roadmap

Relevance during Period of attempt to Nationalize the Sector and Create a Monopoly

As previously mentioned, in 2019 there was an attempt by key actors in GoL to push for the (re) nationalization of Liberia's cocoa sector, returning the sector's structure back to the LPMC model



(with government both regulating and being the sole exporter of cocoa), and away from the current LACRA (regulator only) model.

Apparently, key leaders within the Government of Liberia crafted a draft regulatory document that proposed to give LACRA the power to both regulate and serve as the sole marketing agency of Liberia's cocoa sector. The regulatory document also provided LACRA the right to commercially license out (outsource) this role to a third party. Therefore, if this newly proposed regulation were to be implemented LACRA could license out this sole marketing role to a private foreign company at agreed upon commercial terms and said company would be the sole exporter of Liberian cocoa.

Such a change would discourage competition and cause established export companies to leave the sector. It would discourage investments in agriculture and other sectors of the economy. Furthermore, it could mean a conflict of interest if government were responsible for grading and exporting (or outsourcing the exporting) of the same product.

Nearly every NC3P platform member and stakeholder, opposed the effort. Almost all the non-GoL sector actors and stakeholders, desired for the current structure of the sector to remain as is, an open market cocoa sector. What intensified the effect of this nationalization attempt, led by LACRA, was that the announcement to nationalize the sector was made suddenly and without any consultative meetings with sector actors and investors and sector development partners. After the nationalization announcement was made, key actors and stakeholders began to organize themselves and began lobbying GoL to reconsider their decision. This issue was even brought up to Liberian lawmakers, specifically the House Committee on Agriculture. During this discussion the House Committee on Agriculture invited key members from the NC3P platform and the Director General of LACRA, Dr. John Flomo, to share their perspectives on this issue. This process was led by the NC3P cocoa sector platform.

During this process, all platform members, and observers, agreed that the platform was helpful in facilitating dialogues between both sides of the monopolization issue. Even LACRA's Director General, Dr. John Flomo, said that "the platform did a good job in providing a comfortable and professional environment for both sides to share their perspectives and have a more logical driven discussion."

Relevance for the Lives of Smallholder and for Poor Cocoa Farmers

Since the NC3P platform, has only recently formally launched its sector development strategy roadmap, all sector actors and stakeholders recognized that presently little has been accomplished in terms of impacting the daily lives of smallholder farmers. However, all actors and stakeholders agreed that if the platform's strategy roadmap is successfully implemented, it would result in significant positive outcomes for Liberia's smallholder cocoa farmers.

Positive impacts



Presently, the platform has had minimum impact to the lives of the average Liberian smallholder cocoa farmer. However, two positive impacts that have been achieved, that interviewees mentioned are:

- The NC3P platform prioritized including (and facilitating the participation of) smallholder producer group representatives at all platform meetings. This made cocoa producer groups feel more trusting of the NC3P platform, decisions made in its meetings, and helped to ensure that their perspectives and interests were taken into consideration in the strategy roadmap development process.
- The NC3P platform strongly supported and coordinated the movement to lobby GoL in not pursuing the nationalization of the sector. The nationalization of Liberia's cocoa sector, depending on its implementation, would likely have harmed the reality of many Liberian cocoa smallholders. For instance, the lack of competition that would result from nationalization could mean lower prices for smallholders.

How to improve the platform's positive impact on smallholders and the poor

All actors and stakeholders agreed that if the NC3P platform successfully implements the activities laid out in its sector development strategy document, then it will positively impact both Liberian cocoa smallholder farmers and larger scale cocoa plantation owners. Within Liberia's cocoa value chains there are a handful of large cocoa plantation estate owners and numerous smallholders.

Within the NC3P roadmap document an entire section is focused on initiatives to provide Liberian cocoa smallholder farmers with a Living Income. These initiatives are all based on three pillars:

- I. Increase the farm gate price of cocoa for the benefit of smallholder producers
 - Specified Interventions:
 - Training farmers in premium cocoa production
 - Support producer groups in pursuing Organic or Fairtrade certification
 - Deliver capacity development training to producer groups in business management and entrepreneurship skills (Liberia National Cocoa Public-Private Partnership Platform, 2021)
- II. Increase cocoa productivity (yields) and decrease the costs of production on the farms of smallholders
 - Specified Interventions:
 - Support farmers in smallholder cocoa farm rehabilitation and GAP training
 - Support producer groups, agents, and private sector service providers in improving their extension services delivery models to smallholder farmers
 - Strengthen the business and technical skills of agro dealers to better serve smallholder cocoa farmers (Liberia National Cocoa Public-Private Partnership Platform, 2021)
- III. Enhance complementary incomes
 - Specified Interventions:



- Support producer groups in developing polyculture production systems that complement their current focus on cocoa production
- Support producer groups in accessing markets for their complementary crops
- Support producer groups in accessing suitable financial services by enabling access to mobile payment ecosystems (Liberia National Cocoa Public-Private Partnership Platform, 2021)

Relevance for Environmental Sustainability

Actors and stakeholders agreed that the NC3P platform has contributed to progress in Environmental Sustainability. They shared that the NC3P platform has helped MoA and LACRA to better understand and prioritize tackling issues around deforestation (as it relates to agriculture) as well as methods for adapting to climate change. NC3P platform secretariat's lead coordinator, Hilary David from IDH shared that, "the platform supported GoL in further setting and promoting their environmental sustainability goals."

Within the NC3P roadmap document an entire section is focused on initiatives to transform it into a more environmentally friendly cocoa sector. These initiatives are all based on three pillars:

- I. Developing the infrastructure in Liberia's cocoa sector that can provide the global cocoa market the guarantee that cocoa exported from Liberia is deforestation free
- II. Promoting and protecting the continued existence of Liberia's natural rain forest
- III. Educating producers and aggregators, cocoa License Buying Companies (LBCs) and Exporters, within Liberia's cocoa sector on agroforestry and climate smart agricultural best practices for cocoa cultivation

(Liberia National Cocoa Public-Private Partnership Platform, 2021)

Relevance for Sector Coordination

Almost all platform members and observers agreed that the NC3P platform did improve coordination within Liberia's cocoa sector. The only divergent response came from Dr. John Flomo, the Director General of LACRA, who stated that, "the platform needs to better synchronize donors & multilaterals and needs to better align interests. It also needs to do a better job at holding more consistent meetings." He also stated that, in recent months, he has been disappointed due to infrequent attendance by both USAID and EU representatives at NC3P platform meetings.

Successful Coalition Building Lessons Learned from the NC3P Platform

Although the NC3P platform has just recently begun its efforts in implementing its cocoa sector development strategy roadmap, there are already lessons that can be learned from the NC3P platform's experiences undertaking the process of designing and launching of a multi actor coalition. Below is an aggregated list of lessons learned about the coalition building process that was produced from this case study's questionnaire assessment methodology, where key actors and stakeholders in Liberia's agriculture sector were interviewed using the questionnaire survey tool in Annex III of



this document. The lessons learned are divided by those lessons where there was consensus among the interviewees (where stakeholders agreed), and those lessons learned where the interviewees disagreed.

Lessons learned about coalition building in an agricultural sector that had consensus among interviewees

- I. **Strong Secretariat:** Interviewees shared the importance of the role of a coalition's Secretariat. They highlighted that the Secretariat needs to be both technically strong and possess the required social capital, trust, and respect with the sector actors and stakeholders.
- II. **Continuous Engagement:** It is important that the secretariat continuously engages and develops relationships with platform members. It is also important for the coalition's bodies and members to meet regularly. In this case interviewees were referring to the NC3P platform's plenary and technical committees. Interviewees recognized that when both sub bodies convened regularly the platform was more dynamic and effective.
- III. **The importance of prioritizing trust building amongst members of the coalition:** Interviewees also shared that within the coalition building process, there needs to be regular trust building activities programmed into the coalition development process. Such activities nurture relationships amongst members of the coalition before conflicts and/ or tense discussions occur. Interviewees explained that often conflict resolution is made more difficult, because members are both unfamiliar with and distrustful of one another. Interviewees shared that it was also helpful during tense discussions the secretariat and facilitators continuously highlighted and focused on areas of mutual interests.
- IV. **Inclusive decision making:** It is important that major decisions concerning the coalition are made using an inclusive decision-making process. This involves the coalition's secretariat convening meetings with the coalitions plenary body, then its governing body, to discuss key issues, using a democratic process to make strategic decisions. Interviewees also learned that inclusive decision making can be useful within their internal organization's processes; Mr. Titoe from MoA stated, "What the MOA learned from its experiences within the launching of the cocoa platform, is that MOA makes better policy decisions, if knowledgeable sector experts and actors, especially the private sector, are involved in the policy development process"
- V. **Staying focused on the coalition's mandate and objectives:** The Secretariat needs to ensure that the coalition does its best to stay focused and committed to its core mandate and objectives, despite various distractions. This focus is important, with the understanding that urgent and important issues will occasionally arise and need the attention of the coalition. However, these issues need to be addressed as responsibly and as quickly as possible, so that the coalition's leadership and members can return to its original mandate and focus on achieving its targeted objectives. The current coordinator for the NC3P Platform's Secretariat Mr. Hilary David of IDH, shared that "Staying consistent to key objectives is very important in leading a successful coalition, launching the NC3P platform, there were a lot of distractions by firefighting tendencies, so having a strong focus was key for our team." Two unforeseen events occurred during the launch of the NC3P platform, that could have distracted the platform from ever launching. These unforeseen events were the following:
 - a. The attempt to nationalize Liberia's cocoa sector by some officials within GoL: the nationalization of Liberia's cocoa sector occurred right when the NC3P



platform was still being designed, so the platform was not fully functional and its governance structure was not fully developed, when it began convening sector actors and stakeholders to mediate discussions.

- b. The Covid 19 pandemic: the Covid 19 global pandemic occurred during the time when the NC3P platform's Technical Committees were convening to research and write its cocoa sector development strategy roadmap document. So, the inability to have in person group meetings, due to health-related restrictions, significantly slowed the process of developing the strategy document.
- VI. Role of coalition as conflict mediators: Interviewees highlighted that the NC3P platform was the ideal organization to mediate discussions between opposing sides during the nationalization/monopolization push here in Liberia in 2019. They shared that the NC3P played a key role in convening sectors actors and government and facilitating peaceful and productive dialogues.
 - VII. Role of coalition in producing better sectoral strategic documents: Interviewees were in full agreement, that the NC3P platform produced the strongest Liberia cocoa sector growth strategy document, compared to other sectoral growth strategy documents that were produced by a development project or donor contracting an individual consultant and the consultant drafting the strategy document after conducting interviews in relative isolation. Interviewees further shared that this was achieved due to NC3P's inclusive and participatory consultative process. This process leveraged the knowledge and experiences of both sector experts and local technicians.
 - VIII. Coalitions need to help address key issues that matter to its members: Many interviewees mentioned their disappointment that the platform avoided discussions around access to finance issues, that many of its private sector and producer group members experience as a serious constraint. Interviewees shared that the issue of financing and financing mechanisms should have taken on a more prominent role within early NC3P platform discussions. Specifically, financing for private sectors actors and smallholder farmer groups/farmers). They further shared that if this would have occurred, the NC3P platform would have gained even more momentum and engagement from private sector actors.
 - IX. Coalitions need secure funding and stronger governance structures: Interviewees communicated that from the onset the NC3P platform should have had a dedicated secretariat body. One that has secured funding throughout the forecasted duration of the implementation of the cocoa sector development strategy roadmap activities. Instead of the present situation with the NC3P platform, where secretariat funding was only secured to the production of the strategy roadmap document

Lessons learned about coalition building for which there was no consensus

1. Coalition's implementation approach: Although most interviewees shared that they appreciated the NC3P platform's process driven and systems approach; two interviewees stated that they would have appreciated more of an iterative approach, where sectoral problems and challenges were immediately tackled as the coalition identified them and did not have to wait to produce a strategy roadmap.



2. Mechanisms to hold coalition members accountable: Interviewees were split over the issue of the best mechanism to hold NC3P members accountable to their commitments to implement the identified and agreed upon activities within the cocoa sector development strategy roadmap document, that their organization had committed to contributing to its implementation. A handful of the interviewees expressed their concern that the platform's steering committee had very little influence in ensuring that roadmap activities were implemented. They are worried that the platform's steering committee will be "all bark but no bite." Therefore, the lesson learned from this insight is that a coalition's governance structure really needs to explore models to hold their members accountable to agree upon commitments.

Potential Replication of Platform Coalition Approach to other sectors in Liberia's Food System

All interviews, except for one, agreed that the NC3P platform's platform-based coalition building approach should be replicated in other key agricultural sectors in Liberia. Initially when this study was commissioned, the commissioning team had requested that the possibility be explored for a platform-based coalition building approach to be implemented in Liberia's coffee and peri urban vegetables sectors. However, after the rapid questionnaire assessment study was conducted, interviewees shared that they thought the platform-based coalition building approach is ideally more effective in more important (in terms of food security or its contribution to national GDP), mature, cash crop and export oriented agricultural commodity sectors. Several of the potential sectors that were listed were rubber, oil palm, rice, cassava, and marine fisheries. Several interviewees did point out that the Liberia's rubber sector already has the Liberian Rubber Planters Association, which is an active producer-based coalition body. The Rubber Planters Association does coordinate many rubber sector related activities and is responsible for managing much of the lobbying efforts of Liberian rubber farmers. Several, respondents also highlighted that there was an existence of a Liberia Oil Palm Platform that was funded by UNDP here in Liberia. This platform was modeled after the NC3P platform, shortly after it was launched. However, the main difference was that the Oil Palm platform's sole mandate was focused on the production of an oil palm sector development strategy document; compared to the NC3P platform's mandate that is focused around both the development of a strategy document and the coordination and monitoring of said strategy document's activities. Therefore, shortly after the production of the oil palm strategy development document, the activities of the Liberia Oil Palm platform ceased.

With this being understood, the next sub-section will explore how the NC3P platform's coalition building approach can be applied to Liberia's rice sector.

Overview of Liberia's Rice Sector

The Liberian rice economy is extremely important to the diets of the population. The Food Balance Sheet for Liberia indicates that 33% of per capital caloric intake is from milled rice, followed by 21% from cassava. Despite the country's ability to produce rice, Liberia relies upon rice imports for 69% of annual consumption. (FAOSTAT, 2016) There is great potential to further develop rice production in Liberia. Land and water resources are abundant in Liberia and offer potential for significant expansion of agricultural and rice production.



Considering the social and political implication of rice in Liberia: there is a strong need for increasing domestic rice production to meet consumption demand and reduce reliance on imported rice. Smallholder farmers predominantly grow rice in upland environments, with a limited percentage devoted to lowland ecology. Currently, rice is mostly cultivated once a year. The rice yields in Liberia's uplands are persistently low.

Most of the rice produced domestically in Liberia is consumed by producer households. Very little domestically produced rice enters the commercial market, although accurate data on this flow are not available.

The availability and price of rice is a very sensitive political consideration. Currently, the GoL policy is to increase domestic rice production while relaxing import license restrictions, opening what had been a tightly controlled license permit process for the import of rice. The most common method of processing in rural areas is either by manual pounding or with small, portable threshing and milling machines donated by international NGOs and development projects. Figure 5 outlines the actors involved in Liberia's rice sector.

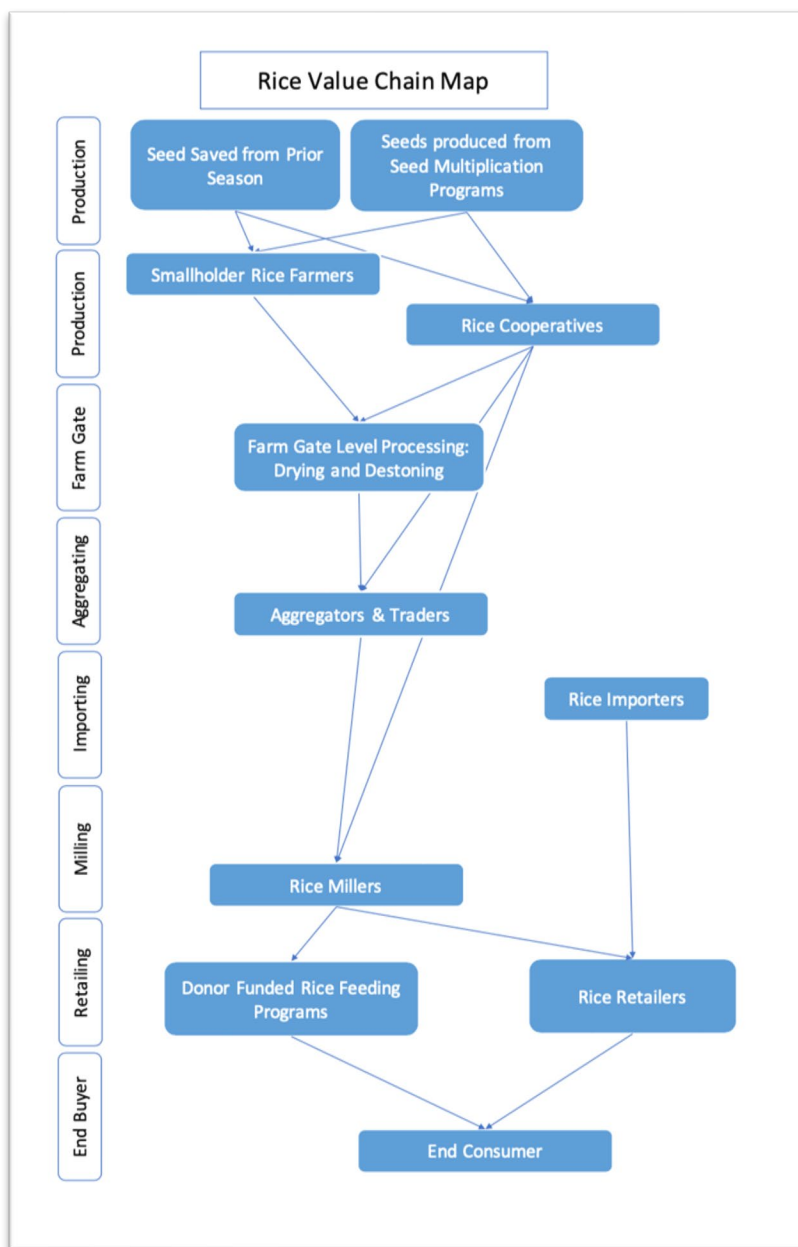


Figure 5: Map of Liberia's rice value chain



Table 5: Table of Liberia Rice Value Chain's Strengths & Opportunities and Constraints & Risks

Rice Value Chain's Strengths & Opportunities
National primary staple food product
National priority of GoL
Large and expanding domestic market
High job creation potential
Currently operating at most rudimentary level, so much room for improvement
Rice Value Chain's Constraints & Risks
Lack of high quality and high yielding rice seeds from a seed multiplication program
Lack of farmer capacity both on human and technical level
Lack of farmers - farming is considered an unattractive job
Absence of technical farming capability
Lack of reasonably priced paddy due to NGO overpayments
Poor transport networks connecting rice fields with markets
Non-competitive vs. imports due to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overly expensive cost of production • relatively poor quality rice • low or non-existent import tariffs
Minimal and rudimentary rice processing capability (de-stoning, drying, polishing and parboiling)
Market pricing challenges for both paddy rice and processed rice
Minimal packaging and marketing effort
Minimal access to finance
Common agriculture risks - weather and natural events
No ready market for what farmers produce at current prices considering viability and costs of transport of paddy rice to processors

Source: (Kazadi & Ryan, 2016)



How a few of the identified Rice Sectorial Challenges could be addressed by coalition building
The constraints in Liberia's rice value chain can be addressed by both using the same platform approach, that the NC3P cocoa sector platform implemented, and leveraging some of the cocoa sector platforms lessons learned.

Firstly, similarly to what occurred in Liberia's cocoa sector, Liberia's rice sector actors can be convened with the purpose of designing a rice sector platform with a similar mandate of developing and managing the implementation of a sustainable rice sector development strategy. Such a body would be composed of GoL ministries and bodies, the private sector, iNGOs and local NGOs & CSOs, multilateral institutions and donors. These actors would work together in an inclusive and participatory approach to design the proposed rice sector platform's governance structure and then develop a holistic and practical sustainable rice sector development strategy.

By improved sector coordination, this refers to the following outcomes:

- I. Increase in convened meetings and dialogue sessions between sector actors and stakeholders
- II. Improved communications among donors and other sector actors & stakeholders
- III. Sharing of information relating to sector mapping
- IV. Increased opportunities for producer groups, private sector actors and other potential beneficiaries to learn about activities of specific development projects that their organization could potentially partner with
- V. Increased opportunities for producer groups to learn about farm gate pricing (improvements in market information)
- VI. Increased opportunities for farmer groups to meet and develop relationships with potential private sector partners: either off takers or investors
- VII. Decrease duplication in donor partner and development project interventions, where development projects and iNGOs are doing the same types of interventions with the exact same producer groups (beneficiaries)
- VIII. Overall, more efficient use of investment capital and other resources (such as Technical Assistance) in the specific sector's ecosystem

Based on initial scoping, Liberia's rice sector receives an inflow of significantly more development funds, compared to Liberia's cocoa sector. If Liberia's rice sector had a rice sector platform, opportunities could be created that these funds could be used more efficiently and productively due to improved sector communication and coordination among rice value chain actors and stakeholders.

The proposed Liberia Rice Sector Platform (LRSP) could leverage the following lessons learned from the NC3P cocoa sector platform:



-
- **Ensure that the Liberia Rice Sector Platform (LRSP) has secured funding for its secretariate for a minimum of 4 or 5 years. To fund the secretariate: from design of the platform, to well into implementation.**
-
- **Ensure that a strong secretariate and lead platform coordinator are contracted to lead the rice sector platform initiative. The contracted organization and an individual, need to possess the trust, respect, and have pre-existing favorable connections with key sector actors**
-
- **The rice sector platform secretariat's lead coordinator should convene continuous meetings with sector actors to build trust, encourage alignment and continuous dialogue, among rice sector actors and stakeholders**
-
- **Embrace its informal role as a convening body and conflict mediator within Liberia's rice value chain**
-
- **Leverage the rice sector platform's mandate to coordinate resource to perform a thorough Liberia rice sector mapping exercise: identifying key lowland swamp areas ideal for rice cultivation in all of Liberia's counties**
-
- **Leverage its mandate to function as a lead source for collected reports and studies on Liberia's rice sector: both upland and lowland rice cultivation**
-
- **Leverage its mandate and role as a convener to collect key pieces of data and insights to develop a holistic sustainable rice development strategy, that has the input and buy in of all key sector actors and stakeholders**
-
- **Be practical and realistic in its targeted activities. Most likely within the next few years, Liberia's policy on duties and taxes associated with rice imports are not going to change in favor of domestic producers. Therefore, the rice platform should not invest much time in tackling such an activity, of rice import subsidies, and instead should focus its efforts and resources on other interventions that could make domestic rice producers more competitive**
-
- **To not shy away from policy and regulatory discussions all together. The rice sector platform although it would avoid targeting changing GoL's policy on rice import subsidies, it could aim to target other key rice sector policies and regulations such as policies relating to paddy rice purchase prices and seed rice regulations.**
-
- **To not shy away from tough issues such as financing for sector actors, specifically financing for private sector actors and farmer groups.**
-
- **Explore mechanisms to hold its members accountable to their commitments to implement and finance activities that they had initially committed to**
-
- **Explore opportunities for Liberia's proposed rice sector platform to connect with the global, Sustainable Rice Platform (SRI)⁶. Like how the NC3P cocoa sector platform engages and connects with the Cocoa & Forests Initiative (CFI) in Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire.**
-

⁶ <https://www.sustainablelricerice.org/>



Examples of Similar Coalition Bodies in the West Africa sub region

The NC3P platform had several opportunities to connect with other cocoa focused platform coalition bodies in the west African sub regions. On three occasions, representatives from Liberia's NC3P cocoa sector platform connected with the Cocoa & the Forests Initiative, coalition bodies that is active and operates in Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire's cocoa and forests sectors. The Director General of LACRA, Dr. John Flomo, and some representatives from Liberia's NC3P cocoa sector platform had the opportunity to attend a CFI annual and quarterly meeting, in Ghana. During said trip the Dr. John Flomo shared that he was able to connect and share ideas with high executives within Ghana's Cocoa Board regarding the issue of domestic cocoa farm gate pricing.

The CFI is an initiative that started about 3 or 4 years before Liberia's NC3P cocoa sector platform. Although the NC3P cocoa sector platform is heavily inspired by the CFI initiative there are some significant differences in mandate. The Cocoa & Forests Initiative (CFI) is a coalition body that is made up of:

“The governments of Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana and 35 leading cocoa and chocolate companies have joined together in the Cocoa & Forests Initiative to end deforestation and restore forest areas.”⁷

Unlike Liberia's NC3P cocoa sector platform, who is focused on developing Liberia's entire cocoa value chain, the Cocoa & Forests Initiative is a coalition body that is more exclusively focused on issues surrounding deforestation driven by cocoa production in Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire.

Despite this difference in mandate the Secretariate of the NC3P cocoa sector platform, IDH, leveraged its experience as an implementer and the Secretariate of the Cocoa & Forests Initiative, building on some of its lessons learned within their previous roles. Much of the approach and the governance structure of the NC3P platform was inspired from the governance structure of the CFI initiative. Such governance structures, like:

- I. a steering committee bodies
- II. regular quarterly and annual meetings
- III. the participatory design approaches
- IV. a roadmap strategy document

It is also important to note that around the same time as the design and launch of the NC3P platform in Liberia, other cocoa focused platforms were starting in nearby Sierra Leone and in Cameroun. In Sierra Leone, their platform is called the Sierra Leone Cocoa Coffee Cashew Platform, so their scope is beyond just cocoa and includes coffee and cashew. This platform was launched after Liberia's Cocoa Sector Platform and during their design phase they spoke with the NC3P platform to gain inspiration from its experiences. The cocoa focused platform in Cameroun is called the Green Cocoa

⁷ <https://www.worldcocoaoundation.org/initiative/cocoa-forests-initiative/>



Landscape Program. This platform initiative takes more of a landscape approach and even involves interventions and collaboration with oil palm and forestry sector actors and stakeholders.

During the 1x1 interviews, all participants saw it valuable for the NC3P cocoa sector platform to continue its collaboration and open lines of communication with other cocoa focused platform bodies in the sub region.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research underscores the ongoing necessity for the active engagement of multi-actor coalition bodies in fostering the advancement of Liberia’s agricultural value chains. However, it is crucial to highlight one of the pivotal findings of this study: the respondents in the survey emphasized that the platform approach proves effective particularly for essential cash or export crops. These crops, which encompass cocoa, rubber, oil palm, and rice, hold greater value and are characterized by larger production volumes. Conversely, the consensus among survey participants was that applying the platform approach might not yield optimal results within emerging value chains such as coffee, as well as within intricate systems like Liberia’s vegetable value chain.

At the present juncture, a handful of forthcoming agricultural-focused development initiatives are slated to commence in Liberia early next year, in 2023. Based on the insights derived from this research, it is advisable for the prospective executive teams overseeing these projects to consider the following strategic avenues:

1. Sustained financial support for the NC3P platform, either through direct funding or through a potential role as the NC3P platform's secretariat.
2. Collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and the Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI), in conjunction with other pertinent sectoral stakeholders, to conceptualize and launch the Liberia Rice Sector Platform. This endeavor should adopt an all-encompassing and participatory approach.

Both of these initiatives are poised to yield favorable outcomes, particularly in enhancing sectoral coordination, catalyzing collective action, and fostering collaboration within two critical value chains—cocoa and rice. These chains are pivotal to the future expansion of Liberia’s agricultural sector, contributing in tandem to the overarching objectives of inclusivity, environmental sustainability, and healthier dietary practices. In this context, these coalition bodies emerge as pivotal actors in addressing the underlying structural limitations within these value chains, thereby fostering improvements within Liberia’s broader food system.



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ANNEX II – LIST OF ACTORS & STAKEHOLDERS INTERVIEWED FOR THIS ASSIGNMENT

Actors Interviewed
LACRA, Dr. John Flomo, Managing Director
MOA - Michael Titoe, Cocoa Lead
Liberia Marketers Association
MOA - Foya extension technician
IDH - Robert - field technician
IDH - Hilary David
Solidaridad
EU - Geertruii
GROW II – Darkina Cooper, Policy Lead
GROW I – Team Leader
CARI
DMDI
CBI, Stanford Peabody
Clemenceau Urey of Atlantic Cocoa
GROW field technician
3 other cocoa exporting companies - SUSCOM, Hinterlands
LCC - Operators of Cocoa of Excellence Fermentation and Drying Centers
3 partner cocoa cooperatives of the NC3P platform
3 cocoa smallholder farmers outside the donor defined breadbasket counties
4 Cocoa Traders
3 Coffee Traders



ANNEX III – COPY OF QUESTIONNAIRE

#	Questions
A.	Members of the platform
1	Which organization do you represent? Is your organization a: government entity, multilateral, donor, NGO, private sector, or farmer group
2	Why was your organization initially interested in being a part of the platform?
3	What did your organization hope to gain by joining the platform? What objective was your organization trying to achieve when it initial joined the platform?
4	Thus far, has the platform supported your organization in accomplishing any of its objectives? If so, which ones and how? Has it failed to help your organization achieve any of its objectives? If so, which ones and how?
B.	Comparison with the sectoral working groups
5	How is the cocoa sector platform different from the sectoral working groups? The Cocoa Technical Working Group, Fisheries Working Group etc.
6	Thus far, which forum has been more impactful: cocoa sector platform or the technical working group? How? Why do you think this is?
C.	Accomplishments and shortcomings of the cocoa sector platform
7	Thus far how has the cocoa sector platform impacted Liberia's cocoa sector?
8	Thus far, what has been the cocoa sector platform's major victory?
9	Thus far, where has the platform fallen short, underachieved?
10	Would you say the cocoa sector platform engaged sector actors well during the period when there were thoughts about nationalizing/monopolizing the sector?
11	Was having a body like the cocoa sector platform helpful in facilitating dialogues between the opposing sides during this period?
12	Do you believe that there were divergent interests in the sector and that the platform helped address them?
13	Would you say the cocoa sector platform has already positively benefitted the lives of the smallholder cocoa farmer?
14	What issues can the cocoa sector platform tackle to address the needs of everyday smallholder cocoa farmers more directly?
15	Has the NC3P cocoa sector platform been relevant for poverty reduction in Liberia?
16	Has the NC3P cocoa sector platform been aligned with goals related to environmental sustainability in Liberia?
17	Has the NC3P cocoa sector platform helped improve sector coordination in Liberia? Examples of sector coordination are: ...
D.	Lessons learned
18	What lessons can we draw from the cocoa sector platform in terms of how successful coalitions may be built?
19	What has your organizations learned about the policy development process from your experience working within the cocoa sector platform body?
20	In your opinion what are feasible models that can be implemented to fund the cocoa sector platform, moving forward? How might they be funded? Is external funding essential?



E.	Relevance to other sectors
21	Could similar models be explored to design, start, and operate platforms within other agricultural value chains in Liberia?
22	Do you think the platform structure could be replicated in other sectors in Liberia?
23	Which other agricultural sectors could copy the cocoa sector's approach?
24	Among the following agricultural sectors, which one is best suited for a platform intervention: vegetables and coffee? Why do you think so?
25	What are key issues facing the peri-urban vegetable farming sector? Are any of the issues facing the peri-urban farming sector like those facing the cocoa sector?
26	What are key issues facing the coffee sector? Are any of the issues facing the coffee sector like those facing the cocoa sector?
27	Has the cocoa sector platform experienced success in tackling any of these shared issues?
28	Are sub-regional/landscape-based coalitions what is needed to address some of the more controversial issues related to the Liberian food system, such as preserving opportunities for peri-urban farming?
29	How can we apply lessons learned from the success (and failure) of the cocoa sector platform to the issues related to Liberia's food system?



ANNEX IV – Brief Concept for the Liberia Rice Sector Platform

The Liberia Rice Sector Platform (LRSP) is a multi-actor coalition that seeks to assist and guide the design and implementation of development interventions within Liberia’s rice sector. The goal of the LRSP platform is to improve alignment & coordination of the rice sector actors’ activities, supporting the creation of a more sustainable, prosperous, and equitable Liberian rice industry. The idea for a rice sector platform was inspired by the initial success of the Liberia’s National Cocoa Public Private Partnership Platform (NC3P platform) and grounded on the research on coalition building in Liberia’s agricultural sector that was funded by Food System Economics Commission (FSEC)⁸.

The proposed mandate of the LRSP platform is to use a participatory and inclusive approach to support in the coordination, development, and monitoring of a Liberia national rice sector roadmap strategy.

The envisioned roles and responsibilities of the LRSP platform are to:

1. Improve alignment of Liberia’s rice sector actors and stakeholders. By improved alignment this refers to the following outcomes:
 - I. Increase in meetings and dialogue sessions between rice sector actors and stakeholders
 - II. Improved communications among donors and other rice sector actors & stakeholders
2. Encourage continuous knowledge-sharing (relating to activities and technical knowledge) among Liberia’s rice sector actors and stakeholders
3. Develop a shared sector vision for Liberia’s rice sector
4. Develop a national rice sector development strategy roadmap that will be co-developed by Liberia’s rice sector actors and stakeholders, and will have their buy in
5. Support MoA and CARI in the continuous monitoring of said national rice sector development strategy
6. Support in the development of more appropriate rice sector policies and regulations
7. Decrease wastage: Decrease in duplication in donor partner and development project interventions within Liberia’s rice sector, where development projects and INGOs are doing the same types of interventions with the exact same producer groups (beneficiaries)
8. Improve returns (economic productivity and impact) on capital invested by donors and development partners (and other resources such as Technical Assistance) in Liberia’s rice sector ecosystem
9. Provide MOA and CARI leverage to hold rice sector actors and stakeholders accountable to commitments

⁸ The Food System Economics Commission (FSEC) is an independent academic commission set up to equip political and economic decision-makers with tools and evidence to transform food and land use systems. Convened by EAT, PIK, and FOLU, the FSEC builds on the vanguard of integrated assessment modelling and evidence-based policy design to study and synthesize knowledge on the inclusion, health, and environmental dimensions of the transformation of food systems. The Commission’s overarching objective is to further the transition to healthy, inclusive, and sustainable food systems by providing a comprehensive assessment of the economics of current food systems, their unaccounted costs (defined as environmental, dietary health and social costs) and the distributional impacts of the transition; and by rigorously assessing evidence and providing new tools to support policy design. A key theme of the FSEC work on political economy is the importance of coalition building among stakeholders. To understand the political economy of coalition building, FSEC commissioned this, and other case studies related to the food system.



The Rice Sector Development Strategy Roadmap will be the key output of the LRSP platform. It will be the rice sector’s guiding strategic document: outlining the key pathways and activities that when implemented will sustainably and equitably grow Liberia’s rice sector, delivering favorable poverty reduction outcomes and protecting Liberia’s environmental resources.

The LRSP platform will leverage and tap into the knowledge pool of more advanced rice coalitions, like the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP)⁹. This partnership will function similar to the NC3P cocoa sector platform’s connection with the Cocoa & Forests Initiative (CFI platform) in Ghana and Cote D’Ivoire. Below is a short description of the SRP Platform, a global rice coalition institution, that is taken from their website:

“The Sustainable Rice Platform e.V. (SRP) is a global multi-stakeholder alliance established in 2011. Originally co-convened by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ), SRP is now an independent membership association. Together with its over 90 institutional members from public and private sector stakeholders, research, financial institutions, and NGOs, SRP aims to transform the global rice sector by:

- *Improving smallholder livelihoods*
- *Reducing the social, environmental and climate footprint of rice production*
- *Offering the global rice market an assured supply of sustainably produced rice to meet the growing global demand for rice.*

SRP promotes resource-use efficiency and climate change resilience in rice systems (both on-farm and throughout value chains) and pursues voluntary market transformation initiatives by developing sustainable production standards, indicators, incentive mechanisms, and outreach mechanisms to boost wide-scale adoption of sustainable best practices throughout rice value chains.”

To conclude, there are several key lessons learned from Liberia’s NC3P Cocoa Sector Platform on coalition building in Liberia’s agriculture sector, that can be applied to the proposed Liberia Rice Sector Platform (LRSP). A list of these key lessons learned are included in the table below:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the Liberia Rice Sector Platform (LRSP) has secured funding for its secretariate for a minimum of 4 or 5 years. To fund the secretariate: from design of the platform, to well into implementation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage the rice sector platform’s mandate to coordinate resource to perform a thorough Liberia rice sector mapping exercise: identifying key lowland swamp areas ideal for rice cultivation in all of Liberia’s counties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage its mandate to function as a lead source for collected reports and studies on Liberia’s rice sector: both upland and lowland rice cultivation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage its mandate and role as a convener to collect key pieces of data and insights to develop a holistic sustainable rice development strategy, that has the input and buy in of all key sector actors and stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To not shy away from policy and regulatory discussions all together. The rice sector platform although it would avoid targeting changing GoL’s policy on rice import subsidies, it could aim to target other key rice sector policies and regulations such as policies relating to paddy rice purchase prices and seed rice regulations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To not shy away from tough issues such as financing for sector actors, specifically financing for private sector actors and farmer groups.

⁹ <https://www.sustainableice.org/>



- Explore mechanisms to hold its members accountable to their commitments to implement and finance activities that they had initially committed to