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**NATIONAL POLICY FOR**

**AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES**

**July 2012****TABLE OF CONTENTS**

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ACC Agricultural Coordination Committee

AEAS Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services

CBO Community-Based Organization

DRDRE Department of Regional Development, Research and Extension

ICT Information Communication Technology

LASIP Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Program

MOA Ministry of Agriculture

NGO Non-Governmental Organization

SNRM Sustainable Natural Resource Management

USAID United States Agency for International Development

**FOREWARD**

Agriculture continues to be the mainstay of Liberia’s economy. Effective and efficient agricultural extension and advisory services are critical to unleashing the productive potential of the thousands of smallholders whose livelihoods are dependent on agriculture. Liberia’s *Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy* (2008) and the *Liberia Agricultural Sector Investment Program* (2010) call for transformation of Liberia’s extension services into a decentralized and demand-driven system. Extension services in Liberia are currently provided by public, some private, and an abundance of civil society sector actors. There has not been a referenced policy document to frame the process of transforming the national extension system nor to provide guidance to agricultural extension stakeholders. It is the intention of this National Policy for Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS) to provide the legal and enabling framework for the transformation of the existing extension system into a pluralistic, decentralized, demand-driven, and market-oriented AEAS system that is responsive to cross-cutting issues such as gender, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, natural resource management, and climate change, and to provide guidance to AEAS stakeholders.

The Policy was developed through a participatory process. The MOA appointed an Extension Policy Task Force to lead policy development. The Task Force benefited from consultations via field visits, group discussions, rapid surveys, and interviews with many stakeholders including farmers and farmer organizations, extension agents, consultants, and representatives of NGOs, agri-businesses, agricultural education institutions, donors, and international technical agencies. The consultative process culminated in a Stakeholder Validation Workshop held in Monrovia on July 3, 2012 with representation from a wide-range of stakeholders who provided additional input for the Policy.

The National Policy for AEAS comes at an opportune time. Liberia is moving from relief and rehabilitation to an environment of development and growth. The National Policy places AEAS in strong position to contribute to national aims of achieving sustainable agricultural growth and food security, improving family nutrition, and increasing farmers’ and other market actors’ incomes to help alleviate poverty nationwide.

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The MOA also wishes to extend hearty thanks and appreciation to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the technical and financial assistance that was provided through the Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services Project to prepare this Policy document.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Agriculture continues to be the single most important source of livelihood for most rural Liberians. Over 75% of the country’s population of 3.5 million is engaged either directly or indirectly in smallholder subsistence agriculture, including livestock and fisheries.[[1]](#footnote-1) Women and children are particularly dependent on the agricultural sector. Historically, performance of the sector has been limited by structural constraints, poor policies, and armed conflict. Liberia’s *Poverty Reduction Strategy* (2008) emphasizes the centrality of the agricultural sector to reducing poverty, providing food security, and ensuring progress toward the Millennium Development Goals. To this end, the *Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Program* (LASIP, 2010) outlines strategies for rebuilding and decentralizing the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA).

The National Legislature established the MOA in 1972, charging it with achieving self-sufficiency in food production, increasing foreign exchange, increasing farmers’ income and purchasing power, and bringing farmers out of subsistence farming into commercial farming.[[2]](#footnote-2) The 2009 proposed MOA reform and decentralization process[[3]](#footnote-3) updates the mandate to include: The MOA promotes agricultural development, food security, and growth. In pursuit of this mandate, the MOA provides the policy framework, helps direct agricultural related investments, provides the support services necessary to make agriculture and agri-based enterprises profitable, sustainable, and helps spread the benefits of development to the poor thereby enabling the country and its people to prosper.[[4]](#footnote-4)

A critical activity of the MOA is to create the enabling environment for timely provision of efficient and effective agriculture extension services. Well-coordinated extension services help accelerate the process of technological change and socio-economic development. Extension enables producers, processors, and other agriculture stakeholders to make efficient, productive, and sustainable use of their agricultural resources.

Liberia’s National Agriculture Extension Service was established in 1960. It was a conventional top-down extension system that existed, with a limited number of extension officers attempting to pass on new technologies developed by researchers to the mass of small-skilled farmers scattered across the country. It was generally supply-driven with heavy emphasis on transfer of technology. It aimed to persuade farmers to adopt available technologies and had limited feedback mechanisms on the value of extension. As in most developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, the extension system was woefully under-resourced and the methods used (typically the World Bank supported “Training and Visit” System) proved ineffective in exposing a large number of farmers to new technologies and practices. The system completely collapsed during the period of the Civil War. Following the Civil War, the International Community provided extension assistance, largely through non-governmental organizations (NGO) and United Nations Agencies.

**1.1 Current Status of Extension Services in Liberia**

The rebuilding of extension services is currently in process. Within the current structure of the MOA, the Department of Regional Development, Research and Extension (DRDRE) houses public sector agricultural extension. Though currently understaffed and underfunded, the MOA has made progress in and is committed to decentralizing staff to the county and district-levels. MOA County Agriculture Coordinators represent the MOA at the county level. Plans include posting District Agriculture Officers at all district levels and various subject-matter specialists (i.e., tree crops, livestock, aquaculture, quarantine, M&E) at county or district-levels. Notwithstanding progress, the current public extension approach reflects historical legacy whereby the training that is provided to farmers is delivered by district-based extension agents in the prevailing hierarchical linear ‘expert teaching mode’. Public sector extension faces numerous limitations, in particular, insufficient generation, dissemination and adoption of improved agricultural technologies and practices; lack of client-based program planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; inadequate human, infrastructural, and institutional capacities; and constrained funding. Public sector extension is unable to reach all those in the agricultural sector who could benefit from agricultural extension information and advice.

There are now public, some private, and an abundance of civil society actors engaged in extension activities in Liberia. NGOs and special projects provide a very significant amount of the extension services across the country, giving them a wide scope in approach, range, and reach of their activities.

Extension services in Liberia continue to be preoccupied with the supply and distribution of agricultural inputs and equipment to farmers (often free of charge). There is insufficient monitoring and evaluation of quality of services provided. Although extension approaches which focus on engaging groups of farmers (largely through Farmer Field School type approaches) are becoming more widespread, there is limited emphasis on client empowerment or participatory approaches for extension program planning and development in rural communities. There are singularly few agricultural education institutions preparing for future generations of extension services providers. In general, the key functions of an extension service are not being adequately carried-out. These key functions are:

Source and transform research-based and indigenous knowledge of improved technologies and practices that are remunerative into extension messages and materials.

Improve farmer, and other market actors, access to and knowledge of remunerative improved technologies and practices.

Assist farmers, and other market actors, to make optimal use of their available resources to ensure access to food and income for their families.

Help farmers solve their agricultural problems and improve their farm and natural resource management and marketing skills.

Organize farmers into producer groups (e.g., production, processing, marketing, storage, and/or transport) to build social capital and strengthen their market position, with particular emphasis on “profits”.

**1.2 Definitions**

**1.2.1 Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services (AEAS)**

Liberia chooses to use the term “agricultural extension and advisory services” (AEAS) to identify its national system. The terms extension and advisory services are used interchangeably. AEAS are defined much more broadly than the traditional view which holds that extension primarily transfers technology and trains farmers to increase production and improve yields. AEAS are a system that:

* facilitates the access of women, men, and young farmers, their organizations and other market actors (e.g., processors, consolidators, traders) to knowledge[[5]](#footnote-5), information, and technologies;
* facilitates their interactions with each other and with partners in research, education, agri-business, banks, and other relevant institutions; and
* assists them to develop their own technical, organizational, and management skills and practices.[[6]](#footnote-6)

**1.2.2 Food Security**

Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (1996 World Food Summit).

**2.0 LIBERIA’S NATIONAL POLICY FOR AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICES (AEAS)**

**2.1 Need**

The landscape of agriculture extension in Liberia is changing rapidly. This is driven by globalization, the increasing need to produce food for an expanding population, climate change, growing concern over natural resource management, and a move from primarily public sector delivered extension to extension services delivered also by the private and civil society sectors. Currently, there are many organizations, agencies, and institutions involved in the provision of agricultural extension in Liberia. Services are fragmented, uncoordinated, and sometimes duplicative. Liberia’s 2008 *Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy* emphasizes development of decentralized, demand-driven extension services targeting smallholders and focusing on food production. In its Institutional Development Program, LASIP calls for building capacity and transforming Liberia’s national extension service into a decentralized demand-driven farm advisory system. Building capacity of all engaged in AEAS underpins this Policy and is critical to its success.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Currently, the MOA does not have a referenced policy document to provide direction for agricultural extension and frame the process of transforming the national extension system. In-line with the *Nairobi Declaration on Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services* (2011), which calls on governments to develop clear policies on extension and advisory services in a participatory manner, it is the purpose of this document to address this policy deficiency and articulate Liberia’s National Policy for AEAS.

The focus of the National Policy for AEAS is to provide the legal and enabling framework for the transformation of the existing extension system into a pluralistic, decentralized, demand-driven, and market-oriented system that is responsive to cross-cutting issues such as nutrition, gender, HIV/AIDS, natural resource management, and climate change Effective and efficient implementation of the Policy will enable AEAS stakeholders to appropriately and sustainably use their resources and it will foster the acceleration of Liberia’s socio-economic development.

**2.2 Vision and Mission**

The Vision of the policy is organized groups of Liberian agricultural extension and advisory service clientele across the country demanding and accessing at the right time and the right place, high-quality market-appropriate extension and advisory services from providers of their choice and contributing to the cost of these services.

The Mission of the policy is to provide AEAS client stakeholders across the country with efficient and effective AEAS.

**3.0 AREAS OF POLICY INTERVENTION**

There are five primary areas of policy intervention requisite to realizing the Vision and Mission of the National Policy on Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services and achieving a transformed AEAS system. These are AEAS system characteristics; AEAS client stakeholders and geographic coverage; AEAS content, approach, and methods; AEAS actor roles and responsibilities; and AEAS coordination.

**3.1 AEAS System Characteristics**

The policy encourages the development of a pluralistic, decentralized, demand-driven, and market-oriented system of AEAS that incorporates cross-cutting issues of priority to the people and Government of Liberia.

**3.1.1 Pluralistic AEAS**

Liberia’s AEAS system of service providers now encompasses actors from the public, private, and civil society sectors. Donors and international technical agencies are key actors in the AEAS system as a whole. The term pluralistic, in the context of pluralistic AEAS, refers specifically to the plurality of actors who provide AEAS services. Donors and international technical agencies support many of these providers.

**Public sector** actors include ministries and other organizations of the state.

**Private sector** actors include farm households; farmer groups, associations, and cooperatives; agribusinesses including input suppliers; and other profit-oriented firms such as concessions

**Civil society sector** is comprised of NGOs; educational institutions; the media; and other civil society community-based organizations.[[8]](#footnote-8)

In addition to the idea that these sectors filled a vacuum as public sector extension declined, the basic reasoning for promoting pluralism is to tackle extension constraints of coverage and financing. Public sector extension has insufficient number of agents to reach the high numbers of widely-dispersed and hard to reach smallholders. Engaging others via a pluralistic system will help extension coverage. Public sector extension has less than sufficient funds needed to fully support both its staff and programs. Diversifying the providers of extension and advisory services is expected to bring additional funding to service provision (though not necessarily to the public sector). Within a pluralistic system, the delivery of service and the funding of service can be delinked. For example, the public sector has funded other sectors to deliver specific services.

The Policy will identify and suggest roles the different sectors (public, private, and civil society) can play in a pluralistic system (see Section 3.4 below). It creates space for, and welcomes, the participation of all sectors in the delivery and funding of AEAS to its various stakeholders. In particular, it fosters and encourages Public-Private Partnerships.

**3.1.2 Decentralized AEAS**

Decentralized public sector extension involves transferring government decision-making and funding support to lower levels and increasing local government involvement in extension activities, including outsourcing (or contracting-out) extension activities. Decentralization also considers the degree of decision-making authority transferred to rural people from participation in extension programming to control over specific financing. The principle of subsidiarity underlies decentralization, supporting the move away from a top-down decision-making model. Liberia has moved MOA extension staff from central to county and district-levels and promotes the decentralization process. Within the framework of guidance from MOA at the national-level, operational decisions have been decentralized to county-level MOA staff. Discussions regarding further decentralization of MOA decision-making and funding continue.

The policy supports continued decentralization of select responsibilities of public sector extension to local authorities in the counties, districts, and clans. This will involve strengthening of local ownership, commitment, and accountability at these different levels. To address the principle of subsidiarity relative to farmer participation, the policy establishes a framework of local to national platforms whereby farmers, along with other stakeholders, will have substantial input into planning extension programs and identifying program priorities (see Section 3.5 below).

**3.1.3 Demand-Driven AEAS**

Demand in this context is defined as “what people ask for, need and value so much that they are willing to invest their resources, such as time and money, in order to receive the services”.[[9]](#footnote-9) Demand-driven AEAS are characterized by accountability of service providers to service users, by the ability of farmers to identify what services they want and/or to choose among service providers, and by farmers paying in some way for services delivered (e.g., fee-for-service, in-kind contribution, or cost-sharing). Although the demand for public good services such as natural resources management may be weak, the, public sector AEAS will continue to play a major role in their provision.

The Policy endorses AEAS providers to experiment with mechanisms to increase accountability of service providers to service users using protocols such as Memoranda of Understanding between users and providers and performance agreements between users and providers. AEAS providers are responsible for building service users capacity to articulate their needs and demands. As different providers become active, farmers are free to choose among them, contingent on their ability to meet provider requirements. The policy supports a gradual movement toward farmer contribution to costs of services delivered, beginning with a graduated removal of direct subsidies to farmers in the form of free distribution of goods such as seeds and tools. This does not apply where goods are provided as a means to decrease risk associated with a high-risk innovative or improved agricultural technology or practice. Based on the premise that people value what they contribute to, and feel positive about themselves when they are able to contribute, the goal of this policy element is to slowly but surely increase farmer contributions to the costs of services provided.

**3.1.4 Market-Oriented AEAS**

Market-oriented AEAS promote value chain approaches and move AEAS from a production and technology transfer focus to a focus on markets and on greater involvement in facilitation in market chains. A market-orientation expands the role of extension from interacting exclusively with farmers to interacting with other actors, such as processors, consolidators, traders, agro-dealers, banks, researchers, and agricultural educators.

The policy fosters the promotion of value-chain activities as well as agricultural diversification activities suitable for different farm households as they seek to increase their income. It encourages AEAS providers to facilitate interactions among all actors along market chains.

**3.1.5 Cross-Cutting Issues of Priority**

A transformed AEAS system supports related and emerging cross-cutting issues of importance to the people and Government of Liberia. Currently these include: gender issues, equity of access and participation, HIV/AIDS and other health-related issues, nutrition, and sustainable natural resources management and climate change

* ***Gender Issues*.** The Policy fully supports the inclusion ofgender issues in public, private, and civil society sector AEAS, taking into consideration the unique needs of women farmers. AEAS are still largely male dominated, both in terms of who receives and who delivers AEAS. Hence it is necessary to ensure that women farmers receive information relevant to their agricultural work, particularly with reference to crops, livestock, and post-harvest technologies. Training of women in decision-making in the context of farm and home management and family health as well as training of women on agricultural marketing, particularly with respect to post-harvest processing, on farm value addition, and market requirements/demand will be provided. Efforts will be made to provide training for both men and women extension and advisory staff on women’s role in agriculture and rural development and how AEAS could be organized and conducted to meet women’s needs in these spheres. As a method to facilitate reaching more women, the policy encourages AEAS in all three sectors to increase the number of female AEAS staff in their employ.
* ***Equity of Access and Participation*.** The objective is to improve equity of access to and participation in AEAS by non-traditional and vulnerable groups such as women, widows, youths and the specially-challenged.
* ***HIV/AIDS and Other Health Issues.*** The Policy promotes the inclusion of information on HIV/AIDS and other human health issues, such as schistosomiasis, in AEAS messages. AEAS providers will need to acquire knowledge and understanding of such issues in order to protect themselves and to educate their AEAS clients and communities.
* ***Nutrition*.** An aspect of food security is food utilization. Food utilization is linked to nutrition. AEAS providers are encouraged to facilitate good nutrition behaviors by incorporating nutrition messages in their interactions with farm men, women, and youth.
* ***Sustainable Natural Resource Management (SNRM) and Climate Change*.** The Policy promotes activities, projects, and programs that create awareness of SNRM and that teach SNRM practices such as promoting renewable use and environment-friendly activities; preserving, protecting and developing natural resource bases; strengthening the capabilities of AEAS providers and clients to manage environmental concerns. The Policy supports preparing AEAS clients with knowledge and skills to mitigate against the adverse affects of climate change as the basic requisite for sustainable agricultural development.

**3.2 AEAS Client Stakeholders and Geographic Coverage**

Transformed AEAS will focus on diverse categories of client stakeholders across the country, including women and men farmers as well as widows, youth, and specially-challenged groups and organizations engaged in agriculture activities. As used in this document, the term ‘client stakeholders’ refers to those who receive AEAS services, those who are clients of AEAS providers. The term ‘client stakeholder’ and stakeholder are used interchangeably.

The policy supports opening AEAS to all agriculture sector stakeholders across the country, while focusing on its primary clients: smallholder producers, most particularly women and youth, and their organizations. In this context, AEAS stakeholders are not only producers, but also input supply dealers, consolidators, and processors as well as buyers and others involved in marketing who would benefit from receiving AEAS services.

To build social capital of AEAS stakeholders and to address issues of AEAS coverage (i.e., the capacity of AEAS providers to reach all those across the country who could benefit from AEAS), the Policy emphasizes working with existing farmer groups, associations, cooperatives (such as those organized by the Cooperative Development Agency), and other apex organizations and/or reinvigorating groups whose effectiveness has declined. Where these entities do not exist, the Policy promotes the sustainable formation, development, and strengthening of farmer groups, associations, and other apex organizations. These may be producer, processor, marketing, input supply groups or any combinations deemed appropriate by group members. Organized groups are open to interacting with any AEAS provider, even if that provider did not provide initial group development and support. Groups and organizations can provide effective channels for both the dissemination of improved technologies and practices to large numbers of small and marginal farmers and for channelling feedback to extension and research. They can also serve as viable linkage mechanisms to other service providers, including input suppliers and marketing agencies. With capacity development, farmer groups are enabled to act as their own AEAS providers, delivering services to their own members. Active and competent groups will ensure meaningful farmer participation in representative AEAS platforms and groups will be called upon to partake in decisions regarding the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of AEAS. As well, groups and organizations will, to the extent possible, increasingly influence the hiring of and incentives for their AEAS providers.

**3.3 AEAS Content, Approach, and Methods**

While AEAS covers all major content areas of agriculture—including farm management and farm financing; production of food, tree, and cash crops, livestock, and fish; post-harvest practices and processing; credit; marketing; and business development services—the Policy emphasizes the importance of framing content within the context of farming as a business. As the lead ministry in the agriculture sector, the MOA is the focal point for content of AEAS content and messages. The Policy expects content and messages to be evidence-based and reflect best practices. As requested, the MOA will make available technical content and messages to all AEAS providers. This will involve a collaborative process of exchange of information as organizations other than the MOA may have the most current evidence-based and best practices content. Where comparative advantage in terms of content and delivery capacity of AEAS is established and agreed upon, possibly in the rubber and oil palm industries for example, the MOA will rely on competent actors in the sector to deliver the majority of AEAS with subsequent decrease in MOA direct involvement in service delivery in the sector.

Given that there are various approaches to delivery of AEAS, the Policy supports all that are designed to be cost effective and efficient in reaching stated AEAS goals and objectives. While group based approaches are strongly encouraged, considered as best practice, and essential to reach large numbers of clients, no single approach nor method is suitable for all purposes and occasions. AEAS providers will select appropriate approaches and methods in order to meet specific AEAS objectives with various categories of clients. The Policy strives for and appreciates approaches and methods that are grounded in best practices, are participatory, that empower AEAS clients, and that are sustainable. The Policy promotes the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) as a critical component in the provision of AEAS. Harnessing ICT for AEAS provision will ensure that information, including feedback, is shared more widely, more cost-effectively, and more rapidly to diverse clients across the country.

**3.4 Actor Roles and Responsibilities**

Changes in AEAS providers and the delivery system give rise to modifications in the roles and responsibilities of the public, private, and civil society sector actors and others in the system.

**3.4.1 Public Sector**

* ***The MOA*.** The overarching responsibility of the MOA in the drive toward transforming AEAS is to create an environment conducive to the full participation in AEAS of all AEAS providers and AEAS clients from the public, private, and civil society sectors. The long-term goal foresees the private sector providing the very large majority of AEAS with MOA focused on its main functions and having a reduced role in direct provision of AEAS. It is acknowledged however that in an economy where the large majority of farmers are smallholders, the public sector will continue to play a vital role in AEAS delivery. The MOA will continue to be involved, as needed, in the provision of AEAS in the short and medium-term.

 The main functions of the MOA are coordination, facilitation, regulation, monitoring, evaluation, and resource mobilization. In the context of a pluralistic system, MOA responsibilities are to:

* 1. Create evidence-based extension messages and materials for use by AEAS providers in their work with agricultural stakeholders.
	2. Coordinate with regional, national, and local research entities and other relevant institutions (e.g., Environmental Protection Agency, Forestry Development Authority) to facilitate the flow of information, issues, challenges, and solutions among all involved in AEAS.
	3. Coordinate AEAS-related data and information management systems including market transaction data.
	4. Coordinate all AEAS providers to improve extension reach and coverage and minimize duplication of services.
	5. Monitor and evaluate AEAS activities and projects implemented throughout the country for purposes of promoting quality of service delivery.
	6. Establish and facilitate a participatory process for development of accreditation standards and guidelines for AEAS providers at the individual and/or service group level.
	7. Accredit AEAS providers at the individual and/or service group level.
	8. Promote appropriate AEAS (including farmer group development)[[10]](#footnote-10) on all agricultural-related subject-matter including land rights. In the absence of private or civil society sector provision of AEAS, the MOA will provide such AEAS.
	9. Identify constraints to efficient and effective AEAS, with the aim of removing these constraints.
	10. Develop human resources for AEAS including capacity development in technical, social, management, and organizational areas.Maintain a reasonable flow of funding for AEAS.
	11. Facilitate financial resources to farmer groups and associations so they are enabled to contract directly with public and private AEAS partners and define, manage, and implement their own AEAS.
	12. Review the National Policy on AEAS to reflect situational changes on a periodic basis.
* ***Local County Authorities*.** In-line with decentralization, in cooperation with MOA, and increasingly overtime, county authorities are expected to:
	1. Provide appropriate AEAS (including farmer group development) on all agriculture-related subject-matter.
	2. Collaborate in coordination of AEAS along with MOA.
	3. Collaborate in monitoring and evaluation of AEAS activities and projects along with MOA.
	4. Develop human resources for AEAS at the county-level.

**3.4.2 Private Sector**

* ***Agricultural Firms and Businesses*** responsibilities are to:
1. Supply and distribute agricultural inputs including embedding AEAS as part of product promotion.
2. Produce commercial seeds, seedlings, cuttings, and other planting materials under government certification and quality control.
3. Increase the availability of agriculture equipment, particularly labor-saving equipment for use by farmers, processors, and others.
4. Provide appropriate AEAS to clients able to meet private sector requirements.
5. Participate actively in AEAS platforms and coordinating bodies and meetings.
* ***Women, Men, and Young Farmers and their organizations*.**

While farmers and their organizations are expected to benefit from AEAS, their critical role is also that of clients, sponsors, and stakeholders of AEAS. They are active essential partners with a highly significant stake in the outcomes of AEAS. To that end, their major roles are to:

1. Become increasingly proactive in their working relationships with public, private, and civil society sector AEAS.
2. Collaborate in coordination of AEAS along with MOA.
3. Collaborate in monitoring and evaluation of AEAS activities and projects along with MOA.
4. Participate actively in AEAS platforms and coordinating bodies and meetings.
5. Convey their AEAS needs to appropriate levels of AEAS facilitators and providers in order to establish AEAS activities, projects, and programs that are farmer-driven.
6. Apply AEAS information, advice, and improved technologies and practices to their agricultural operations and provide feedback to AEAS providers, researchers, and other stakeholders on outcomes of such application.
7. Manage on-farm testing and demonstration of improved technologies and practices.
8. Progressively demonstrate financial commitment to AEAS through graduated contributions costs of AEAS.
9. Establish and manage their own AEAS.

**3.4.3 Civil Society Sector**

* ***International and Local NGOs and Community-Based Organizations (CBO)****.* Working collaboratively with the MOA, the primary roles of NGOs and CBOs are to:
	1. Provide appropriate AEAS on all agriculture-related subject-matter emphasizing farming as a business and increasing farmer access to improved agricultural technologies and practices.
	2. Reinvigorate and strengthen existing or form and develop new farmer groups, associations, and apex organizations as critical sustainable components of a transformed AEAS system.
	3. Engage farmers and other stakeholders in sustainable actions designed to assist them to achieve their food security and increase their income.
	4. Test-out innovative AEAS approaches and methods in order to identify and disseminate best practices to those involved in AEAS.
	5. Develop linkages and networks among AEAS actors along market chains,
	6. Collaborate in coordination of AEAS along with MOA.
	7. Collaborate in monitoring and evaluation of AEAS activities and projects along with MOA.
	8. Participate actively in AEAS platforms and coordinating bodies and meetings.
* ***Agricultural Education Institutions***

 These institutions are vital for building and sustaining AEAS capacity. To complement their role in building expertise to be applied to the agricultural sector in general, their primary role vis-à-vis AEAS is to meet the growing need to develop well-trained AEAS advisors and technicians who are capable of efficiently and effectively responding to the needs of farmers and their organizations and to meet the array of challenges of a pluralistic AEAS system.

**3.4.4 Donors and International Technical Agencies**

Good donor practices, as presented in various statements such as the Global Donor Platform for Rural Development “Joint Donor Principles for Agriculture and Rural Development Programmes”, the L’Aquila statement, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and the Accra Agenda for Action, provide the framework for donor and international technical agency roles. These documents emphasize principles such as ownership, alignment, harmonization, managing for results, mutual accountability, strategic coordination, support for country-owned processes, a comprehensive approach, use of effective multilateral mechanisms, and sustained commitment. Within this framework, roles more specific to AEAS are to advise on trends and emerging practices; make available technical advice and support; develop and implement participatory processes for monitoring, evaluation, and impact assessment and for conducting research on extension processes; and finance and invest in AEAS.

**3.5 AEAS COORDINATION**

It is recognized that coordination among stakeholders and actors is fundamental to successful AEAS and consultative mechanisms are required.[[11]](#footnote-11) Coordination is a main function of the MOA and the MOA will lead such efforts in collaboration with others in the AEAS system. Coordination will be ongoing and continuous. The goal of coordination is to develop trust and facilitate transparency, open communications, and dialogue among all involved with AEAS in order to meet and overcome the challenges of this Policy’s Vision and Mission. Stating from the seminal document, *Common Framework on Agricultural Extension*, the dialogue must be equitable - coordination must not become control by a different name.[[12]](#footnote-12)

There are three categories of actors whose active engagement in systematic consultations will be critical. These are: farmers; public, private, and civil society sector AEAS providers; and AEAS providers, researchers, technical experts, input suppliers, agricultural educators, and others who have access to remunerative new or improved agricultural technologies and practices.

**3.5.1 Farmers**

Currently, farmers and/or their organizations, at the clan, district, county, and national levels have limited opportunity to directly provide input to reviewing, discussing, and/or establishing extension plans and priorities that affect them. Opportunities for farmers to provide feedback to AEAS providers on their performance are also limited. To facilitate a demand-driven AEAS system requires that farmers have such opportunities, and have the capacity, to articulate their needs (or demands) and assess extension performance. Based on the principle of subsidiarity, a formalized farmer steering committee platform at these levels is to be established to provide farmers with such opportunities. In order to act effectively on such opportunities, farmers will need capacity development to support their participation in such platforms. Women farmers, young farmers, and farmers from disadvantages groups, as well as progressive and innovative farmers should all participate in these platforms. Farmer platforms need simultaneously to be linked to AEAS providers who it is expected will act on the information and input provided by farmers.

**3.5.2 Public, Private, and Civil Society Sector AEAS Providers**

While a national-level platform for providers is needed, the large majority of effort and emphasis is to be at the county and/or district-levels. National-level activities to be undertaken could include development of an *AEAS Code of Conduct Handbook* and other such activities that impact across the country. At the clan, district, and county levels, within the framework of participating AEAS project parameters and in light of input from farmer stakeholder platforms, the aim is to identify common objectives and priorities and ways of addressing these objectives and priorities. The different AEAS providers can capitalize on their field-based experiences and exchange information on, for example, activities, plans, best practices, challenges, and solutions to challenges. Collaboratively planning, scheduling, and conducting of monitoring and evaluation activities, with the end of providing quality services, are critical activities at these levels. There are possibilities of pooling certain resources at these levels, such as training resources.

**3.5.3 AEAS Providers, Researchers, Technical Experts, Input Suppliers, and Others Who Have Access to Remunerative New or Improved Agricultural Technologies and Practices**

One of the key functions of agricultural extension identified earlier in this Policy is: To source and transform research-based and indigenous knowledge of improved technologies and practices that are remunerative into extension messages and materials. To perform this function, new innovative ways of engaging research and extension, and others—including farmers—who have evidence-based practices, need to be identified and tested.

The Policy supports experimenting with the establishment of a national-level “Best Practices Group”, having the primary aim of producing evidence-based extension messages and materials encompassed in the concept of “Best Practices”. A best practice is a technique or methodology that, through experience and research, has proved to reliably lead to a desired result. It is a method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark. A commitment to using the best practices in any field is a commitment to using all the knowledge and technology at one’s disposal to ensure success. [[13]](#footnote-13)

Initial objectives of the national Best Practices Group are to: identify Best Practices; package practices into extension messages and materials in the form of tools in extension tool kits; identify researchable problems as the basis for research and development of Best Practices; and find practical answers and innovative solutions to the range of challenges farmers and their organizations face. Best Practices are not limited to production practices, but also consider for example, processing, marketing, financing, and ICT, as well as other types of Best Practices that advance agriculture in Liberia. To bring field-based Best Practices to the national-level, pilot experiments with county, and potentially district, Best Practice Groups are to be carried-out.

**3.5.4 Coordination Mechanism**

The effective coordination and implementation of the National Policy hinges on the appropriate harmonization and linkage of all actors. This will be coordinated along three major platforms, properly decentralized with membership open to major operatives, where applicable at the different levels of the decentralized system. The three platforms will be coordinated through the National Extension Platform under the Agricultural Coordination Committee (ACC) as a technical working group to be duplicated in the counties. The Implementation Strategy of this Policy document, to be developed, will detail the structure and implementation of the coordination mechanism.

**4.0 THE WAY FORWARD**

The Policy supports and promotes high-quality AEAS that are responsive to the wide-range of Liberia’s AEAS stakeholders. To this end, implementation of some aspects of the AEAS Policy can begin immediately or in the near term. The Task Force charged with the development of this Policy acknowledges that an Implementation Strategy will facilitate moving the AEAS policy agenda in its entirety further forward. Thus, under the leadership and coordination of the MOA, an Implementation Strategy will be developed to detail the various mechanisms whereby policy interventions are put into observable practice.

1. These figures from Liberia’s *2008 Population and Housing Census*. World Bank 2011 figures indicate the population has increased to 4.1 million see: http://data.worldbank.org/country/Liberia [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. National Transitional Government of Liberia, United Nations Mission in Liberia. (2004). *A Profile Ministry of Agriculture*, UNMIL Civil Affairs Section, Monrovia, Liberia, 6 December 2004. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Technical Assistance Services in Support the Ministry of Agriculture (TASMOA). (2009). *Strategic Assessment of the MOA*. Monrovia, Liberia. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This is an improved version of the MOA’s mandate that considers the current program of the Government of Liberia on Public Administration and Decentralization as contained in the *Smaller Government, Better Service*, Civil Service Reform Strategy (2008-2011), June 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. This would include, for example, knowledge of land rights. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Adapted from: Davis, K., & Heemskerk, W. (2012). Investment in Extension and Advisory Services as Part of Agricultural Innovation Systems. World Bank. In *Agricultural Innovation Systems: An Investment Sourcebook* (pp. 179-260). Washington, DC: World Bank. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. This would include capacity development, for example, of women, men, and youth farmers and their organizations, processors, input supply dealers, extension staff, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This is also referred to as the third sector. Farmer marketing groups, and other farmer groups, associations, and cooperatives could be categorized as civil society sector (with cooperatives as public sector) but all are categorized as private sector herein because they are profit-oriented.. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Chipeta, S. (2006). *Demand-driven Agricultural Advisory Services*. Lindau, Switzerland: Neuchâtel Group. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Appropriate AEAS would include, but not be limited to: Increasing farmer, and other market actors, access to and knowledge of remunerative improved technologies and practices; assisting farmers, and other market actors, to make optimal use of their available resources to ensure access to food and income for their families; and helping farmers solve their agricultural problems and improve their farm and natural resource management and marketing skills. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Coordination is described as the orderly arrangement of efforts to provide unity of action in the fulfillment of common objectives. Consultation is a process of dialogue leading to a decision, involving sharing of information and seeking of opinions and inputs on options and alternatives. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Neuchatel Group. (2009). *Common Framework on Agricultural Extension*. Lindau, Switzerland: AGRIDEA. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Available: http://searchsoftwarequality.techtarget.com/definition/best-practice [↑](#footnote-ref-13)