At Catholic Relief Services, we have big ambitions. Our bold goals include—but are not limited to—1.5 million people overcoming poverty, 1 million farmers increasing their agricultural yields by 50%, 50 million people benefiting from savings and borrowing services.

In Liberia, and around the world, CRS champions a multi-sectorial approach—whether we’re responding to emergencies or supporting agriculture, health, peacebuilding, and livelihoods.

The yearlong, USAID-funded Agriculture Sustainability Activity (ASA) implemented by CRS in July 2021 promoted sustainable economic growth, food security and agricultural development in Liberia. Using the Farmer-to-Farmer volunteer approach, the project connected a pool of local and international volunteers to smallholder farmers in four counties to address their challenges and increase the availability of domestically produced and processed rice and cassava.

Farmers from Suakoko Agriculture Development Empowerment Cooperative go back home after work in Suakoko rural area near Gbarlala town in Bong County, Liberia, on July 19, 2022. They received training sessions from the CRS Agriculture Sustainability Activity (ASA) program. [Patrick Meinhardt for CRS]

Leveraging Partnerships

STRENGTHENING THE RICE AND CASSAVA VALUE CHAIN IN LIBERIA


CRS is uniquely positioned to pivot quickly. To utilize already established partnerships and programs. And to facilitate results under challenging circumstances.

Because for more than 75 years, that is exactly what we have done. With shared goals and commitment, we see no limit to the long-term independence and self-reliance we can build in collaboration with our partners and the people we serve. Farmer to farmer, field to table, market to market, together we grow.
Remarkable Impact

Focusing on building the capacities and resilience of four groups in the agricultural production value chain—women, men and youth in rural farm households, agro-dealers, markets/aggregators and processors—the Agriculture Sustainability Activity leverages the network of expertise available through Farmer-to-Farmer and local partners. Through paired volunteer assignments, farmers within the rice and cassava value-chain gain knowledge in key areas like good agricultural practices (including climate-smart agriculture), post-harvest handling and storage, marketing and organizational development and business and financial management to improve production and productivity, access new markets, and conserve resources.

The results have been life changing.

In the cassava value-chain, volunteer training in marketing helped Rural Women and Girls Promoters for Sustainable Development redesign their super gari packaging, promote their product via radio and social media, and expand to three markets. Training in business planning and management enabled the Beyan Business center to hire a bookkeeper, open an account with a finance institution, and practice accurate record keeping.

In the rice value-chain, volunteers worked with five cooperatives to develop a template for contract farming, which will help increase commercialization and establish effective mutual relationships. Both the Beteba Rice Farmers’ Association and the Dezebah Farmers’ Association saw marked increases in sales and significant decreases in post-harvest losses after trainings in harvesting, packaging, cooling, storage, cleaning, sorting, and transportation.

All in all, farmers implemented many of the Agriculture Sustainability Activity volunteers’ recommendations which will help increase value of annual sales, increase hectares under improved management practices or technologies and eventually improve yields.

Musu Nana, Chair of Suakoko Rural Women Cooperative

“When we started in 2015 we were only 30 farmers, today we are 1242. CRS came and helped us improve our farming practices and how to better develop our business.”

Gormiah Yarkpawolo, Cassava farmer, Bong County

“I used to plant cassava in a traditional way but would lose many crops in the process. Thanks to CRS we learnt the importance of location and where to plant. I am sure we will get more out of this crop. With the profits I will pay for my children school fees and buy medicine.”

Noah Wilson, Chairlady of Dakotan Cooperative

“As a chairlady I like to encourage other farmers so they can keep doing what they like. Through CRS I have learn better irrigation techniques and how to work in groups. Before I used to be by myself but now I have learnt the value of team work. I like being a farmer, eating what I produce.”