

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

RURAL FINANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (RFCIP 2)



INSIDE DE FARM

— MONTHLY NEWSLETTER —



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ON THE OCCASION OF THE STATE OPENING OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE SIXTH PARLIAMENT, PRESIDENT BIO HIGHLIGHTS STRIDES MADE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY



**MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD SECURITY (MAFS) AND
PARTNERS REFLECT ON MILESTONES
AND DEVELOP SMART PLANS
FOR NEXT QUARTER**



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His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio (G.C.R.S.L.)

His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio (G.C.R.S.L.), President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces has on the occasion of the State Opening of the Second Session of the Sixth Parliament of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone on Tuesday, 6th August, 2024 highlighted strides made on Agriculture and Food Security. Below, see except from the Presidential address:

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, Agriculture and Food security are the cornerstones of a nation's stability and prosperity.

They transcend mere sustenance and form a crucial pillar of national resilience, economic growth, and social wellbeing. Without the ability to feed our people, we risk sitting atop a volatile precipice poised for unrest and turmoil. The adage "a hungry man is an angry man" holds profound truth, highlighting the direct link between food scarcity and national security.

In my address to this esteemed House last year, I emphasised that prioritising investments in agriculture can mitigate food price volatility, enhance our resilience to external shocks, and advance our journey towards food self-sufficiency.

Increasing investment in the agriculture sector has the power to create jobs, reduce dependency on essential food imports, boost export earnings from cash crops, and catalyse sustainable economic growth. This investment is a safeguard for national security and a vision for a prosperous future.

As we prioritise "FEED SALONE" in our new Medium -Term National Development Plan, our vision for a robust food production system is private sector-led, transforming every aspect of our agricultural value chains.

My Government has focused on addressing key constraints such as finance, soil fertility, water management, mechanisation, quality seed input, infrastructure, and the deployment of technology and research to boost agricultural productivity.

Since the launch of the FEED SALONE Programme in October last year, we have made the following strides in collaboration with International Partners and Non-Governmental Organisations:

- ◇ Expansion of Rice Production: We have expanded rice production areas to include inland valley swamps, irrigated fields, and mechanised services to expedite land preparation.

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- ◇ Mechanisation of the Value Chain: We increased mechanisation by providing tractors, harvesters, rice mills, and three landing craft for riverine areas.
- ◇ Research and Quality Inputs: Utilising research to deliver high-quality inputs for optimal yields in key value chains, including rice, cocoa, and onions.
- ◇ Revival of Cooperatives: We have reintroduced the cooperative system to support rice farming and cocoa production and marketing.
- ◇ Development of Agribusinesses: We supported the establishment of the first cocoa processing factory, a sardine factory using local ingredients, a cashew processing factory, and a large-scale egg production and poultry hatchery.
- ◇ Establishment of Agro-Industrial Hubs: We have created hubs in key rice production areas, rehabilitated markets, replaced handdrawn ferries with bridges and constructed a dyke and 35 kilometres of feeder roads.
- ◇ Support to Armed Forces Agriculture: We enhanced the Armed Forces Agricultural Unit with machinery and high-quality inputs to scale up rice production. VIII. Financial Instruments for Agriculture: We tailored financial solutions such as Community Banks, a US\$10 Million Agriculture Credit Facility at a 10% interest rate, and a pioneering crop insurance scheme worth NLe28 Million.
- ◇ Ag-Tech and Climate-Smart Agriculture: We introduced technology to support agricultural research, established an early warning system for food security, a soil digital information system, and a national farmers registry linked to national identity numbers.
- ◇ Empowerment of Women and Youth: We expanded the participation of women and youth in agriculture, particularly in postproduction rice processing.
- ◇ Improved Farmer Earnings: We launched a pilot Out-Grower Scheme in Kambia District to increase the production, processing, marketing, and distribution of locally produced parboiled rice at affordable prices.



His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio at the House of Parliament

Our Government has partnered with international coalitions to enhance agricultural strategies, create an enabling environment for private sector participation, and strengthen inclusive food systems and institutions.

Sierra Leone currently co-chairs the Alliance of Champions for Food Systems Transformation and is a signatory to the Republic of Korea's K-Rice Belt project, supporting select African countries in achieving rice self-sufficiency.

THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY (MAFS) AND PARTNERS REFLECT ON MILESTONES AND DEVELOP SMART PLANS FOR NEXT QUARTER



Dr. Henry Musa Kpaka, Minister of Agriculture & Food Security

In his opening remarks, Minister of Agriculture Dr. Henry Musa Kpaka described the retreat as an essential platform for reviewing field activities, gathering critical data for this year's Feed Salone annual report, and addressing challenges affecting implementation in the field. Dr. Kpaka emphasized the importance of engaging all sectors involved within the Ministry to critically assess what has worked well and what needs improvement since the inception of Feed Salone. He highlighted the significance of civic education and citizen engagement, urging Sierra Leoneans to take ownership and actively participate in the Feed Salone initiative.

Dr. Kpaka also announced that the Inland Valley Swamp will be the Ministry's flagship project for the coming year, signaling a renewed focus on this critical area.

Joseph Kamara, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, praised the Ministry for its inclusive approach, which has brought all stakeholders involved in the Feed Salone drive together.

He described the retreat as a crucial step in assessing the progress of Feed Salone interventions and assured

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), along with its partners, convened a significant retreat from August 14-16, 2024, in Kenema. The event brought together key stakeholders, including representatives from MAFS projects, agencies, local government, FAO and the farmers, to review the Ministry's achievements, challenges, and strategize for the upcoming quarter.

the Ministry of Parliament's full commitment to collaborating closely on the necessary policies to achieve the vision.

Dr. James Edwin, Director General of the National Monitoring and Evaluation Agency (NaMEA), underscored the importance of synergy between ministries and other partners in obtaining credible data for Feed Salone. He noted that as the initiative approaches its first anniversary, the outcomes of this year's efforts will significantly influence President Bio's vision. Dr. Edwin stressed the need for accurate data and documentation to effectively tell the story of Feed Salone and urged participants to fully commit to their work to achieve the desired results.



THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY (MAFS) AND PARTNERS REFLECT ON MILESTONES AND DEVELOP SMART PLANS FOR NEXT QUARTER



The Minister, his two deputies, the Chief Agriculture Officer, Snr. P.S, DAOs, other technical staff and various MAFS projects heads

During the retreat, the Ministry also took the opportunity to sign Performance Contracts, an initiative by President Bio designed to hold District Agriculture Officers and Project Managers accountable and ensure they lead their teams towards maximum productivity. The process was overseen by Senior Permanent Secretary Mr. Andrew Sorie.

Over the three-day event, various MAFS projects, including AVDP, RAIC, SLARIS, RFCIP, RRVCP, SCADeP, and FSRP, as well as MAFS agencies and division heads, presented their achievements, challenges, recommendations, and plans for the next quarter. The Minister, his two deputies, the Chief Agriculture Officer, Professor Abdulai Jalloh, and other technical staff provided guidance and solutions to enhance implementation in the coming months.



Dr. Theresa T. Dick, Deputy Minister of MAFS I at the session



Mr. Sahr Hemore, Deputy Minister of MAFS II at the session

IFAD CONCLUDES IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT MISSION FOR THE RFCIP II PROJECT



The IFAD RFCIP II Support Mission Wrap up meeting chaired by the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Dr. Henry Musa Kpaka

With an objective to create an enabling environment for the implementation of the Rural Finance & Community Improvement Project Phase II (RFCIP-II), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has conducted an Implementation Support Mission for the RFCIP II Project from 12th to 22nd August 2024.

The mission while in the country paid courtesy calls to the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and the Minister of Finance (MoF) and then proceeded to Bo, where they held focused discussions with the Bank of Sierra Leone (BoSL), the NPCU, the Apex Bank and the Temporal Investment Fund (TIF) team, as well as the managers and clients of ten (10) Community Banks and the managers and members of another ten (10) Financial Services Associations. Representatives from MAFS, MoF, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development (MoPED) and BoSL participated in the support mission.

A pre-wrap up meeting with the staff of the NPCU was held on 21 August 2024 and the wrap up meeting chaired by the Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, Dr. Henry Musa Kpaka was held in Freetown on 22 August 2024.

The Mission was composed of two teams. Pascaline Barankeba, Country Director and Overall, Mission Leader; Davy Serge Azakpame, Regional Technical Specialist for Rural Finance, and Project Technical Lead (PTL); Joseph Brima, Country Programme Officer, in charge of M&E and KM; Yaw Brantuo, Rural Finance Specialist and Mission Technical Lead; Moses Jenkins, Procurement Specialist; Christopher Kalokoh, ICO Support Consultant on the IFAD Team.

In the Government of Sierra Leone Team were Lamin Conteh, representative from Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security; Mr Solomon Taylor, representative from Central Bank of Sierra Leone; Harding Konneh, representative from the Ministry of Finance; Rev. Michael Tejan Gbenday, representative from the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development.



Cross section of participants at the Wrap up meeting at MAFS

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

WITH SUPPORT FROM KOINDU COMMUNITY BANK 31 YEARS OLD SAHR BONGAY, DETERMINES TO CREATE MORE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO YOUTHS



Sahr Bongay, a serial Entrepreneur and a Rural Development Practitioner

Meet Sahr Bongay, (31 Years) a serial entrepreneur and a rural development practitioner in Koindu Town, Kailahun District. With his determined spirit and unwavering passion for Rural Development and entrepreneurship, Sahr carved his path to success, inspiring his fellow youth across the Kissi Kama and Dia Chiefdoms in the Kailahun District. From his early age as a Charcoal Burner to his current role as a serial entrepreneur with over a decade in establishing and managing different businesses. Sahr's story is nothing short of remarkable. Sahr started business at an early age under his father who was a Produce Buyer with a large shop in Koindu Town.

Sahr was able to unlock his full potential when he had an encounter with the Koidu Community Bank where he got his first loan of 5,000 NL (USD 200) to kick-start his entrepreneurial journey. Sahr has taken his 7th loan from the Koindu Community Bank to pursue his long dream of supporting his fellow youth in the Kissi Kama and Dia Chiefdoms. His current loan package is 50,000 NL. With this new loan, Sahr has ventured into series of businesses to create job opportunities for his fellow youth. Appalled by the quantum of jobless youth and his burning desire to create employment opportunities for these youth who are closed to his heart, he bought 13 motor cycles from the proceeds of his loan from the Koindu Community Bank in 2022 to support youth employment.

Moved by the desire to create employment opportunities for his fellow youths, Sahr has opened a mini-filling station (Fuel Dealer), a produce-buying shop/store and an additional shop in Dia Chiefdom to create more employment opportunities for these youths in order to address the growing youth unemployment in that part of the country.

To reach the Apex of his desire (which is to champion the cause of his fellow youth within and outside his native Koindu Town), Sahr proceeded to the Njala University College where he studied and graduated with a Bachelor in Rural Development. This spectacular youth from Koindu Town (One of the most affected places of the war and the Ebola scourge) is working tirelessly to ensure that he gets youth from slipping into drugs and other harmful substances to living a meaningful life by creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for a youthful population trapped by the scars of war and a ravaging Drug abuse ('kush' consumption).



Sahr Bongay receives NPCU Kai Edward Kelly

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

WITH SUPPORT FROM KOINDU COMMUNITY BANK 31 YEARS OLD SAHR BONGAY, DETERMINES TO CREATE MORE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES TO YOUTHS



"My vision is to create more opportunities for youth that would give them sustainable livelihoods."

This remarkable youth has acquired sound education (Bachelor Degree), chains of Produce Buying Shops/Stores in Kissi Kama and Dia Chiefdoms, fleets of Motor Cycles for Commercial purposes, a bigger shop in Freetown, a mini-filling station (Gas Station), 3 houses and booming business that has employed 30 youths and more.

"I have lived all my life in Koindu Town where youth unemployment is very high and opportunities very slim as a result of the war and the Ebola scourge.

I am very passionate about rural development and creating opportunities for young people, especially those who have lost their parents due to the war and the Ebola pandemic.

My vision is to create more opportunities for youth that would give them sustainable livelihoods. I am very grateful to the Koindu Community Bank who has been my bedrock of financial support in addressing youth unemployment and expanding my business to include more youths." Sahr Bongay (31 years).



Sahr being caught on camera



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

MULOMA WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT: PROMOTING WOMEN TO GROW THEIR BUSINESSES

Muloma Women's Development was founded by women living within the Simbaru Community. The essence of the creation of this exclusively women group was borne out of the desire to feed their entrepreneurial hunger and as a response to the needs and aspiration to support their families as most of their husbands are miners, which simply means the irregular flow of income to provide the requisite support to meet the basic needs of their varied households. With the support of the Simbaru Community Bank, this group has grown from strength to strength. Their membership which started with small committed members has grown in number and their income has dramatically changed as a group and also as individuals.

Group Head Kadiatu Barrie by her group's locally made Iron Box Safe

Before the establishment of a community bank in this community, it was very difficult for business people to have access to financial services (loans, remittances, savings, and payment facilitations). As a result of this problem faced by these women, the group was formed to self-raise capital to feed their entrepreneurial hunger and aspirations and to support domestic consumption for their families.

From a humble beginning of just 15 members (exclusively women of all ages and backgrounds), this group has evolved greatly over the years and its membership and coverage increased immensely with each member benefitting from the scheme to support their different businesses.

This group started raising funds from a daily contribution of 2NL by members of the group. This daily contribution is collected by the head of the group from each member and then kept in an iron box (locally made safe). To ensure transparency, accountability, probity, and sustainability of the scheme, a committee was set up among the members to manage the financial records of the group. Access to these savings can only be done with the consent of the group members as four different locks were put on the iron box and keys are kept by the 4 committee members chosen from the group to prevent individual access.

Whilst this box is kept in the custody of the group's leader, Kadiatu Barrie, she is excluded from the committee that has access to these keys.

With a certain amount of money saved the group then convened a meeting where a decision would be made to provide a loan to an individual member of the group to start a business of her own. Interests from these self-raised loans are then plowed into agricultural activity (rice, maize, cassava, and groundnut cultivation) to support their households with food. The little profit made from their agricultural venture is judiciously used to meet other needs of their families.



A display of the locally made Iron Box Safe

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

MULOMA WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT: PROMOTING WOMEN TO GROW THEIR BUSINESSES



Group Head Kadiatu Barrie

*"Unity is our strength,
and commitment to re-
paying our loans is key to
ensuring sustainability."*

With the establishment of Simbaru Community Bank, this group has benefitted not only from financial support (through loans and other financial services) but also from financial literacy which has strengthened their financial management skills. The youngest member of the group, Aminata Bangura (22) is now a proud business (shop) owner who has received business loans from Simbaru Community Bank to build her business whilst also using some of the funds to educate herself and her siblings.

Through the stewardship of Kadiatu Barrie, every member of the group is a shareholder of the bank and has benefitted tremendously from the services of the bank. From a humble beginning, Muloma Women's Savings Group is now a force to reckon with. Collectively and individually members of this group have opened and run their businesses and are making recognizable strides to the admiration of many within and outside Simbaru Chiefdom.

"Unity is our strength, and commitment to repaying our loans is key to ensuring sustainability." Kadiatu Barrie.



Muloma Women's Development Members around their locally made Iron Box Safe

RRVCP ENGAGES FBOS AND SMES ON ISLAMIC MICROFINANCE LOAN SCHEME IN TORMABUM



Group photo of the RRVCP supported FBOs and SMEs in Tormabum,

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security's Regional Rice Value Chain Project (RRVCP) has On Tuesday, August 20, 2024, held an engagement with farm-based groups (FBOs) and small-medium enterprises (SMEs) in Tormabum, Bum Chiefdom, Bonthe District. The meeting focused on introducing the Islamic Microfinance loan scheme, which will be processed by Apex Bank.

The purpose of this engagement was to formally inform the FBOs and SMEs, particularly women and youth, about the commencement of the loan scheme and to guide them through the process of accessing these loans from Apex Bank.

Welcoming the project team, the Paramount Chief of Bum Chiefdom, PC Alex Maada Kaipumu, expressed the community's excitement about the loan scheme. He noted that the majority of the chiefdom's residents are primarily engaged in rice production, with some also involved in cassava farming. He emphasized the importance of this initiative in empowering the actual farmers and businesspeople within the chiefdom. Chief Kaipumu thanked the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) for their continued support, which includes irrigation infrastructure, road development, and now, financial assistance to farmers.

Fatmata Binta Jalloh, Agribusiness Specialist at RRVCP, highlighted that the project aims to encourage women and youth to transition from subsistence farming to treating farming as a business, particularly with the

availability of the Islamic Microfinance loan scheme.

She explained that the loan scheme, which operates on a profit-sharing basis rather than traditional interest rates, aligns with the government's Feed Salone program. This program seeks to empower farmers and entrepreneurs, contributing to economic growth and improved livelihoods.

Watta Roseline Beah, Gender and Youth Officer at RRVCP, reinforced the critical role that women and youth play in farming and the local economy. She stated that the loan scheme is designed to optimize rice production and support other business ventures, further enhancing economic development in the community.



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