

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY

RURAL FINANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (RFCIP 2)



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SIERRA LEONE'S PRESIDENT JULIUS MAADA BIO COMMEMORATES FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF FEED SALONE, ENCOURAGES CITIZENS TO GROW WHAT THEY EAT



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SIERRA LEONE'S PRESIDENT JULIUS MAADA BIO COMMEMORATES FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF FEED SALONE, ENCOURAGES CITIZENS TO GROW WHAT THEY EAT

His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio has on Wednesday, October 16, 2024 joined the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, development partners, and farmers from across the nation to mark the first anniversary of the Feed Salone Initiative during the World Food Day celebrations, themed "Right to Food for a Better Life and a Better Future." The President urged Sierra Leoneans at the Kailahun Town Field, Eastern Region to take the initiative of growing their own food, even in their backyards.



His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio engaging an Octogenarian farmer at the World Food Day celebration in Kailahun

The President emphasized that while large-scale farming plays a critical role in realizing the Feed Salone objectives, if every citizen takes part in cultivating their food, his vision of food self-sufficiency for the nation will soon be a reality. He asserted that no nation can thrive without its people engaging in an agricultural revolution and called on all Sierra Leoneans to fully support the Feed Salone program for the greater good of the country.

President Bio reflected on how his flagship program during his first term focused on education, leading to an increase in school attendance among girls. He took the opportunity to express gratitude to the First Lady, Dr. Fati-ma Maada Bio, for her timely advocacy for the protection of girls in the country.

Encouraging all Sierra Leoneans to engage in agriculture regardless of their background, President Bio showcased his own endeavors, highlighting the cultivation of over 1,400 acres of rice and an additional 500 acres of oil palm on his farm.

He clarified that Feed Salone is about the welfare of Sierra Leoneans not about him as President or the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), urging citizens to actively pursue farming.

Dr. Kandeh Kolleh Yumkella, Chairman of the Presidential Initiative on Climate Change, Renewable Energy, and Food Security, expressed his gratitude to farmers for exhibiting their produce and demonstrating their efforts since the launch of the Feed Salone Initiative by President Bio. He urged farmers to remain patient with the government as it works to improve the sector, assuring them that with their support and government commitment, the goals of Feed Salone are within reach.

Mr. Saeed Abubakar Bantie, the Food and Agricultural Organisation representative in Sierra Leone, thanked President Bio for his dedication to agriculture through the Feed Salone initiative, noting the global increase in hunger and the pressing need for food diversification.

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His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio interacting with Project staff at the RFCIP 2 Booth during the World Food Day Celebration in Kailahun

He assured continued support from FAO for Feed Salone, including assistance for farmers and the Ministry of Agriculture in providing livestock, implementing innovative best practices, and empowering local communities.

Dr. Henry Musa Kpaka, Minister of Agriculture and Food Security, expressed appreciation to farmers nationwide for their steadfast support of President Bio's Feed Salone initiative. He highlighted that October 16th is not just an ordinary World Food Day celebration, but the very day President Bio launched Feed Salone, urging farmers to leverage their resources to turn agriculture into the nation's breadbasket.

Dr. Kpaka confirmed that farmers have embraced the President's call for widespread agricultural engagement across the country, citing several leading women farmers, including those in the diaspora.

The Minister promised that Feed Salone will continue until Sierra Leone can produce rice that is less expensive than imported varieties, improve connections for farmers to access markets through better road infrastructure, provide financial support to farmers, and create additional jobs in the sector. He encouraged everyone to engage in farming at any scale, reiterating the imperative that together, we can grow what we eat and urging others to take an active role in the Feed Salone initiative.

Forming part of the event was the presidential tour and inspection of booths by the President to catch glimpses of exhibited produce. At the RFCIP 2 booth, the President was received by the Project Technical Assistant for the Rural Farmers Radio Establishment, George Nyambe Williams who engaged him on the soon to be launched Rural Farmers Radio, while a presentation of gift (souvenir) from the Project team formed the highpoint.

PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL ON FEED SALONE BRIEFS PRESIDENT BIO ON FIRST-YEAR PROGRESS, ADVOCATES FOR CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE



His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio addressing members of the Presidential Council for Delivering Feed Salone

Dr Henry Musa Kpaka, Minister of Agriculture and Secretary to the Council, updated President Bio on the key achievements over the past year. He highlighted the development of strategic policies and partnerships with local and international stakeholders, aimed at facilitating the successful implementation of Feed Salone. He said institutional frameworks have been established to guide the initiative, ensuring a strong foundation for its continued success.

Dr. Kpaka outlined some of the notable achievements, including the mobilization of over \$1 billion in funding and technical support, which has enabled the government to invest heavily in infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and irrigation systems nationwide. Dr. Kpaka added that a national soil mapping program was also completed, providing critical data to inform farmers and partners on optimal farming practices across the country.

The Minister further emphasized that the focus on increasing rice production has been strengthened by expanding cultivated areas, enhancing mechanization, improving irrigation, and creating greater access to agricultural financing. He also spoke about a significant investment in seed and input systems, including the cultivation of orange-fleshed sweet potatoes and yellow-fleshed cassava, and innovations such as

The Presidential Council for Delivering Feed Salone has on Monday 7 October 2024 engaged His Excellency President Dr. Julius Maada Bio at State House, on the significant progress made under the government's flagship Feed Salone initiative. The Council also emphasized the need for farmers to adopt climate-smart agricultural practices.

rural telephony systems, which have been introduced to support farmers.

Looking ahead, Dr. Kpaka revealed ambitious plans for the next two years, including the development of 16,000 hectares of Inland Valley Swamps, strengthening the seed systems, scaling up livestock projects, and industrializing cassava production. He also mentioned the creation of the country's first farmer registry and the establishment of insurance policies for farmers. The Minister called for increased civic engagement, stressing that Feed Salone is a national initiative requiring the participation of all Sierra Leoneans.



Dr. Henry M. Kpaka, Minister of MAFS giving an update to H.E.

PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL ON FEED SALONE BRIEFS PRESIDENT BIO ON FIRST-YEAR PROGRESS, ADVOCATES FOR CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE



His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio and members of the Presidential Council on Feed Salone at State House

President Julius Maada Bio expressed his gratitude to the Council for their dedication and belief in the vision of Feed Salone. He acknowledged the significant progress made in just one year, attributing it to the collective efforts of the Council members and their diverse professional expertise.

“I have aggressively sought funding both within and outside Sierra Leone to realize the promise I made to the people,” President Bio said. “I have made strong cases for Feed Salone to our international partners, which has resulted in pledges that will support our agricultural agenda and value chain program. It is our responsibility to prepare projects that will ensure we can access those pledges.”

The President reiterated his commitment to ensuring that Sierra Leone can feed itself, stating that this requires collective determination and responsibility. “With the combined wisdom and experience of this Council, I am confident we will succeed in delivering on Feed Salone,” he assured.

Vice President Dr. Mohamed Juldeh Jalloh also weighed in, noting a reduction in food imports as a result of the government's investments in farmers through credit facilities provided by the Central Bank. He emphasized that while Feed Salone represents an end goal, it is the development of a robust food chain system that is key to achieving sustainable food security in the country.



THE MYTH AND THE MAN: MOHAMED TEJAN KELLA RECOGNIZED FOR HIS CONTRIBUTION IN THE COUNTRY'S FOOD SECURITY

Eagles do not flock, they are found one at a time. This aptly describes Mohamed Tejan-Kella, a serial agro-entrepreneur; Master Farmer; and seasoned programmer with over 35 years of experience specializing in developing and implementing agriculture and rural development programs in Sierra Leone.

With his determined spirit and unwavering passion for changing the narrative of farming in Sierra Leone, Tejan Kella carved his path to success inspiring fellow compatriots across the nation, including naysayers within and outside the agricultural sector. From his early age as an agricultural officer to his current role as a program coordinator for the two IFAD-supported projects in Sierra Leone, the completed Rehabilitation and Community-based Poverty Reduction Project (RCPRP); a post-war recovery project aimed at overhauling the agricultural sector from its moribund body as a result of the war to a functional sector supporting the sustainable development of farming and its related activities in Sierra Leone, and the current Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme Phase 2 Projects (RFCIP 2); an ongoing project that has given birth to the Apex Bank and its 76 rural finance institutions RFIs (59 Financial Services Associations commonly called FSAs and 17 Community Banks (CBs) creating



Mohamed Tejan-Kella, RFCIP Boss and Master farmer

the Rural Finance Network (RFN) that is providing financial and non-financial services for rural communities across the country. These financial institutions have contributed immensely to sustainable income generation for rural communities across Sierra Leone through access to finance for farmers and other rural enterprise development on a sustainable basis.

As a coordinator, he has demonstrated his expertise in the sector and has supported farmers across the country with the necessary inputs to change the narrative from subsistence farming to commercialization. His expertise in program management and modern farming practice set him apart in the competitive business world.

As the founder and CEO of Abhajar Rice Development (ARID), a company supporting farmers through an outgrowing scheme and Feed De Nation Poultry, Tejan's transformative leadership has empowered fellow compatriots through job creation and a source of inspiration to farmers and other Agri-entrepreneurs within and outside Sierra Leone. From revolutionizing farming practices, and creating the widest financial network in the entire nation to spearheading the growth of poultry his impact has been felt far and wide.



Mohamed Tejan-Kella receiving the IFAD Gender Award from the former MAFS Deputy Minister 2

THE MYTH AND THE MAN: MOHAMED TEJAN KELLA RECOGNIZED FOR HIS CONTRIBUTION IN THE COUNTRY'S FOOD SECURITY



His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio recognizing the RFCIP Boss and Master farmer at the World Food Day celebration in Kailahun

However, Tejan's influence extended beyond rice development, the rural finance network, and the growth of poultry in Sierra Leone. He has dedicated himself to developing the next generation of leaders and entrepreneurs to which the writer of this piece is a proud beneficiary. His commitment to skills development programs and mentorship reaches thousands of young people, providing them with the tools they need to succeed.

Despite his busy schedule, Kella never forgot his roots. Through his expertise in agricultural development and

rural transformation, he has created job opportunities, apprenticeship schemes, and training for thousands of others to thrive sustainably. His dedication to attracting youths in agriculture and providing mentorship for them is a testament to his belief in giving back to his community.

His recent acknowledgment and recognition by the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone as a Master Farmer and key player in the government initiative and his strides in the transformation of the sector at the recently concluded World Food Day Commemoration in Kailahun which coincided with the First Anniversary of the Feed Salone Initiative speaks volumes. This recent recognition by His Excellency, President Julius Maada Bio marked his third presidential acknowledgment as a stellar contributor to the development of the agricultural sector and his ambition to support the food sufficiency drive in the country.

Tejan's story is not without challenges, but he faced them head-on with resilience, grit, and grace. His transformative story serves as a beacon of hope for farmers and agricultural practitioners everywhere, showing them that with determination and hard work, anything is possible.

Mohamed Tejan Kella continues to inspire farmers and rural enterprise practitioners to pursue their dreams, reminding them that they have the power to shape their destinies and make a difference in this beautiful nation called Sierra Leone. His legacy lives on as a testament to the strength and resilience of Sierra Leoneans everywhere.



Mohamed Tejan-Kella handing over a sample of set of tools to farmers

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

THE IMPACT OF THE TEMPORAL INVESTMENT FUND (TIF) ON THE OPERATIONS OF THE RURAL FINANCE INSTITUTIONS

The Temporary Investment Fund (TIF), also known as a special-purpose vehicle, was established in December 2019 under the Rural Finance and Community Improvement Programme (RFCIP), funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). The TIF was created to address the chronic undercapitalization within the network of rural financial institutions, specifically Community Banks (CBs) and Financial Services Associations (FSAs).

This fund is designed to enable these institutions to achieve regulatory compliance, enhance their lending capacity, and expand financial services to rural communities, smallholder farmers, and other agricultural actors. By ensuring that these RFIs are financially secured and well-capitalized, the TIF aims to support sustainable financial growth in Sierra Leone's rural sector.

Administered by a fund manager and governed by a board of directors, the TIF invested a total of \$4.8 million across 17 CBs and 59 FSAs. These funds were allocated to help CBs and FSAs address the demand for loanable funds, particularly among rural communities, smallholder farmers, and other actors within the agricultural value chain. As a temporary capital fund under RFCIP-2's first component, TIF was tasked with disbursing \$5 million to CBs and FSAs, with the dual objectives of capitalizing these institutions in the short term and demonstrating their potential to attract additional investments from private and institutional sources.

The impact of TIF funding has been significant and can be assessed at both the retail (client-focused) and wholesale (institutional) levels.



At retail-level, the fund has been able to create significant impact, among which are:

- **Increase in Household Usage of Financial Services:** The number of households utilizing rural financial services increased from 124,486 at the start of the program to 253,585 by December 2023.
- **Access to Financial Services:** The total number of individuals in rural areas who could access financial services, including savings and credit, grew substantially from 746,916 in December 2019 to 1,521,510 by December 2023.
- **Expansion in Agricultural Loan Products:** The percentage of clients in RFIs who accessed agricultural loans increased from 23.6% to 28% for FSAs, and from 12.3% to 14% for CBs. This targeted growth in agricultural lending is a vital step in supporting smallholder farmers and agricultural businesses.

At the institutional level, it is worthy to note that the TIF funding has contributed to regulatory compliance and capital growth for both CBs and FSAs, enhancing their ability to provide financial services sustainably.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

PRESIDENT BIO'S IOWA VISIT HIGHLIGHTS MECHANIZATION'S ROLE IN BOOSTING AGRICULTURE

President Julius Maada Bio on Monday October 28, 2024 took part in a hands-on visit to Demoss Farm in Iowa, owned by Steven Kuiper, Director of the 8th Crop Reporting District, where he joined the corn harvest on the 80-acre family-run operation. The visit was part of a broader mission to enhance agricultural productivity in Sierra Leone through partnerships and advanced mechanization.

Steven Kuiper, a fourth-generation farmer, expressed enthusiasm for hosting President Bio, recognizing their mutual dedication to advancing agriculture. During their conversation, Kuiper recounted his farming journey, which began in 1987 and now encompasses over 3,000 acres dedicated to corn and soybeans. He provided an overview of his farm's annual cultivation practices, highlighting Iowa's seasonal crop cycle from planting to harvesting.



His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio and his Minister of Agriculture, at Demoss Farm in Iowa, United State

After participating in the harvest, President Bio emphasized that his Iowa trip is part of his commitment to supporting Sierra Leone's "Feed Salone" program.

He pointed out that mechanized farming, demonstrated on farms like Kuiper's, holds the potential to transform Sierra Leone's agricultural landscape.



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

PRESIDENT BIO'S IOWA VISIT HIGHLIGHTS MECHANIZATION'S ROLE IN BOOSTING AGRICULTURE



His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio and his Minister of Agriculture, on a demo harvesting at Demoss Farm in Iowa, United State



President Bio stated, adding that Sierra Leoneans with financial resources should consider investing in the sector to foster economic growth and food security.

The President also acknowledged Kuiper's enduring legacy and praised the dedication of his family, particularly Kuiper and his son, in sustaining agriculture as a viable enterprise.

In addition to his visit to Demoss Farm, President Bio toured a John Deere dealership in Knoxville, Iowa,

where he inspected agricultural equipment including tractors, planters, and sprayers, assessing their potential to enhance farming practices in Sierra Leone.

President Bio's visit to Iowa coincides with his role as Special Guest of Honor at the World Food Prize Foundation's Norman E. Borlaug International Dialogue; where he met with senior officials from the United States Department of Agriculture, co-chaired a roundtable discussion with the President of the African Development Bank Group, and present the 2024 World Food Prize, reinforcing Sierra Leone's commitment to agricultural innovation and global food security.



His Excellency Dr. Julius Maada Bio having a handshake with the proprietor of Demoss Farm

THROWBACK

2016

"I AM GOING TO MISS MY BABES"

- JENEBA KALLON CRIES



It is always a tear-shedding moment for a mother seeing her siblings taken away from her to a new/strange environment. This was the feeling expressed by Twenty years old Jeneba Kallon in Kabala.

Jeneba Kallon is the caretaker of one of the oil palm nurseries in Koinadugu district under the Rehabilitation and Community based Poverty Reduction Project (RCPRP) and at the time of this interview, was waiting her WASSCE result. Her works at the nursery include watering and weeding the grass on the oil palm seedlings. She has worked at the nursery for over six months, taking care of the babe plants (seedlings) and saving her earnings for college. Jeneba hopes to go to college when her result comes out; as she is so hopeful to pass. "I am grateful to those who gave me this job. Now I could boast that, with the little that I have saved, I can pay my college fees, which has always been my greatest challenge," she said.

It is not only the love of money (though we cannot rule it out) that held Jeneba to this job. She showed passion over her work. She has grown personal relationship with the seedlings that she now refers to them as her 'babes'. "I am going to miss my babes," she cries. She was referring to the next stage of the plants' life – the transplanting of the trees at their permanent locations/plantations. Indeed, the plants are due for transplanting and all is now set to have them transported to their final destination. But for Jeneba, whom these plants have lived with all of their lives, it seems very hard to accept the reality. "I will surely miss them. I will miss those moments when I have woken very early to ensure that my plants have been watered. I miss the tender touches that I have to take with the utmost care, when removing grass on them," she says. Like Jeneba, so are staff of the Project (Rehabilitation and Community based Poverty Reduction Project – RCPRP) who are now awoken to the reality that the once booming project, which has created so much impact in the lives of the rural poor in its four operational districts is coming to an end. While looking forward of having it extended, the truth remains that all good must come to an end and that nothing last forever.

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