



Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry
and Food Security

INSIDE DE FARM Newsletter

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PRESIDENT KOROMA SWITCHES THE ENGINE OF PALM OIL PRODUCTION



**Sierra Leone to become Producer
and Exporter of Irish Potato**

51 Facts about Pollutions

**“Bringing back the light to Turma Bum”
Says the Minister of Agriculture**



*“If we have the conducive agro-
climatic condition and the resources,
why do we have to import Irish
potato?”*



The garbage dumped in the ocean
every year is roughly around 14
billion pounds. Plastic is the
major constituent.



The project will employ about 20,
000 farm families, and will directly
benefit 85,000 to 100, 000 people

From State House



President Koroma switches the engine of Oil Palm Production in Sierra Leone

Culled from the State House Communication Unit

President Dr Ernest Bai Koroma on Saturday, 9 April, commissioned the largest palm oil production mill by SOCFIN Agricultural Company in Sahn Malen Chiefdom, Pujehun district.

In his opening remarks, President Koroma said he was doing the commissioning with two hearts – one that has to do with happiness in commissioning SOCFIN and the other which has to do with the resentment initially shown by the people of Sahn Malen against SOCFIN.

He said SOCFIN was never a government to government arrangement but rather private sector arrangement with due consultations with the locals. He however expressed delight over the apparent joyful mood of the people of Malen chiefdom this time round which, he said, has sent a clear message to the world that “we have not only defeated Ebola, but we are now ready for business.”

President Koroma assured the people of Sahn Malen that government will never back SOCFIN in any attempt to exploit them. “My government is always open for round table talks if the need arises,” he said, adding that government will never take it kindly this time with NGOs and civil society organizations to present the country in bad light for their selfish interests.

The president admonished management of SOCFIN to continue engaging the community to establish a common understanding and at the same time thanked the people of the entire Pujehun district for doing almost everything on their own.

Welcoming the president, the General Manager of SOCFIN, Philip Tonks, referred President Koroma’s tour of their farm site and the commissioning of their production mill as historical. He informed the audience that the SOCFIN palm oil farm is not just the largest in the country, but also in West Africa, and that the company has invested over \$ 130 Million United States Dollars, planting 12, 319Ha of hybrid oil palm trees and building a mill currently with a 30t/hr of Fresh Fruit Bunch capacity and with capacity to increase to 60t/hr.

Mr. Tonks pointed out that the plantation area which is situated in the Malen Chiefdom comprised 12, 319Ha of palm oil trees in varying stages of maturity including areas of infrastructure and undeveloped wetland and natural areas. He said the total concession area is 18, 481Ha (45, 647 acres) for which an annual lease payment amounting to Le1, 323, 800, 000 is paid every year and the company has currently utilized 12, 319Ha. The General Manager disclosed that a total of over 31 Billion Leones was paid to land owners in land compensation for palm oil plantation and also revealed that his company has employed over 2, 460 seasonal workers to support plantation operations plus 1, 091 permanent workers all totaling 3, 551 workers, and most of these workers he said are from the surrounding communities within the company’s operational areas.



Why are rural youth leaving farming?



Young people are usually not interested in this field of work

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Rural youth recently reported that access to information, lack of credit and negative perceptions around farming are the leading reasons why African young people are leaving small farming at such alarming rates.

The comments came during the 2016 Youth Agribusiness, Leadership, and Entrepreneurship Summit on Innovation (YALESI 2016), held in Dakar, Senegal, from 29 to 31, in March. The conference – which gives young African men and women living in rural areas the opportunity to discuss key issues and learn new skills – is one of the initiatives that came out of the IFAD-supported Global Youth Innovation Network. During the conference, which was co-organized by IFAD alongside the Government of Senegal and GYIN, IFAD hosted a number of sessions on agribusiness and entrepreneurship practices, as well as shared agribusiness and entrepreneurial know-how for over 250 African youth.

“High youth unemployment is one of the biggest problems currently affecting African youth,” said Moses Abukari, IFAD’s Country Programme Manager and Youth Focal Point for West and Central Africa.

“When youth can’t find viable jobs in their communities, they begin to migrate from rural areas in search of opportunities in bigger cities or different countries where they face an uncertain future,” he continued.

According to Abukari, when young people can participate in community decision-making and take management roles in local organizations, they improve their situations while also contributing their energy and creativity to their communities.

“Young people have many innovative ideas but are often excluded from planning and policy processes relating to the future of rural areas,” said Abukari.

Offering youth a future in farming

With 200 million people aged between 15 and 24, Africa has the youngest population in the world.

Unemployment for youth is a growing concern. Youth account for 60 per cent of all African unemployed, according to the World Bank. In North Africa, the youth unemployment rate is 30 per cent. It is even worse in Botswana, the Republic of the Congo, Senegal, South Africa, Nigeria and several other countries.

The ability of rural youth to engage in productive agricultural and non-agricultural activities has social and economic benefits for both the young people and the economy.

However, many youth in developing and transition countries have negative perceptions of farming.

“Young people are usually not interested in this field of work, in large part due to their perception of farming being antiquated and unprofitable,” said Abukari.

“The image of agriculture traditionally has been more about subsistence; you produce enough for you to eat. It is not seen as a business,” he said.

Young men and women who want to go into farming face other obstacles as well, including limited access to information, technology, and financial services.

(Contd. On page 9)

The Farm History



History of Sweet Potato

Sweet potato or **kumara** (*Ipomoea batatas*) is a dicotyledonous plant that belongs to the family Convolvulaceae.

Its large, starchy, sweet-tasting, tuberous roots are a root vegetable. The young leaves and shoots are sometimes eaten as greens. *Ipomoea batatas* is native to the tropical regions in the Americas. Of the approximately 50 genera and more than 1,000 species of Convolvulaceae, *I. batatas* is the only crop plant of major importance—some others are used locally (e.g. *I. aquatica* (kangkong)), but many are poisonous. The sweet potato is only distantly related to the potato (*Solanum tuberosum*) and does not belong to the nightshade family.

The genus *Ipomoea* that contains the sweet potato also includes several garden flowers called morning glories, though that term is not usually extended to *Ipomoea batatas*. Some cultivars of *Ipomoea batatas* are grown as ornamental plants; the name *tuberous morning glory* may be used in a horticultural context.

The plant is a herbaceous perennial vine, bearing alternate heart-shaped or palmately lobed leaves and medium-sized sympetalous flowers. The edible tuberous root is long and tapered, with a smooth skin whose colour ranges between yellow, orange, red, brown, purple, and beige. Its flesh ranges from beige through white, red, pink, violet, yellow, orange, and purple. Sweet potato varieties with white or pale yellow flesh are less sweet and moist than those with red, pink or orange flesh.

Naming: In some parts of the English-speaking world, sweet potatoes are locally known by other names, including yam and kumara. Although the soft, orange sweet potato is often called a "yam" in parts of North America, the sweet potato is botanically very distinct from a genuine yam (*Dioscorea*), which is native to Africa and Asia and belongs to the monocot family Dioscoreaceae. To add to the confusion, a different crop plant, the oca (*Oxalis tuberosa*, a species of wood sorrel), is called a "yam" in many parts of Polynesia, including New Zealand. To prevent confusion, the United States Department of Agriculture requires sweet potatoes to be labeled as "sweet potatoes" and not as "yams".

Although the sweet potato is not closely related to the common potato, they have a shared etymology. The first Europeans to taste sweet potatoes were members of Columbus's expedition in 1492. Later explorers found many varieties under an assortment of local names, but the name which stayed was the indigenous Taino name of *batata*. The Spanish combined this with the Quechua word for potato, *papa*, to create the word *patata* for the common potato. The first record of the name "sweet potato" is found in the *Oxford English Dictionary* of 1775.

Origin, distribution and diversity:

The origin and domestication of sweet potato is thought to be in either Central America or South America. In Central America, sweet potatoes were domesticated at least 5,000 years ago. In South America, Peruvian sweet potato remnants dating as far back as 8000 BC have been found. One author postulated that the origin of *I. batatas* was between the Yucatán Peninsula of Mexico and the mouth of the Orinoco River in Venezuela. The 'cultigen' had most likely been spread by local people to the Caribbean and South America by 2500 BC. Strong supporting evidence was provided that the geographical zone postulated by Austin is the primary center of diversity. The much lower molecular diversity found in Peru–Ecuador suggests this region should be considered as a secondary center of sweet potato diversity.

The sweet potato was grown in Polynesia before western exploration. Sweet potato has been radiocarbon-dated in the Cook Islands to 1000 AD, and current thinking is that it was brought to central Polynesia around 700 AD, possibly by Polynesians who had traveled to South America and back, and spread across Polynesia to Hawaii and New Zealand from there. It is possible, however, that South Americans brought it to the Pacific, although this is unlikely as it was the Polynesians who had a strong maritime tradition and not the Native South Americans.

The theory that the plant could spread by floating seeds across the ocean is not supported by evidence. Another point is that the sweet potato in Polynesia is the cultivated *Ipomoea batatas*, which is generally spread by vine cuttings and not by seeds.

Sweet potatoes are cultivated throughout tropical and warm temperate regions wherever there is sufficient water to support their growth. Due to a major crop failure, sweet potatoes were introduced to Fujian province of China in about 1594 from Luzon. The growing of sweet potatoes was encouraged by the Governor Chin Hsüeh-tseng (Jin Xuezeng). Sweet potatoes were introduced as a food crop in Japan, and by 1735 was planted in Shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune's private garden. It was also introduced to Korea in 1764

Yields

In 2010, the world average annual yield for sweet potato crop was 13.2 tonnes per hectare. The most productive farms of sweet potato breeds were in Senegal, where the nationwide average annual yield was 33.3 tonnes per hectare. Yields as high as 80 metric tonnes per hectare have been reported from farms of Israel

Production

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) statistics, world production in 2004 was 127 million tonnes. The majority comes from China, with a production of 105 million tonnes from 49,000 km² (19,000 sq mi). About half of the Chinese crop is used for livestock feed. Per capita production is greatest in countries where sweet potatoes are a staple of human consumption, led by Papua New Guinea at about 500 kg (1,100 lb) per person per year, the Solomon Islands at 160 kg (350 lb), Burundi and Rwanda at 130 kg (290 lb) and Uganda at 100 kg (220 lb).

About 20,000 tonnes of sweet potatoes are produced annually in New Zealand, where sweet potato is known by its Māori name, *kūmara*. It was a staple food for Māori before European contact.

In the United States, North Carolina, the leading state in sweet potato production, provided 38.5% of the 2007 U.S. production of sweet potatoes. In 2007, California produced 23%, Louisiana 15.9%, and Mississippi 19% of the U.S. total.

Mississippi has about 150 farmers growing sweet potatoes on about 8,200 acres (30 km²), contributing \$19 million to the state's economy. Mississippi's top five sweet-potato-producing counties are Calhoun, Chickasaw, Pontotoc, Yalobusha, and Panola. The National Sweet Potato Festival is held annually the entire first week in November in Vardaman (Calhoun County), which proclaims itself as "The Sweet Potato Capital".

Nutrient content

Besides simple starches, raw sweet potatoes are rich in complex carbohydrates, dietary fiber and beta-carotene (a provitamin A carotenoid), while having moderate contents of other micronutrients, including vitamin B₅, vitamin B₆ and manganese (table). When cooked by baking, small variable changes in micronutrient density occur to include a higher content of vitamin C at 24% of the Daily Value per 100 g serving (right table).

Sweet Potato in Africa

Amukeke (sun-dried slices of root) and *inginyo* (sun-dried crushed root) are a staple food for people in northeastern Uganda. *Amukeke* is mainly served for breakfast, eaten with peanut sauce. *Inginyo* is mixed with cassava flour and tamarind to make *atapa*. People eat *atapa* with smoked fish cooked in peanut sauce or with dried cowpea leaves cooked in peanut sauce. *Emukaru* (earth-baked root) is eaten as a snack anytime and is mostly served with tea or with peanut sauce. Similar uses are also found in South Sudan.

The young leaves and vine tips of sweet potato leaves are widely consumed as a vegetable in West African countries (Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, for example), as well as in northeastern Uganda, East Africa.

According to FAO leaflet No. 13 - 1990, sweet potato leaves and shoots are a good source of vitamins A, C, and B₂ (riboflavin), and according to research done by A. Khachatryan, are an excellent source of lutein.

In Kenya, Rhoda Nungo of the home economics department of the Ministry of Agriculture has written a guide to using sweet potatoes in modern recipes. This includes uses both in the mashed form and as flour from the dried tubers to replace part of the wheat flour and sugar in baked products such as cakes, chapatis, mandazis, bread, buns and cookies. A nutritious juice drink is made from the orange-fleshed varieties, and deep-fried snacks are also included.

In Egypt, sweet potato tubers are known as "batata" (بطاطا) and are a common street food in winter, when street vendors with carts fitted with ovens sell them to people passing time by the Nile or the sea. The two varieties used are the orange-fleshed one as well as the white/cream-fleshed one. They are also baked at home as a snack or dessert, drenched with honey.

In Ethiopia, the commonly found varieties are black-skinned, cream-fleshed and called "bitatis" or "mitatis". They are cultivated in the eastern and southern lower highlands and harvested during the rainy season (June/July). In recent years, better yielding orange-fleshed varieties were released for cultivation by Haramaya University as a less sugary sweet potato with higher vitamin A content. Sweet potatoes are widely eaten boiled as a favoured snack providing calories and carbohydrates.

Climate Change Education



51 facts about Pollutions

Pollution can be described as contamination of air, water and soil by introduction of a contaminant into a natural environment, usually by humans that are harmful to living organisms. The most common forms of pollution are air pollution, water pollution, [agricultural pollution](#) and [land pollution](#).

Pollution is defined by *The American Heritage Science Dictionary* as the “contamination of air, water, or soil by substances that are harmful to living organisms. Pollution can occur naturally, for example through volcanic eruptions, or as the result of human activities, such as the spilling of oil or disposal of industrial waste.”

Below are 51 facts on Pollution

Fact 1: Pollution is one of the biggest killers, affecting more than 100 million worldwide.

Fact 2: More than 1 billion people worldwide don't have access to safe drinking water.

Fact 3: 5000 people die every day as a result of drinking unclean water.

Fact 4: The garbage dumped in the ocean every year is roughly around 14 billion pounds. Plastic is the major constituent.

Fact 5: Pollution kills more than 1 million seabirds and 100 million mammals every year.

Fact 6: People who live in high-density air pollution area, have 20% higher risk of dying from lung cancer, than people living in less polluted areas.

Fact 7: Approximately 46% of the lakes in America are extremely polluted and hence risky for swimming, fishing and aquatic life.

Fact 8: In the great “Smog Disaster”, that happened in London in the year 1952, approximately four thousand people died in a few days due to the high concentrations of pollution.

Fact 9: United States produces 30% of the world's waste and uses 25 % of the world's natural resources

Fact 10: The Mississippi River dumps 1.5 million metric tonnes of nitrogen pollution in the Gulf of Mexico every year.

Fact 11: Every year around one trillion gallons of untreated sewage and industrial waste is dumped in the U.S water.

Fact 12: Children contribute to only 10% of the world's pollution but are prone to 40% of global disease.

Fact 13: More than 3 million kids under the age of 5 years die every year due to environmental factors like pollution.

Fact 14: Composting and recycling alone have prevented 85 million tons of waste to be dumped in 2010.

Fact 15: China is the world's largest producer of carbon dioxide. United States is number 2.

Fact 16: Almost 80% of urban waste in India is dumped in the river Ganges.

Fact 17: Noise pollution is the most neglected type of pollution.

Fact 18: The amount of money invested in nuclear test could be used to finance 8,000 hand pumps, giving villages across third world access to clean water.

Fact 19: Acidification of the ocean is the worst type of pollution. Oceans are becoming more acidic due to greenhouse emissions from fossil fuel.

Fact 20: Livestock waste majorly contributes to soil pollution. During monsoon, water runs over the fields carrying dangerous bacteria from the livestock into the streams.

Fact 21: More than 100 pesticides in any medium- air, water or soil can cause birth defects, gene mutation and cancer.

Fact 22: There are more around 73 various kinds of pesticides in the groundwater, which is used as drinking water.

Fact 23: There are more than 500 million cars in the world and by 2030 the number will rise to 1 billion. This means pollution level will be more than double.

Fact 24: Major oil spills like those in the Gulf of Mexico, is the worst type of pollution due to consistent oil spills in the water body which spreads everywhere else.

Fact 25: House owners use chemicals that are 10 times more toxic per acre, than the amount used by the farmers.

Fact 26: Around 1000 children die in India every year due to diseases caused from the polluted water.

Fact 27: In India, the Ganges water is gradually becoming septic, especially due to dumping of half burnt dead bodies and enshrouded babies.

Fact 28: 88% of the children in Guiyu, China suffer from various respiratory diseases as the area they live in is a huge e-waste site.

Fact 29: Antarctica is the cleanest place on Earth protected by anti-pollution laws.

Fact 30: Scientific research has proven that carbon dioxide emissions are lowering the pH of the ocean and are acidifying them even more.

Fact 31: A single car generates half a ton of CO₂ and a NASA space shuttle releases 28 tons of CO₂.

Fact 32: Americans buy more than 29 million bottles of water every year. Only 13% of these bottles are recycled every year.

Fact 33: Tsunami in Japan during the year 2011, has created a debris of 70 miles, which consists of cars, plastic, dead bodies and radioactive waste.

Fact 34: Cadmium is a dangerous pollutant that kills foetus' sex organ cells. It is wide spread in many things that we eat and drink.

Fact 35: It takes only 5 days for a jet stream in China to carry the air pollution to the United States.

Fact 36: Pollution in China can change the weather in United States.

Fact 37: World Health Organization (WHO) estimates 6400 people die every year in Mexico due to air pollution.

Fact 38: A single person in United States produces 2 kilograms of garbage every day.

Fact 39: The UAE is one of the biggest waste producer and water consumer.

Fact 40: Every 1 million ton of oil that is shipped, approximately 1 ton from gets wasted in the form of spills.

Fact 41: Most of the hazardous pollutants that are discharged in the atmosphere each year are released to surface water, ground water, and land, combined.

Fact 42: Approximately 3 billion people without proper shelter and healthcare cook and heat their homes using open fires and leaky stoves, thus contributing more towards pollution and global warming.

Fact 43: Chronic obstructive respiratory disease (COPD) that develop due to indoor air pollution is responsible for the death of more than 1 million people every year.

Fact 44: The people more susceptible to high ozone levels are children, elderly, people with lung disease, and people who are active outdoors.

Fact 45: A glass that is produced from recycled glass instead of raw materials can reduce related air pollution by 20%, and water pollution by 50%.

Fact 46: If you think that you don't smoke and you will be spared by lung cancer, just remember that your lungs or heart may be similarly damaged simply from exposure to ozone and particulate matter.

Fact 47: Places which are near to high traffic roads, seaports or railyards are dangerous place to live or work as they contain more concentrated levels of air pollution.

Fact 48: In cities, where there is huge traffic and vehicles run bumper-to-bumper, the pollutants in the air can seep into your car making the air you breathe inside your car up to 10 times more polluted than typical city air.

Fact 49: In 1987, the U.S. released 1.2 million tons of toxic chemicals into our atmosphere, 670,000 tons into our soil, and 250,000 tons into our water. (International Wildlife magazine)

Fact 50: In the US, 41% of all insecticides are used on corn. Eighty per cent of these are used to treat a pest that could be controlled simply by rotating the corn for one year with any other crop.

Fact 51: Public transportation and car pooling can help you to reduce air pollution and save money up to a great extent.

Voice from the Farm



PC Alex Kainpumu with Prof. Patrick Monty Jones and team at Turma Court Barray

“Bring back Turma Bum to light” says Minister of Agriculture.

By: Contact Tracer

“The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security has challenged the people of Turma Bum in the Bum Chiefdom, Bonthe District to bring the agricultural rich environment from the darkness to light. Addressing farmers and authorities during his visit on Thursday last week, Professor Monty Jones said there is a multi-million dollars project for Turma Bum.

It can be recalled that the President of the South African Chamber of Commerce in America, Mr. Willem Ellis showed great interest to invest in rice cultivation in the country. Mr. Ellis visited Turma Bum to assess the agricultural potential of the community where he is ready to bring in investors to invest.

The Government of Sierra Leone has already committed itself to provide \$750, 000 counterparts funding towards the Sierra Leone Development Program (SLDP) investment project, which is expected to start in September this year. The vision is to establish large scale farming, support supply chains and export high quality products under a Sierra Leone Brand. This will be done under a sustainable plan and that benefits of the large scale farming will be extended to the smallholder farmers in order to significantly increase and intensify farm development. In partnership with investment companies in the United States, new production methods and other opportunities would be pursued.

The project will employ about 20, 000 farm families, and will directly benefit 85,000 to 100, 000 people that will be involved in rice, vegetable and maize production in over 100, 000 hectares of land. The project will provide hydroelectricity powered through the Sewa River, a mini airport and make the Turma Bum Rivers very busy with ships coming for locally produced and processed agricultural stuffs. Women and youths will be actively engaged, and the project will apportion some percentage of its profit to the community.

Professor Monty Jones informed the people that the vision of President Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma is to enable farmers increase production and productivity. “We want farmers to produce more, eat more, sell more to make money for themselves, their families and their communities,” he said, and added that if farmers want to get rich they should move from subsistence farming to mechanized farming. The Minister admonished farmers to make good use of the Community Banks by obtaining loans to increase production and productivity.

Prof. Jones promised to engage with his staff to come up with a special program for Turma Bum, which has the capacity to feed the entire nation and save for export.

Voice from the Farm



Prof. Patrick Monty Jones and team at Turma Bum

“Bring back Turma Bum to light”

The *National Programme Coordinator* MAFFS/IFAD programmes, Mr. Mohamed Tejan-Kella, established a rice company ten years ago with a single tractor and with 150 acres of land. Presently, he can boast of ten tractors and twenty staff.

From page 3

Why are rural youth leaving farming?

To help tackle the issue of access to credit, the Global Youth Business Incubator was launched during the conference with the purpose of connecting young entrepreneurs with investors, organizations and supporters. Also, IFAD has many different projects that establish and strengthen micro-lending institutions that give young men and women the jump-start they need for their business. During the conference, there were a number of presentations from rural women from IFAD-supported projects.

According to Abukari, the intentional choice to focus on young women also highlights the important role they play in agricultural transformation. “From different countries you can see that young people, young women especially, add a lot to the value chain where there is a lot of opportunities,” Abukari said.

“Young women, in my opinion, are the future of smallholder farmers. Every time we give youth an opportunity, we should help women in any way we can.”

Zoeliharimalala Nirinarisoa of Madagascar is connected to PROSPERER, a project that works with rural people in five of the country’s poorest and most densely populated regions to increase income.

Mr. Tejan-Kella said Sierra Leone should make good use of the land by providing a good irrigation scheme that will enable farmers to cultivate three times a year. He also named the problem of fertilizer and good seeds, which affects rice cultivation. “We have no reason to be poor and import rice. It is an insult as Agriculturists to be seeing the land laying waste without cultivation,” he said.

Hon. Arthur Harvey, Board Chairman of Sierra Leone Roads Authority said they will supervise road construction work that will soon commence so as to enable Turma Bum become the solution to Sierra Leone’s food security problem.

Welcoming the Minister and team, the Paramount Chief of Bum Chiefdom, Hon. PC Alex Kainpumu commended President Ernest Bai Koroma for providing them with the biggest rice mill in the country, and requested that it should be made to function properly. He assured of his people’s support in restoring the lost glory at Turma Bum.

Zoeliharimalala gained access to the market with her yogurt product, which she processes, packages and sells. She added moringa to her yogurt, a crop with medicinal value, to make her product more nutritious and give it a delicious new taste.

Her business endeavours was a success, and she now employs other members of her community.

Another panelist, named Nurat Okeowo, hailed from Nigeria. Through the Rural Finance Institution-Building Programme (RUFIN), Nurat was able to gain access to credit, something not usually available to a woman who did not have a high school diploma. She was also trained by the programme to manage a fish farm, and today Nurat has expanded her business significantly. She not only has a substantially larger income, but also employees and oversees men. Nurat now is well-respected within her community. These young women represent the benefits of empowering women, and young people as a whole said Abukari.

Our Staple Food



IRISH POTATO: SIERRA LEONE TO BECOME PRODUCER & EXPORTER

Culled from: AgriNews

Director of the Crop Division at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), Mr. Henry Kargbo has revealed the country's drive to become a net producer and subsequently an exporter of Irish Potato as the newly revamped Crop Division of the ministry powers its drive towards food staple diversification and up the income of farmers in the

Speaking to AgriNews, Mr. Henry Kargbo acknowledged that Sierra Leone has heavy reliance on rice as the lead staple but that in order to ensure food security in the country, there is need to diversify staple food production in the country. He stated that in recent years, the enhanced production of other food crops such as sweet potato, cassava, sorghum and vegetable has significantly aided the realization of the moderate food security the nation currently enjoys.

"Further diversification of our food crop production to include the Irish Potato as it is the current drive of the Ministry will not only ensure that there is diversification of our staple food but will also serve to ensure nutrition and food security the country craves for among other things," the Director said in an interview. A second objective Director Henry Kargbo said is "to promote increased income generation and provide market security for the farmers" as according to him, "the affordability and cost of Irish potato weighs heavily on the income of Sierra Leoneans as well as impacts negatively on the foreign exchange earning of the country". He added, "if we have the conducive agro-climatic condition, have the resources, why do we have to import Irish potato when we can actually produce enough for our local market and even export as the case may be".

The pilot stage of the project which is already underway in the agricultural friendly district of Koinadugu in Northern Sierra Leone covers about two hectares of Irish Potato crop site in two locations in the district and trains 50 women farmers in two groups of 25 in a hands-on and practical approach in the production and management of Irish Potato.

Food diversification Henry Kargbo reiterated "is essential in enhancing sustainable food production and promotion of nutrition security in the country as well as poverty alleviation". Mr. Kargbo also stated that "seasonal hunger due to lack of wide range of food stuffs at household levels contributes to increasing the risk of malnutrition and poverty", adding that "income opportunities are low among farmers who make up more than 70% of the country's population due to limited livelihood options available to them".

The domestic production of Irish Potato through Farmer Based Organizations (FBO) is therefore key.

"If we have the conducive agro-climatic condition and the resources, why do we have to import Irish potato?"

Our Photo Gallery

Sierra Leone Youth representative receiving certificates at the 9th IFAD WCA Regional Programme Forum at Abuja, Nigeria



President Koroma being taken round on a conducted tour at the Socfin's Palm oil Refinery



Cross section of Community people gracing the visit of Prof. Monty Jones to Turma Bum



INSIDE DE FARM

Ministry of Agriculture Forestry, and Food Security



292 Rural Youth trained on IVS Water Management and Agronomic Practices

336 participants from four districts (Kenema, Kono, Kailahun and Koinadugu) have benefitted from 16 days training on Inland Valley Swamps Water Management and Agronomic practices. The training, which targeted 292 Rural Youth Contractors and 44 Service Providers staff from these districts, was undertaken by the Inland Valley Swamp Development Component of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security/International Fund for Agricultural Development funded Rehabilitation and Community based Poverty Reduction Project (RCPRP).

It is worthy to note that, Agronomic practice and Water Management is also key to rice cultivation in Inland Valley Swamp (IVS) Development. This so, as with basic knowledge on how to determine quality seeds, quantity of seed rice to nurse, height of water before and after transplanting and height of water during and after fertilizer application, etc. are key requirements for an IVS development.

In this regard, the training was focused on capacitating the beneficiaries with skills on water control and water management on one hand and improved agronomic practices for rice, vegetables, groundnut and cowpea on the other hand. The training was conducted by Resource Persons from the Crops and Engineering Services Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security in partnership with the Project IVS Officers and Agronomists. During the training, participants were divided into smaller groups of four or five for field demonstrations and practical. They were evaluated to ensure and maintain the quality of training, and to address participants' individual strengths and weaknesses.



The training focused on providing technical expertise to the participants through learning by doing. Group and participatory approach was emphasized. About 90 % of the training session was devoted to Practical exercises.

At end of the training, participants were gainfully capacitated on various skills and techniques, which if put into practice, will undoubtedly raise their yields and in extension help increase their income. These acquired skills and techniques cover:

Quantity of fertilizer to apply on a hectare of land depending on the crop, ideal storage condition, care and safety precautions in the use of fertilizers; Major constraints negating production and solutions to overcome them; to name a few.

Throughout its implementation phases, it is evident that this Component has completely rehabilitated/ developed a cumulative total of 2,960 hectares of IVS in its four operational districts; while efforts are still afoot to accomplish an additional 1,380 hectares within these districts.

All these swamps are invariably cultivated with rice as the first crop, followed by second and third crops.

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