

1. INTRODUCTION

The post-war status of agriculture in Sierra Leone presents a very grim picture compared to the pre-war years. Rice production declined by 65 percent whereas 90 percent of the livestock population was decimated. Productivity of tree crops was severely affected by age of trees and over-growth of wild vegetation; agricultural installations, buildings and vehicles were destroyed; the formal seed production sector (SMP, RRS, IAR) was destroyed; and most farmers lacked basic farm inputs, including seeds and tools. Consequently, there was increased dependency on food aid.

In addition, about 80 percent of the population is poor. Per capita GDP fell from a low of US\$232 in 1990 before the war to US\$142 in 2001 when the war was officially declared over; daily calorie supply is 1,800 compared to 2,663 for developing countries; infant mortality rate is 182 per 1000 childbirths and life expectancy is 38 years compared to 45 for sub-Saharan Africa.

However, despite this gloomy state of affairs, the country has a huge agricultural potential to transform the situation and eradicate the menace of hunger. There are 5.4 million hectares of arable land of which only 20 percent is presently under cultivation. Rainfall is abundant, ranging from 2500–4500 mm per annum with favourable temperature ranging from 23°C–28° C. There are nine major rivers with 14 river basins ranging from 1200 to 54000 hectares with 70 billion cubic meters of annual discharge.

During his inaugural address on the assumption of his second term of office in May, 2002, His Excellency the President Alhaji Dr Ahmad Tejan–Kabba pronounced his resolve to ensure that by 2007, no Sierra Leonean goes to bed hungry.

The President's Pledge

- The right to food.

“....I pledge to work even harder, and with greater resolve, to do everything in my power, to ensure that within the next 5 years, no Sierra Leonean should go to bed hungry”

H.E. President, Alhaji Dr Ahmad Tejan –Kabba. 19 May 2002.

The Right to Food (*The Right to Feed oneself*) implies access to adequate and suitable food for the health and strength of the individual.

To underscore this genuine commitment to the development of the nation's Agriculture and eventual alleviation of poverty, H. E. the President created the portfolio of “**Food Security**” under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS).

The President then called on the country's development partners to assist Sierra Leone in developing a strategy for meeting the goal of “Food for All” within five years.

Food Security means that all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preference for an active and healthy life. You will no doubt agree that given the circumstances under which we were assigned this responsibility, it promised to be no easy task.

Food Security is dependent on three main factors: availability, accessibility and stability of food supply. It entails availability, affordability and access of nutritious food to all and sundry. To achieve national food security, a country must be able to grow sufficient food or have adequate foreign exchange to enable it import food. Households must also produce their own food and/or earn sufficient income to purchase food from the market. For vulnerable groups that are not capable of earning income or producing their own food, food safety nets should be provided.

Food Security does not mean that the government is going to provide food for every individual in the country. Instead, it would create an enabling environment under which farmers could increase their production and the unemployed get gainful employment.

The attainment of National Food Security therefore requires positive contributions from other line Ministries including Finance, Development and Economic Planning, Works and Maintenance, Health and Sanitation, Transport and Communications, Local Government and Community Development, Labor, Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, Trade and Industry, and Information and Broadcasting in addition to Donors, NGO's, communities, farmers and other stakeholders. The National Association of Farmers of Sierra Leone can also play a collaborative role in this venture.

2. MAFFS's VISION, GOAL AND MISSION STATEMENT

The Ministry's VISION

The Right to Food for the People of Sierra Leone.

The Ministry's GOAL

To attain food security, reduce poverty and environmental degradation through sustainable management of resources in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

MISSION STATEMENT

To achieve sustainable food security and reduce poverty through agricultural intensification, diversification and the efficient management of the natural resource base.

The MAF&FS has the mandate to support the production of all crops and livestock in an environmentally sustainable manner and to ensure the achievement of Food Security.

The major objectives of the Ministry are:

- (i) To increase and diversify domestic production and reduce

importation of food with a view to achieving food self-reliance and food security in the medium to long term.

- (ii) To increase agriculture productivity, output, rural income and employment while ensuring adequate protection of the environment;
- (iii) To secure balanced Regional Agricultural development and growth as well as equitable income distribution; and
- (iv) To maximize foreign exchange earnings from agricultural production.

3. STRUCTURE OF THE MINISTRY

The present structure of the Ministry is made up of two major wings:

- a. Administrative**
- b. Professional**

3.1 The Administrative Wing

This wing has broad ministry-wide responsibilities for policy advice and inter-sector collaboration and for the central support functions of Finance, Personnel, Stores and Records Management. A Senior Permanent Secretary (SPS) heads the administrative wing, supported by a Permanent Secretary (PS). In his capacity as Vote Controller, the SPS wields authority over spending decisions across the whole Ministry.

3.2 The Professional Wing

The professional wing, which is headed by the Director General (DG), has three technical divisions (Crops; Livestock; Forestry) and two service divisions (Land and Water Development; Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Statistics) each headed by divisional directors. There are several support services/units within the divisions. In addition, there are other institutions under the umbrella of the Ministry (NARCC; RRS, Rokupr; IAR, Njala; NATC, Njala) headed by directors.

A Minister, who is responsible for making all agricultural policy decisions, is the political head of the MAFFS, supported by a Deputy Minister. The Ministers are advised on a day-to-day basis by the SPS/PS and the DG who is responsible for all operational matters within the Ministry. The Ministry has also established a Food Security Secretariat whose head reports directly to the Director General.

The Ministry has just completed a Management and functional review supported by DFID through the Public Service Reform Unit of the Government Reform Secretariat. The aim of the restructuring is to **decentralize** and enhance effective implementation of agricultural plans and programmes at both district and headquarter levels. Consequently, the positions of Regional Officers have been abolished and the office of District Directors established

in each district. In this respect, all heads of Divisions, including the District Directors of Agriculture, report to the DG who liaises closely with the SPS/PS.

3.2.1 Crops Division (Formerly Agriculture Division)

This Division encompasses the Crop Production, Crop Protection, Horticulture, Produce Inspection, Agricultural Engineering, Fertilizer and Rice units. The Director of Crops is the head of this division and is the Chief Adviser to the Director General on matters relating to the various disciplines encompassed within the division. He is assisted by a Deputy Director of Crops and three Assistant Directors of Crops.

Short-Term Goals

- (i) To provide farm inputs to vulnerable farmers
- (ii) To promote the transfer of improved farm technologies through an efficient research and extension delivery system and the establishment of farmer field schools
- (iii) To formulate appropriate policies for the development of the Agricultural sector
- (iv) To mobilize national and international resources for the implementation of the food security and other programmes

Medium-Term Goals

- (i) To promote a change from bush fallow cultivation to mechanized farming;
- (ii) To provide the requisite extension services and backup support
- (iii) To reduce post-harvest losses;
- (iv) To sensitize farmers on new ideas and techniques in farming.

Status of Activities:

- Ten 45-horsepower Mahindra tractors were procured and distributed to 10 Districts for custom ploughing for farmers.
- Ploughed, harrowed and seeded 1,700 acres.
- Procured and distributed 70,000 bushels of improved seed rice to farmers all over the country in 2003. This is expected to create the input for a seed bank at village level.
- 75 mt of foundation seed of popular improved rice varieties multiplied
- Distributed 1,840kg of maize, 3,000 bushels of groundnuts, 19,000 bundles of cassava cuttings and 24,000 bags of sweet potato vines and 1.360 bags of assorted fertilizers to farmers nationwide
- 20,000 oil palm seedlings distributed in 2002
- Farm tools, fertilizers, seed rice, and power tillers etc. worth over Le10 million supplied to farmers in 74 Chiefdoms with funds from IDB integrated Rural Dev. Project
- 74 power tillers and 74 mobile threshers supplied for the development of Inland Valley Swamp (IVS) farmers
- 74 rice stores and 74 drying floors constructed in 74 chiefdoms and 3,000 bushels of seed rice supplied
- Training of farmers in the use of power tillers.
- 33.44 mt. of improved ginger from China distributed

3.2.2 Livestock Division

This Division is responsible for veterinary services, inspection of animal products and general livestock extension. It is divided into animal health and animal production units. The health section deals with disease diagnosis and treatment, preventative health care and vaccination against diseases. The production section is concerned with improvements in husbandry practices. The former is a clinical function and the latter an extension function. A Director of Livestock heads this division, supported by two Deputy Directors of Livestock and two Assistant Directors of Livestock.

The overall policy objective of this division is to achieve self-reliance in the production of domestic livestock and animal products, and to promote the adoption of draught animal power in suitable ecologies.

The specific policies involve:

- Providing adequate support in livestock extension and veterinary services
- Promoting appropriate intermediate farm technology through the use of Work Oxen
- Promoting commercial livestock production by encouraging private sector participation in development of the industry which will include appropriate changes in existing laws and regulations
- Introducing animal health and extension services on commercial basis
- Promoting livestock research to develop a sound genetic bank
- Promotion of local production of necessary raw material inputs for the livestock industry
- Encouraging proper land use for expanded livestock production
- Encouraging the integration of crops and livestock production through acceptable arrangements relating to land ownership and utilization

Short term goals

- To rehabilitate livestock stations
- To facilitate the acquisition of appropriate and certified breeding of animals from countries in the Sub-region
- To rehabilitate the pig and poultry production unit at Newton
- To encourage female participation in livestock production
- To improve animal husbandry practices through effective extension delivery system

Medium-Term Goals

- To establish veterinary clinics at every headquarter town
- To reactivate cattle resettlement scheme in the predominantly cattle-rearing areas of the country
- To rehabilitate and restock the Musaia, Malal Mara and Newton Livestock stations
- To rehabilitate livestock extension posts countrywide
- To improve and strengthen the animal health delivery services countrywide
- To upgrade existing facilities in the meat industry

Long-Term Goals

- To establish livestock stations in the Eastern and Southern Provinces to encourage effective utilization of the grasslands in those regions
- To build the institutional capacity of government's livestock stations

Status of Activities

- Administrative block and the central laboratory rehabilitated at Teko and Musaia
- 5 Districts (Kambia, Bombali, Koinadugu, Kono and Kailahun) being restocked with sheep and goats for breeding and multiplication at farmers' level under HIPC
- Veterinary drugs and insecticides distributed to farmers
- Poultry farm at Lumley expanded and modernized (Chinese Technical Team)
- About 30% of pre-war livestock population restocked

3.2.3 Forestry Division

The mandate of the Forestry and Wildlife Division entails the protection of forests, forest products including wildlife and related services for present and future generations. The proper management of this division has tremendous potential to significantly contribute to the economy of Sierra Leone, especially food security.

The main objectives are to:

- Promote best practices in forest management in order to provide optimum combination of economic, social and environmental benefits that the forests can provide. This includes the rehabilitation of the national forest estates.
- Create enabling environment for the production of sustainable volume of forest products that contribute to food supply.

The Divisional head is the Director of Forestry who has a Deputy Director and an Assistant Director. Their main tasks are forest conservation and development but other duties include forest research and surveys, with small units for wildlife conservation, protection and utilization. There are District Forest Officers in each District that vary in rank from a Conservator of Forests (CF) through Senior Assistant Conservator of Forests to Assistant Conservator of Forests.

Short –Term Goals

- To ensure the protection of the forest and forest services.
- To conduct periodic field surveys to provide intelligence at the appropriate time.

Medium-Term Goals

- To plant fast-growing trees in degraded areas on steep slopes.
- To carry out soil conservation measures and reckless soil degradation by stabilizing boulder in their locations.

Long-Term Goals

- Continuous seedling production and tree planting , public sensitization and education, etc. on wild fire management, soil and energy conservation.
- To provide services geared towards protecting the environment against natural calamities such as erosion, landslide and floods through planting trees on hill slopes and in fragile areas.
- To undertake reforestation programmes on cleared private and public lands so as to provide additional timber resources and also help address land degradation problems.
- To create and maintain extensive protected areas for the full range of forest value and biodiversity conservation.
- To promote nature conservation and sustainable management of forests both within and outside Sierra Leone and to ensure that Sierra Leone fulfills its obligation under international conservation agreement.
- Soil and water conservation studies on adjacent catchment. These studies are necessary for the formulation and implementation of soil conservation aimed at reducing land degradation and improving soil fertility.

Status of Activities:

During the year under review, the forestry division was engaged in:

- (i) Construction of 48 kitchens and 480 mud stoves built to demonstrate efficient utilization of wood for cooking.
- (ii) About 350,000 assorted tree seedlings were produced and planted on 350 acres of land.

3.2.4 The Central Support Services (CSS)

The Central Support Services (CSS) under the professional wing falls under the umbrella of the National Extension Coordinator (NEC) who reports directly to the DG. This system ensures that improved production technologies are transferred to farmers to achieve increased production and productivity. To ensure that technologies developed are relevant and sustainable, the system constantly develops and improves Research -Extension - Farmer linkages covering all levels and fields of agricultural activity.

The CSS sector constitutes the following units:

- a. Agricultural Communication Unit
- b. Manpower Development and Training Unit
- c. Women in Agriculture and Nutrition

a. Agricultural Communication Unit (ACU)

This Unit is responsible for Development Support Communication functions of MAF&FS and is answerable directly to the National Extension Coordinator. The functions performed by ACU are of fundamental importance for the preparation and dissemination of extension and other materials and messages to support a wide range of agriculture and rural development activities with a view *inter-alia* to increasing agricultural production. This involves simplifying and repackaging relevant scientific and technical information for delivery to farmers and other stakeholders in the Agriculture Sector through audiovisual programs.

The National Agricultural Documentation Center (NADOC), in particular, continues to provide unlimited access to both national and international agricultural information for students, agriculturists and other professionals conducting research or simply inquiring on different aspects of agricultural production and development. Its unique information management capability has facilitated access to exchange of agricultural information.

Two mobile audiovisual vehicles to go down to village level to educate and sensitize farmers by showing films on video and screen on improved agricultural techniques will soon be ordered as funds have been secured within the current budget. They will serve to bring the farmer in the village up to date with current affairs in agriculture.

b. Manpower Development and Training Unit

The training and continuous education of personnel in the Agriculture sector is key to the efficient and effective operation of the national Agricultural extension system.

The Certificate Training Center (CTC) run by the Ministry at Njala University College was renamed the National Agricultural Training Center (NATC) and upgraded to offer the 2-3-year Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) courses in addition to the 2-year certificate course in General Agriculture. A total of 45 students were enrolled in the various courses during the 2002/2003 academic year.

The thrust of the Ministry in the future will continue to be manpower capacity building, with particular emphasis on specialist and farmer training, building and strengthening grassroots women farmers associations, as well as instituting manpower appraisal and performance.

c. Women in Agriculture and Nutrition

A critical component of the Agricultural Extension System is the focus on women to ensure that improved farming technologies are transferred to them at the grassroots level, while also assisting them to fully participate in agricultural activities and improve on the nutritional status of farm families. Towards this end, a women's unit, Women in Agriculture and Nutrition, was established under the MAFFS.

Sensitization and motivation meetings for women were held in the Moyamba, Port Loko, Tonkolili and Kenema districts, as well as the Western Area. Women farming cooperatives were formed in each district to promote the participation of women in the agricultural development process and linkages/collaboration were developed with other organizations operating in the Agriculture sector. This type of collaboration has provided tremendous benefits to women farmers.

2.5 Service Divisions

2.5.1 Land and Water Development Division (LWDD)

This Division was created in 1981 after the termination of a joint UNDP/FAO Land Resources Survey Project. In general terms, the Division is mandated to appraise land and water resources for their suitability for agricultural purposes providing information and technical support for improving the use of land, soil, water and climatic resources so as to make possible sustainable agriculture. It has a vital role in addressing the critical issues of agriculture development and protection of the land-based environment.

Short-Term Goals

- To rehabilitate production facilities and infrastructure, including inland valley swamps and farm machinery.
- To promote the improvement of lowlands for rapid food production.

Medium-Term Goals

- To improve on the productivity of Inland Valley Swamp (IVS) and enhance the capacity of farmers to operate and manage improved swamps.

Long-Term Goals

- To promote the development and improvement of agricultural lands for crop production on a sustainable basis.
- Survey designing and implementation of activities for new swamps.
- To invite consultants for the implementation of Rhombe/Rolako studies.

Status of Activities

- 1,200 hectares of inland valley swamps rehabilitated in 74 chiefdoms.

2.5.2 Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Statistics Division (PEMSD)

The PEMS D was largely established by and benefited from the Agriculture Sector Support Project (ASSP). It is generally recognized by both the Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) and donors that many development programmes fail to achieve their objectives not so much from lack of funds but for lack of adequate planning and policy direction. It was out of this conviction that the GOSL, with financial assistance from donors decided to establish PEMS D in 1983.

PEMS D is headed by a Director and nominally has three constituent sections:

- a. Policy Analysis, Planning and Budgeting
- b. Monitoring and Evaluation
- c. Statistics

a. Policy Analysis, Planning and Budgeting

This section recommends policies and strategies on agricultural development, advices on investment priorities, coordinates preparation of annual development estimates and public investment programs, and evaluates feasibility of projects.

b. Monitoring and Evaluation

This section liaises with various divisional heads under the MAFFS and other institutions to ensure that projects and programmes approved and funded are implemented. It monitors progress of projects and agricultural production, surveys manpower requirements in MAFFS and evaluates impact of projects.

c. Statistics

This section prepares crop forecasts and agricultural census programs, designs agricultural data collection surveys, analyzes survey data and prepares annual production reports. It establishes sample farm management surveys and early warning systems and information network as a basis for national food security.

For the period under review, the GOSL provided funds to PEMSD to undertake a crop and livestock production and vulnerability survey. Preliminary results show that there has been substantial increases in production in 2002 when compared to 2001. This is as a result of Government's policy of free agricultural input delivery to farmers supported by similar input delivery by Non-governmental Organizations.

2.6 Agricultural Research

2.6.1 National Agricultural Coordinating Council (NARCC)

Research plays a critical role in agricultural production and continues to be a priority of the Ministry. However, for a long time, research in Sierra Leone was inadequately co-ordinated and funded. Much of the research work was fragmented, piecemeal and largely uncoordinated because the country lacked a research management system that can make the most efficient use of the country's limited resources. Effective Institutional arrangements to review, integrate and rank the research programs of all relevant research activities did not exist.

The Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) therefore established the National Agricultural Coordinating Council (NARCC) in April 1985 to formulate agricultural policy, set research priorities in the light of farmer's needs, researchers' recommendations and GOSL policy objectives. It is expected to enforce these priorities through procedures by which research programs will be designed and funded. The Institute of Agricultural Research (IAR) with headquarters at Njala and the Rice Research Station with headquarters at Rokupr are research institutions presently under the NARCC umbrella.

During the period under review, NARCC introduced and disseminated nationwide over 1 ton of NERICA improved rice varieties from neighbouring Guinea.

2.6.1 Institute of Agricultural Research (IAR)

The IAR with headquarters at Njala, was established by the Government of Sierra Leone in 1988 following the termination of the Adaptive Crop Research and Extension Project (ACRE). Its mandate is to conduct research on major food crops grown and consumed in the country, other than rice. Presently, research is focused on the improvement of cassava, sweetpotato, yams, maize, cowpea and soya bean. Research is also conducted on the economics of production of these crops, gender issues as they relate to agriculture, soil management, post-harvest technologies, and on nutrition, particularly of the rural people.

The Institute is headed by a Director and has support staff and researchers in its establishment. Its proximity to Njala University College campus has enabled it to forge productive collaborative links with the NUC. It commissions specific research projects by University staff. This enables the Institute to maximize its comparative advantage in the face of dwindling budgetary provisions and also make good use of synergistic opportunities that present themselves as a result of its location.

The Institute conducts on-farm trials and demonstrations through its out-reach programme geared towards improving the income level, nutritional status and food security of the small-holder farmers and rural people who form the bulk of the population.

It has out-reach substations in Bo, Kenema, Njala, Makeni, Kabala, Rokupr, Magbosi and Newton through which research findings are verified and disseminated to farmers.

Through its crop improvement efforts, the Institute has developed improved high-yielding varieties of its mandated crops, together with appropriate cultural practices for high yield enhancement. These varieties out-yield the local varieties, are shorter in duration and have acceptable consumer qualities. Other promising cultivars of these crops are currently under evaluation for their adaptability to a wide range of environments in the country as well as high yield potential.

Transfer of the various technologies developed at the IAR has been achieved through collaborative research efforts involving farmers, researchers, extension workers and other stakeholders. The involvement of NGO's and the National Association of Farmers of Sierra Leone (NAFSL) in the technology transfer process also facilitated the widespread adoption of IAR-generated technologies by farmers.

The Institute has links with IITA in Nigeria, where germplasm of cassava, maize, and cowpeas are received for evaluation in-country. Germplasm has also been received from SAFGRAD and ICRISAT. There is also some collaboration with ISNAR, FAO, WARDA, and EEC.

During the period under review, the IAR:

1. Released 5 cassava and 4 sweetpotato varieties that significantly out-yield local varieties and have the potential of increasing root and tuber production in the country.

2. Established 12 root and tuber crops processing centers all over the country and over 500 female farmers have been trained to process cassava and sweetpotato using various recipes.
3. Rehabilitated the analytical laboratory, Administrative and some staff quarters at Njala
4. Continues evaluating advanced lines of cassava, sweet potato, yam, cow pea, soybean, groundnut and maize for high yield, tolerance to major diseases and pests and adaptability to various ecologies across the country;
5. Multiplied and distributed elite varieties of cassava, sweet potato and yam at the IAR zones across the country.
6. Conducted training in seed yam production.
7. Managed, co-ordinated and fostered collaboration with other national and international institutions.

2.6.2 Rice Research Station (RRS).

This station was established in 1934 with the original mandate limited to rice research in the mangrove swamp ecology. However, this was eventually broadened to incorporate rice research in all ecologies, sorghum, millet, banana and plantains, and vegetable research.

The Station is headed by a Director and has support staff and researchers on its establishment. It has collaborative programs with several International Agricultural Research Centers (IARCs) such as WARDA, IITA, ICRISAT and ICRAF. It has strong links with IAR, SMP, and NGOs.

The RRS was engaged in the following activities during the period under review:

1. Tested and identified 16 promising NERICA and other elite rice lines for release to farmers.
2. Conservation and replacement of biodiversity (CARE and CBAN)
3. Replacement of lost germplasm and the establishment of local gene banks by farmers.
4. Established 14 community blacksmith workshops in Bombali, Kambia, Port Loko, Koinadugu, Tonkolili, Kono and Kailahun districts.
5. Trained 91 blacksmiths, including 5 disabled and 1 female.
6. Fabricated 20,000 cutlasses and 20,000 hoes for distribution to farmers.
7. Provided resource persons for the training of 148 farmers in the operation, maintenance and management of power tillers in 4 centres at Lungi, Moyamba, Bo and Kenema.
8. Rehabilitated Analytical Laboratory, Administrative and some staff quarters at Rokupr. Rehabilitation of infrastructure on campus is in progress; DFID has assisted with water transportation and on-farm seed multiplication by farmers and training of community youths in Rokupr in rice production skills.

2.7. Seed Multiplication Project (SMP)

The SMP is the major GTZ-sponsored public institution responsible for Seed Certification and Testing and the production and supply of seed rice. In addition to rice, limited quantities of maize, groundnut and imported

vegetable seeds are also sold to farmers. It obtains most of its local seed supply from small-scale contract growers. The Rokupr Rice Research Station (RRS) used to produce breeder's seed rice which were then supplied to SMP for further multiplication by its contract growers.

When the war intensified in 1997, the activities of SMP were considerably scaled down and the sponsors pulled out. Up to this time, GTZ has not resumed their activities in SMP because of the negative security reports they get from the website.

Status of Activities:

- In conjunction with the National Seed Board, SMP continued Seed Certification and Testing for most of the large-scale seed rice purchases.
- Screening of six ROK varieties (ROKs 3, 5, 10, 14, 22 and 24) in an 84 acre swamp in Thakoblo, near Binkolo and also supervised 568 contract farmers.
- Supervised maintenance breeding staff of 42 farmers, each cultivating two acres and growing improved ROK varieties at Binkolo.

3. MAJOR INTERVENTIONS

3.1 Food Security Coordinating Committee

This committee was approved by Cabinet to "facilitate the formulation and implementation of the national food security policies and to determine appropriate measures to incorporate the government's 'Right to Food' policy into the activities of relevant ministries." The terms of reference are aimed at clearing policy bottlenecks, which transcend ministerial mandates, in the interest of enhanced agricultural productivity. Issues such as price incentives; targeting highly productive areas in road planning; illegal trans-border trade; timely release of funds etc. will be addressed by this committee, in addition to monitoring, evaluation and supervision.

3.2 Development of an Agricultural Policy

The absence of a coherent and strategic agriculture policy in the past contributed to the stagnation of the agricultural sector. With the collaboration of FAO and other stakeholders, the Ministry has come up with a consistent and clear policy mission of the sector with the objectives of promoting sustained growth of agricultural output, alleviating poverty, protection of the environment, improvement of rural infrastructure and helping farmers to engage in productive income-generating activities. In this regard, an Agricultural Policy Statement of Intent was prepared in November 2002. Final publication is awaiting the Sector Review Report.

Some key strategies being addressed:

- Substantial increases in level of expenditure on Agriculture, given the importance of the sector
- Sustainable management of water resources
- Support agricultural intensification & diversification of production
- Create marketing opportunities
- Conservation of the natural resource base

- Encourage Private sector participation
- Improve rural infrastructure to minimize input/output costs
- Enhancing the specific role of women in national food security by improved access to credit, mechanization, markets and training
- Linking national food security with poverty reduction strategies
- Build capacity of sector institutions
- Support resource access by farmers-Land, farm inputs, etc.
- Food Safety nets

3.3 Management and Structural Review

The Ministry has just completed a Management and functional review supported by DFID through the Public Service Reform Unit of the Government Reform Secretariat. The aim of the restructuring is to decentralize and enhance effective implementation of agricultural plans and programmes at both district and headquarter levels. Consequently, the positions of Regional Officers have been abolished and the office of District Directors established in each district. In this respect, all heads of Divisions, including the District Directors of Agriculture, report to the DG who liaises closely with the SPS/PS.

3.4 Medium Term Agricultural Strategic Plan (MTASP)

- Provides a framework for sustained growth in agricultural output, food security and poverty alleviation.
- Detailed plans for agricultural production within the timeframe.
- Concrete measures are proposed to address key constraints with the primary focus on the rehabilitation and strengthening of agriculture and its institutions.

3.5 Project Formulation-Collaboration with IITA

In collaboration with Sierra Leonean scientists at IITA, the Ministry has identified major project components that are being developed to bolster agricultural production.

The Programme Components include:

- Creation of an enabling policy environment
- Rehabilitation & development of rural infrastructure
- Intensification & diversification of production & marketing
- Diversification & expansion of tree & cash crop production
- Enhancement of production, utilization & conservation of forestry resources
- Increasing and stabilizing livestock production
- Development & strengthening of institutional & human resource capacity

3.6 SPFS (FAO) - Operation FEED THE NATION

This is an FAO-sponsored project that will establish Farmers Field Schools in several places through out the country. The project is designed to train farmers so that they can serve as extension agents themselves to other farmers. Training of trainers has already been completed.

In January 2003, the special Program for Food Security provided support for a 4-man study visit to Ghana and Uganda to study the Farmer Field Schools (FFS) system and other areas of success towards attaining food security. As a follow-up to that tour, a 3-month Training of Trainers workshop is now being conducted in Bo, aimed at training Sierra Leoneans for subsequent workshops to promote the farmers field school program.

It is anticipated that this programme will:

- Build capacity within MAFFS to manage community-based rehabilitation of agricultural production
- Facilitate In-service training to technical staff and farmers to promote the emergence of local human resources
- Enable farmers groups to organize and implement community empowerment initiatives

3.7 Right to Food Symposium

Major stakeholders in food security in Sierra Leone together with several international participants deliberated for 3 days (19-21 May, 2003) to understand the full implication of a right-based approach to food in Sierra Leone. About 120 participants comprising of about 20 overseas resource persons, donor representatives and Sierra Leone ambassadors abroad, attended. World Bank, UNDP, WFP, FAO and the German Government made positive and encouraging presentations. The German and Netherlands governments provided support for the symposium. Over \$200,000 has been pledged by the German government to set up a 'Right to Food' Secretariat.

3.8 Agricultural Sector Review

Following the preparation of an Agricultural Policy Statement of Intent in November 2002, the Ministry with support from the FAO and DFID is conducting a thorough review of the agriculture sector. The review, which started earnestly in May, is being done by a team of national and international experts and the major output of this review will serve as an input in the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

3.9 North Central Agricultural Development Project

The Italian Government recently approved a grant of \$150,000 utilized to provide vulnerable women farmers in the Gbonkolenken chiefdom, Tonkolili District with seed rice, tools, vegetable seeds and livestock. The funds are being administered by the International Fund for Agriculture Development and channeled through the existing structures of NCAP. This pilot project will provide basic agricultural inputs (seed rice, vegetable seeds, tools and livestock) to farmers in Yele.

3.10 Rhombe and Rolako Irrigation Studies

Bids have been concluded for the feasibility study of the 20,000 ha of irrigated land for rice production at Rhombe and Rolako. US\$2 m was provided by ADB for this study.

4. PREVIEW OF KEY THEMES AND FINDINGS

- Comparative advantage
- Private sector
- Communities
- Decentralization
- Accountability

(Government in supporting/facilitating role)

i. Comparative Advantage

Right now, we are good at producing rice, coffee, cocoa, fish and other local foods produced and consumed up country. With technology, information, rural infrastructure, and some inputs, we will be able to compete in a broader range in sub-sectors in national, regional and international markets. This will enable us to diversify, add value, and develop the rural non-farm sector.

Collaboration with sources of improved technologies (e.g. IITA and other international centers) is essential. This will generate jobs and higher rural incomes. Not only will this produce the food needed, it will also provide the incomes to the poor to access the food.

ii. Private Sector

This includes firms, producers, traders, and their respective organizations, including NGOs that are involved in agriculture. They must be in the lead with Government performing supporting and facilitating roles.

iii. Communities

These include villages and local groups dealing with specific needs, such as natural resource management, production, credit, marketing, etc. These groups need to be empowered and energized and Ministry staff and other service providers should be accountable to them.

iv. Decentralization

Agricultural and rural development can only be coordinated in communities, chiefdoms and districts.

Decentralization empowers these levels to plan and manage their own development. It empowers them to raise their own resources, and use external resources in a more sustainable manner.

Decentralization requires:

- A strong center
- Learning by doing and capacity development
- Strong support from the ministry and other service providers

v. Accountability

- To the rural population, and especially to poor and vulnerable groups
- Within the decentralized structures
- Within the ministry
- To the government and the donors

Enhancing accountability is a top priority of the Ministry.

vi. Government in supporting/facilitating role

Government should perform supporting/facilitating roles in the enhancement of the Ministry's ultimate goal.

5. MAJOR PRIVATE SECTOR INVESTMENT

- Reactivation of Magbass Sugar Complex to cultivate 2,280 ha of sugarcane, employing 4000 workers to produce 6000 tons of sugar, ethanol
- Negotiations for Forestry concession agreement for 4 forest blocks in the pipeline
- Prospects for rubber development
- Egyptian investment in 50,000ha oil palm- Consultations in advanced stages

6. PROJECTS IN THE PIPELINE

The Ministry has identified a number of projects that are in various stages of preparation. The African Development Bank has already expressed interest to fund the following projects:

i) Development of New rice for Africa (NERICA) (US\$3m)

ii) Agriculture Rehabilitation Project. This is a US\$12,000,000 which has already been prepared and awaiting the comments and appraisal of the ADB. The project is designed to rehabilitate most of the extension and research infrastructure of the Ministry with a view to enhancing agricultural production of both food and tree crops. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security will implement the project.

iii) Urban and Peri-urban Agricultural Project

This project will support the production and supply of food crops to the major urban centers of Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Koidu and Makeni. Thus farmers in the surrounding areas of Freetown, Bo, Koidu, Makeni, Kabala and Lungi will benefit from this support. The project is under preparation and is expected to cost about \$12.0 to US\$14.0 millions.

iv) National Diversified Food Production Project

This project has an estimated cost of US\$14.0 million and is intended to support the diversification of our food production habits. It will concentrate on the production of other food crops other than rice.

v) National Livestock Development Project (ADB)

This project has an estimated cost of US\$10million and is designed to assist livestock production. It will rehabilitate several Livestock facilities and improve the livestock extension facilities. Initial contacts have already been made to facilitate the preparation of the projects for implementation this year.

vi) IFAD/Country Strategy for Opportunities (COSOP) Project

Rural Development Project. \$30million for three years.

7. NGO Participation

Both national and international non-governmental organizations (NGO) have played a vital role in providing emergency assistance to the agriculture sector since 1991. In 1999, MAFFS instituted a monthly dialogue with all NGOs in the agriculture sector. The objectives for providing this platform are to avoid duplication of efforts; ensure monitoring, evaluation and follow-up; ensure that technical standards in terms of fertilizer dosage, seed quality and seeding density are maintained and timely delivery of inputs is ensured. Prior to the institution of this Ministry–NGO dialogue, there were many incidences of neglect of some areas and over-servicing of others, and possibly limited transparency by NGO’s.

NGOs in the agriculture sector currently cover the following aspects of agricultural development:

1. Provision of farm tools;
2. Provision of planting materials - seed rice, potato vines, cassava cuttings, groundnut seeds, maize grain; etc.
3. Organization of farming associations;
4. Construction of drying floors;
5. Provision of fertilizers, chemical and other inputs delivery;
6. Construction of grain stores;
7. Provision of food for agriculture; and
8. Support bee-keeping practice.

8. PROBLEMS AND CONSTRAINTS

The current difficulties in the Agriculture Sector are largely due to the suspension of funding by the major donors. The suspensions are still in place and adversely affect the activities of the Ministry. The Ministry therefore currently

relies on government of Sierra Leone resources and the good will of UN agencies and NGO's to execute Agricultural programs.

Against this background, the critical factors currently affecting the performance of the Ministry are as follows:

- Inadequate budgetary allocation (See table 1)
- Delays in releasing resources to implement largely time-bound agricultural activities
- Limited mobility
- Inadequate access to resource inputs for cultivation and reduction of post-harvest losses
- Poor infrastructure
- Poor market access.
- Limited motivation for staff
- Institutional weakness and limited operational capacity
- Poor Wild fire management
- Widespread deforestation of Sierra Leone.
- The reluctance of investors to invest in agriculture

Table 1. Budget Profile of Selected Ministries (% of Total Allocation)

Ministry	Fiscal Year		
	2003	2004	2005
Education, Science & Technology	20.3	20.7	21.5
Health & Sanitation	16.0	16.4	16.6
Works, Housing & Technical Maintenance	5.4	5.4	5.4
Agriculture & Food Security	3.4	3.6	3.8
Energy & Power	1.7	1.7	1.7
Transport & Communication	1.5	1.5	1.5
Lands, Country Planning & the Environment	1.0	1.1	1.1
Others	50.7	49.6	48.4

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Allocate 20 % of total budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (FAO recommends 27%)
- Agriculture to be self-accounting for speedy disbursement of funds and effective accountability.
- Support for capacity building to respond to the challenges of food security

THE WAY FORWARD

The Ministry is totally committed to the National Pledge of achieving Food Security within the next five years. The way forward for the realization of this enormous task include the following:

- Intensification of income generating activities of the Ministry to augment government subventions;
- Rehabilitation of all existing Agricultural infrastructure destroyed during the rebel war;

- Restocking communities with species of livestock that farmers reared before the war;
- Promotion of livestock production activities in various parts of the country through:-
 - Farmers and extension staff training
 - Radio /TV programs to create awareness about the benefits of rearing livestock;
- Collaboration with NARCC and NUC to set up a livestock Research Institute to look into the needs of farmers particularly in the areas of:-
 - Housing and Nutrition for various species of livestock
 - Genetic improvement for increased performance in animal meat and milk;
 - Increase production through swamp development and the expansion of irrigated double cropping;
 - Diversification by expanding the production of root crops in upland areas and encouraging a change in dietary habit of Sierra Leoneans thereby reducing the dependence on rice consumption/imports.

The role of the state would include principally:

- Establishing an enabling environment for agricultural development and marketing
- Implementing infrastructure development
- Supporting extension and research and ensuring technical assistance to small-scale farmers.
- Promoting rural credit schemes to finance rural investments and food production
- Mobilizing both domestic and foreign resources to promote food security
- Encouraging the private sector to participate in supplying agricultural inputs and equipments; and marketing imported tradable locally-produced food
- Investing in processing and industrial development activities.
- Development or strengthening of policies on the reduction of tariffs on the importation of Agricultural Machinery and inputs.
- Provision of better services for agricultural Professionals and Practitioners
- Strengthening of the capacity of National Association of Farmers of Sierra Leone.
- Development of a policy on National Food Security.
- Establish an early warning information system and build up the capacity of the Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Statistics Division.

An important issue is the fact that because the Ministry is subjected to the financial budgetary rules applicable to all Ministries, it finds itself in an impossible situation where it is unable to properly utilize even the meager and inadequate funds allocated. This is so because nearly all the operations of my Ministry are seasonal and the major activities are in the first and second quarter of the financial year. Allocating funds for planting in the third and fourth quarters is therefore inappropriate. The solution will be for the Ministry to be self-accounting and be in a position to allocate its own budget line as is expedient

IMPORTANCE OF THE POLITICAL WILL

Unlike previous *ad hoc* campaigns in favor of food self-sufficiency prompted by past Agriculture Ministers, the Food Security Drive is the brainchild of HE the President himself. Since his proclamation of May 19, 2002 Government has left no stone unturned to support MAFFS in the planning and implementation of appropriate interventions aimed at coping with this national goal. The degree of political support given to this drive has also encouraged major donors like the World Bank; DFID; EU, ADB, IDB, BADEA and bilateral funding countries such as Germany, USA, UK etc. to give moral, technical and financial support to this national challenge.

The Ministry will continue to pilot the “Operation Feed the Nation Campaign” in the form of “Freedom From Hunger Crusade”. This is intended to involve every one who matters. Finally, the Ministry is on the path towards achieving its objectives. Its success or failure will entirely depend on the co-operation it receives primarily from the other line Ministries, institutions, the International Community and you. With the political good will it now enjoys, I am very optimistic about the future.