ACF Alliance of Champions for Food Systems Transformation



Alliance of Champions
for Food Systems Transformation

Sierra Leone
Progress framework

About The ACF

The Alliance of Champions (ACF) is a strategic coalition of ambitious countries driving Food System Transformation, taking a 'whole of government' approach, and inspiring others to go further and faster to deliver better outcomes for people, nature, and climate, in accordance with Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement.

This framework sets out the progress made in following up on the COP28 Emirates Declaration.

ACF members exchange experiences—highlighting both successes and challenges – and communicate on progress (ACF Terms of Reference) showcasing national policies and initiatives, for inspiration and presentation at COPs and other international forums, emphasizing that food system transformation is not a linear journey.

These progress frameworks are authored by the ACF Secretariat, in consultation with governments, and aim to capture implementation of membership commitments to strengthen national food system pathways, follow up on sustainable development and climate goals, and demonstrate progress on priority interventions in the 10 ACF action areas.



1. Country Background

RATIONALE FOR SIERRA LEONE'S MEMBERSHIP

As co-chair of the Alliance of Champions for Food Systems Transformation (ACF), Sierra Leone has emerged as a vocal champion for bold and practical action on food systems transformation in Africa and globally. President Julius Maada Bio has placed food security

> *"Transforming our food systems is more than just a goal – it's a national priority. Through the Feed Salone program, we are not only icreasing productivity and reducing our dependance on imports but also creating sustainable opportunities for all Sierra Leoneans"*
>
> *Dr. Julius Maada Bio*
> *President, Republic of Sierra Leone*

and inclusive economic growth at the centre of his second term. In October 2023 - just one month before the ACF was formally launched - he unveiled the Government's flagship Feed Salone programme, explaining that it "will boost agricultural productivity to fuel inclusive growth, increase local food production and reduce our dependence on food imports, reduce hunger, increase export earnings, create jobs, and build resilient food systems." Feed Salone is directly aligned with the ACF agenda. Its interventions cut across all ten of the ACF's priority action areas—ranging from climate resilience and agro-processing to access to finance, governance reforms, and farmer-first innovation.

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Agriculture is the backbone of Sierra Leone's economy, contributing around 25% of GDP, 55% of land use and 43% of the population employed in agriculture. Sierra Leone's top three commodities produced are cassava, rice and oil palm fruit. See the snapshot [INSERT LINK] Sierra Leone imports around 30% of its main stable food, rice. It exports fish products, cocoa, palm oil and other commodities that generate foreign exchange. Most farmers are smallholders and livestock farming is limited to semi-nomadic herders, making poultry the most widely owned farm animal.

The country's climate is highly favourable for agriculture, with annual rainfall ranging between 2,300 mm and 3,100 mm, making Sierra Leone one of the wettest countries in Africa. It also benefits from an abundance of fertile land: approximately 5.4 million hectares. However, only 15% of this land is under cultivation. Expansion needs to be managed sensitively to minimise environmental damage.

As Minister Kpaka says in Sierra Leone's Voices of Progress

> *We also face trade-offs between agricultural expansion and environmental protection. As we scale production, we are taking steps to prevent deforestation, limit slash-and-burn practices and protect our valuable forests".*

Challenges for Sierra Leone's food system inlcude:

- More than two decades following its civil war, Sierra Leone remains **reliant on global markets** to meet its food needs. Despite two-thirds of the population being employed in agriculture, the country continues to import basic staples like rice. With one of the highest per capita rice consumption rates in the world, Sierra Leone spends nearly a third of its food import budget on rice.
- **Undernourishment rates in Sierra Leone remain high, though recent data shows gradual improvement**. In 2020-22 there was a 26% prevalence of undernourishment (3-year average) and this fell to 24.1% in 2022-24 reporting.
- Smallholder farmers — who make up the majority of producers — face **major constraints, including limited access to quality seeds, fertilizers, irrigation, storage, and mechanized equipment.**
- Sierra Leone is **ranked by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) as amongst the 15 worst-affected countries in the world when it comes to climate change.** This is due to its reliance on rainfed agriculture, susceptibility to extreme precipitation and floods, and coastal exposure to sea-level rise.

2. Progress against commitments

01

Strengthen national visions and food systems transformation pathways, inclusive of ten priority action areas and consistent with science-based targets.



Over the past two years, Sierra Leone has made significant strides in advancing the transformation of its food system: improving access to finance, incentivising and derisking investment, progressing the development of infrastructure, and improving data systems, laying the groundwork for long-term resilience. Key developments include:

- **Mobilising Investment:** The country has secured over $1 billion in funding pledges for Feed Salone since its launch in late 2023. In 2025 Sierra Leone has been working to unlock these commitments and to date has programmed over $280m. The Sierra Leone Agrifood Investor Summit in October 2025 was the largest gathering of agriculture investors in Sierra Leone to date bringing over 25 international and regional agrifood companies, DFIs, and impact funds together.

- **Significantly expanding access to finance** for farmers, particularly women and youth. The Government has launched a suite of agricultural finance instruments worth over $28 million, including a $10 million low-interest credit facility targeting rice, onions, and poultry value chains, and a $7.8 million matching grant scheme for rice, cassava, and livestock.

- **Incentivising and derisking investment:** the Finance Act 2025 introduced a package of incentives designed to de-risk agribusiness investments, lowering barriers for both domestic and international players.

- **Infrastructure** is one of the key enablers. In 2025, Sierra Leone has advanced the development of three of the six strategic rice clusters, aimed at promoting commercial and sustainable farming practices tailored to local conditions. Drying floors, seed stores, and irrigation schemes were established in Torma Bum (Bonthe) and Gbondapi (Pujehun) to reduce post-harvest losses and improve rice productivity. Four modern bridges are being completed at Tomparie, Manowa, Mattru–Senehun (inaugurated July 2025), and Gendema, opening new agricultural corridors and linking rural production zones to markets. 420 km of feeder roads are currently under construction nationwide.

- **Introducing its first-ever crop insurance product** in May 2025, marking a major step forward in de-risking agriculture for smallholders. The Weather Index Insurance (WII) was launched in collaboration with Activa International Insurance, the Sierra Leone Insurance Commission and the United Nations Capital Development Fund with funding from the European Union. Reducing the risks to small holder farmers has been a priority for Minister of Agriculture and Food Security Dr. Henry Musa Kpaka, who stated at the launch “When the floods struck last year, I felt the pain of my farmers.

2. Progress against commitments

02

Update NDCs, NBSAPs, LT-LEDS in line with updated pathways

Sierra Leone launched its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC3.0) at COP30. It has been updated in line with Sierra Leone's national pathway, Feed Salone, which bridges food security, energy access, and climate resilience. The updated NDC references food systems and promotes climate-smart, nutrition-sensitive agriculture through sustainable livestock management, agroforestry, soil carbon restoration, and mangrove protection, directly linking agricultural productivity with adaptation and emission reduction. It also includes measures to reduce organic waste, advance innovation and gender parity and improve rural livelihoods.

03

Report annually on targets and priority intervention areas.

This Progress Framework and the accompanying Progress Snapshot fulfil the reporting requirement.



Action Areas

Action Area 1	Indicator	Progress Made
 **Increase the affordability and availability** of nutritious, diversified and sustainably produced foods (including blue foods, nutrient rich foods, alternative proteins, pulses, legumes, fruits and vegetables), without sacrificing yields	**Outcome:** Prevalence of severe food insecurity in lean season	**2024 data:** 17% WFP Sierra Leone Country Brief August 2025 **2023 data:** 28% WFP Sierra Leone Country Brief August 2025
	Process: Coordination of actions and policies across two or more sectors dealing with climate change, agricultural development, dietary guidelines, food procurement, and food security at national, regional and local level	The Government of Sierra Leone has introduced several initiatives to **strengthen food and nutrition security and improve access to affordable, healthy diets.** Key measures include: • National School Feeding Policy May 2021: Provides daily nutritious meals to schoolchildren and emphasizes home-grown sourcing to link nutrition outcomes with local livelihoods. The share of home-grown food in the school feeding program increased from 10 % in 2022/2023 to 40% in 2024. • **National Poultry Policy & "One Egg per Child" (2025)**: under implementation to create structured demand for locally produced eggs, boost local poultry production and decrease imports. • **Rice Price Stabilization:** Rice is Sierra Leone's staple food, and prices have shown recent signs of stabilization. Between June 2024 and June 2025, the price per kilogram of imported rice decreased by 18%, while local rice prices decreased by 3%, easing pressure on household food security.

Action Area 2	Indicator	Progress Made
Improve livelihoods for those working throughout food supply chains, including increasing incomes, creating jobs and economic opportunity, including for youth, and ensuring a just transition for producers and for rural and coastal communities.	**Outcome:** Poverty headcount ratio at $3.00 a day (2021 PPP) (% of population)	**New Sierra Leone Integrated Household survey expected shortly.** **2018 data:** 41.5% World Bank Data
	Outcome: Jobs created under Feed Salone	**2023 data:** 25, 000 (direct jobs created) 60, 000 (indirect jobs created) Feed Salone Progress Report 2024/5 **2023/4** Less than 10, 000 Feed Salone Progress Report 2024/5
	Process: Measurable value for total official flows (official development assistance plus other official flows) to the agriculture sector (SDG 2.a.2) and complementary national actions to improve livelihoods	The Government of Sierra Leone has introduced several initiatives to **strengthen livelihoods across food supply chains**, with a focus on empowering youth, women, and vulnerable communities: • **Agribusiness Grants for Youth and Women-led Enterprises:** Through the Smallholder Commercialization and Agribusiness Development Project (SCADeP), the EU Job and Growth Programme, and the AfDB-supported Njala Enable Youth initiative, Sierra Leone has expanded grant support for youth and women entrepreneurs. The number of agribusiness grants awarded rose sharply from **4 in 2022 to 48 in 2023,** helping to stimulate innovation, create jobs, and improve food security. • **The Bank of Sierra Leone Agriculture Credit Facility (2024)** set up a $10 million fund at a concessional 10% interest rate to ease financing constraints for agribusinesses. To date, more than 10 businesses have benefited, supporting investments across input supply and processing (e.g. the launch of Sierra Leone's first industrial feed mill, expanding capacity for poultry feed production and reducing reliance on imports

Action Area 3	Indicator	Progress Made
 **Build and enhance the resilience of food systems** and their associated supply chains, reducing exposure to climate-, energy- and water-related risks, protecting vulnerable communities and actively promoting climate-smart agriculture.	**Outcome:** % increase in functional irrigated land compared to baseline	**2023 data:** 18.71% 2023 Sierra Leone Annual Agricultural Survey Report **(Baseline) 2022 data:** 13.6 % 2023 Sierra Leone Annual Agricultural Survey Report
	Process: Coordination of actions and policies across two or more sectors dealing with climate change, agricultural development, dietary guidelines, food procurement, and food security at national, regional and local level.	The Government of Sierra Leone is building and enhancing the resilience of its food systems through a set of climate-focused programmes and investments: • Agricultural Value Chain Development Project (AVDP) supports the rrehabilitation and development of farmland and irrigation systems, particularly Inland Valley Swamps (IVS) for rice cultivation. In 2025, over 24,000 hectares of rice cultivation, were supported through both budgetary and project support including 4,115 hectares of Inland Valley Swamp (IVS) rehabilitation. • **Irrigation infrastructure** is being developed across 5,000 hectares in Tormabum to enable large-scale, year-round rice production and enhance water management for climate resilience. • **Weather Index Insurance (WII)** was launched in collaboration with Activa International Insurance, the Sierra Leone Insurance Commission and the United Nations Capital Development Fund with funding from the European Union to reduce the risks to small holder farmers.

Action Area 4	Indicator	Progress Made
Improve gender parity and income equality, including increased protection of IPLCs rights and access to land, water and resources**.**	**Outcome:** % of Women who do not own land	**2019 data:** 68.1% World Bank Gender Data for Sierra Leone
	wProcess: How the national food system transformation pathway considers active participation from diverse stakeholders, including women, farmers, consumers, and civil society	The Government of Sierra Leone is taking targeted measures to improve gender parity and economic inclusion across food systems. Through the 2022 Customary Land Rights Act and the work of the **Land Commission**, Sierra Leone has expanded support for women to access land through redistribution, leasing schemes, and cooperative arrangements. The number of women benefiting from these programs increased from **7,500 in 2022 to 9,500 in 2023**, promoting women's participation in agricultural production and decision-making.

Action Area 5	Indicator	Progress Made
Protect and restore nature, including forests, peatlands, oceans, freshwater habitats, wetlands and coasts, as well as other natural ecosystems, thus supporting biodiversity and contributing to climate change mitigation.	**Outcome:** Terrestrial and Marine protected areas (% of total territorial area)	**2024 data:** 5.1% World Bank Data **(Baseline) 2022 data:** 5.1% World Bank Data
	Process: Measurable targets for the protection and restoration of biodiversity within forests, peatlands, oceans, freshwater habitats, wetlands, and coasts, that are consistent with the Global Biodiversity Framework.	The Government of Sierra Leone is actively working to protect and restore natural ecosystems through large-scale initiatives that integrate environmental recovery with sustainable livelihoods and food security: • **Degraded Land Restoration:** Through initiatives such as the Miro Forestry Sustainable Plantation Project and policies guided by the National Protected Area Authority and the 2022 Environment Protection Agency Act and Land Commission Act, Sierra Leone restored approximately **2,000 hectares of degraded land in 2022** and **1,900 hectares in 2023**. Restoration efforts include reforestation, revegetation, and rehabilitation of degraded areas, supporting biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and climate-resilient livelihoods. • **UNESCO World Heritage Recognition** – Gola Tiwai Complex: In July 2025, Sierra Leone secured recognition for the Gola Rainforest National Park and Tiwai Island Wildlife Sanctuary as its first UNESCO World Heritage Site. The combined complex harbours over 1,000 plant species (113 endemic) and 55 mammal species (19 globally threatened), including the African Forest Elephant and Pygmy Hippopotamus. This designation promotes biodiversity conservation while providing opportunities for ecotourism and sustainable livelihoods for local communities.

Action Area 6	Indicator	Progress Made
Increase the share of land, ocean and freshwater under nature positive, ecosystem-based, and sustainable management practices (including agroecological, regenerative and other sustainable agricultural approaches).	**Outcome:** Agriculture area under organic agriculture	**2023 data** 214 930 hectares FAOSTAT **(Baseline) 2022 data** 194 684 hectares FAOSTAT
	Process: Measurable national targets for increasing the share of land, ocean, and freshwater under agroecological, regenerative, and other sustainable agricultural approaches, consistent with the Global Biodiversity Framework.	The Government of Sierra Leone is promoting sustainable land management and climate-resilient agriculture through a coordinated set of policies and investment programs: • **Support for Agroecological and Regenerative Practices:** Sierra Leone has prioritized the adoption of agroecological, climate-smart, and regenerative practices among smallholders and cooperatives. The number of farmers supported increased from **21,578 in 2022 to 31,050 in 2023**, reflecting expanded outreach, technical assistance, and financing. • **Climate-Smart Seed Systems and Resilient Varieties:** Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI) is leading the development and release of climate-resilient crop varieties—including drought- and pest-resistant rice, maize, and cassava. These varieties require fewer external inputs, mature faster, and withstand environmental stresses, promoting more regenerative practices across farming systems. • **Agroecological Capacity Building and Farmer Extension:** Through national training programs, SLARI has equipped over 60 extension agents with knowledge in Good Agronomic Practices (GAP), safe spray services, and digital agronomic tools such as the Seed Tracker and Herbicide Calculator. These agents cascade agroecological practices—including safer pesticide use, reduced tillage, and herbicide minimization—down to smallholder farmers, expanding the area under sustainable practices.

Action Area 7	Indicator	Progress Made
Reduce all GHG emissions throughout the entire food value chain (including from AFOLU and energy sectors, and including post-farm and consumption-related activities); increase carbon removal activities in the AFOLU sector; and scale land mitigation opportunities in line with Paris Agreement targets.	**Outcome:** GHG emissions (total) % of the world total	**2023 data:** 6.94 0.01% of the world total EU Report **(Baseline) 2022 data:** 6.93 EU Report
	Outcome: Agri-food systems greenhouse gas emissions (kT CO2eq)	**2022 data:** 8286 kiloton FAOSTAT **(Baseline) 2021 data:** 8760 kiloton FAOSTAT
	Process: Nationally established, measurable GHG reduction targets specifically for the entire food value chain, encompassing Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Uses (AFOLU), energy sectors, post-farm, and consumption-related activities	Sierra Leone's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) 3.0 commits to reduce GHG emissions from the Agriculture and Land Use Sector by 33.6% below business as usual levels by 2035. The Government of Sierra Leone is working to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions across agriculture and food value chains through targeted policies, programs, and climate commitments: • **Adoption of Low-Emission, Climate-Smart Practices:** Sierra Leone has expanded support for farmers to adopt practices that reduce emissions, such as improved rice cultivation techniques and solar-powered irrigation. The number of farmers implementing these practices increased from **12,000 in 2022 to 17,000 in 2023**, reflecting growing uptake of climate-smart agriculture. • **Presidential Initiative on Climate Change:** Supports broader mitigation efforts, including renewable energy adoption in farming systems, tracking of emissions, and promotion of sustainable agricultural practices across the country.

Action Area 8	Indicator	Progress Made
Reduce food loss and waste.	**Outcome:** Variation in food waste and loss	**2024** 92 kg/capita/year or 792 109tonnes/year UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2024 **2021** 103 kg/capita/year or 802 371 tonnes/year UNEP Food Waste Index Report 2021
	Process: Evidence of actions, policies, and partnerships aimed at reducing food loss across the food supply chain	The Government of Sierra Leone is implementing measures to reduce food loss and waste across key value chains, strengthening food security and sustainability via infrastructure investments including: • **Torma Bum and Gbondapi (Bonthe & Pujehun):** Additional Feed Salone-linked processing infrastructure has been established, including drying floors, seed storage units, and irrigation schemes. These facilities support ongoing rice intensification efforts by enhancing post-harvest management, enabling higher-quality outputs, and reducing losses in Inland Valley Swamps and lowland rice areas. • **Cassava Agro-Industrial Hubs:** In September 2025, the Ministry secured approval for a $45 million investment from the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) to establish four cassava processing hubs equipped with modern machinery, utilities, and post-harvest infrastructure. These hubs will anchor industrial-scale processing, supported by parallel investments in improved cassava cuttings, mechanisation, and feeder roads. 87km of feeder roads will connect farms to hubs and markets, enhancing efficiency and reducing losses.

Action Area 9	Indicator	Progress Made
Realign public financial and policy incentives to promote low emission, resilient, nature positive production and healthy diets	**Outcome:** Share of government expenditure on agriculture	**2025 data:** 8% Government Budget and Statement of Economic and Financial Policies for the FY 2025 **(Baseline) 2023 data** 2% Government Budget and Statement of Economic and Financial Policies for the Financial Year 2023
	Process: Implemented public financial or policy incentives that specifically incentivize low-emission farming practices and support the production of food for healthy diets .	The Government of Sierra Leone is actively realigning public financial instruments and policy frameworks to support low-emission, climate-resilient, and nutrition-sensitive agricultural production: • **Credit and Financing Programs:** Sierra Leone is updating regulations and procedures for agricultural credit schemes to facilitate easier access for farmers adopting low-emission and climate-smart practices. This includes streamlining processes, providing concessional financing, and prioritizing projects that promote sustainable and resilient production systems. • The **Finance Act**, passed in 2025, supports investment in sustainable food systems through supporting innovation through tax incentives for research and development (R&D). This includes a 125% tax deduction, which is available for expenses related to R&D, training and export promotion, encouraging innovation and capacity building. Farm machinery, agro-processing equipment, agro-chemicals and other key inputs also qualify for import duty exemption.

Action Area 10	Indicator	Progress Made
Accelerate innovation through increased investments in R&D and digital technology.	**Outcome:** Hectarage supported by Feed Salone e-voucher scheme	**2023:** 27,681 hectares Feed Salone Progress Report 2024/5 **(Baseline) 2022 data:** 15,320 hectares Feed Salone Progress Report 2024/5
	Process: Documented national strategies, programs, and actions to promote agricultural innovation and adoption.	The Government of Sierra Leone is actively promoting innovation in agriculture through digital technology and modernization of value chains: • **The e-voucher system at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security** was revamped, and a digitized input subsidy system designed to make the delivery of agricultural inputs (such as seeds, fertilizer, and agrochemicals) more efficient, transparent, and inclusive. *Source: Feed Salone 1 Year Report*. • The national rollout of the **Sierra Leone Seed Certification Agency (SLeSCA) Seed Tracker**, co-led by SLARI, is improving traceability, certification, and regulatory oversight of seed systems. This enhances sustainable land use by ensuring only high-quality, tested seed varieties are planted across certified fields. • In May 2025, the Ministry of Agriculture launched a **new digital monitoring and evaluation platform**, integrating geospatial tools, dashboards, and an AI-powered "Ask a Metric" function. This digital transformation enables real-time tracking of progress and supports informed decision-making. That same month, the government released the 2023 Annual Agricultural Survey (AAS) microdata, representing the country's first-ever comprehensive annual collection of crop and livestock data.

3. Investment in Food System Transformation

DOMESTIC INVESTMENT

President Bio is on track to deliver on his pledge to raise agricultural spending to 10% of the national budget with spend having increase from 2% in 2023 to over 8% in 2025. In 2025 **the Government allocated equivalent to NLe 1.3 billion (approximately USD 48 million) to the agricultural sector**. Of this amount, NLe 747.2 million (USD 32 million) has been specifically earmarked for the Feed Salone initiative.



INTERNATIONAL INVESTMENT

In the first two years, Sierra Leone secured several transformative investments under **Feed Salone** in key value chains, infrastructure, and institutional capacity, including:

- **USD 450 million** from **BADEA** to support Feed Salone and develop the integrated **Rice Industrial Complex in Tormabum**, aiming to boost local rice production, create jobs, and modernize the rice sector.
- **USD 260 million** from the **OPEC Fund** to support rice clusters, agricultural infrastructure, and access to agri-finance.
- **USD 75 million** from the **Africa Development Bank (AfDB)** directed toward a key rice cluster in Kambia district, to strengthen value chains and market access.
- **USD 40 million** committed by the **Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)** and partners for the industrialization of **cassava value chains.**
- **USD 105.5 million** mobilized for the Livestock and Livelihoods Development Project (LLDP), co-financed by **IFAD, OPEC Fund, IsDB and Heifer International.** This is designed to transform the livestock sector, support smallholder producers, improve nutrition, and create jobs across rural communities. Feed Business Middle East & Africa+3FAOHome+3Ministry of Finance Sierra Leone+3
- **USD 74 million** from the **World Bank / IDA** under the Sierra Leone Connectivity and Agricultural Market Infrastructure Project (CAMIP), focused on climate-resilient transport and market infrastructure to reduce losses and enhance access. World Bank.

In 2025 over USD 280 million of the above commitments were moved to programming phase.



4. Looking to the future/Priorities for the next 12 months

As Feed Salone enters its third year, the focus is on closing the food import gap, scaling delivery, and embedding systemic reforms to transform Sierra Leone's food systems. With strong political leadership and a whole-of-government approach, Year 3 will prioritize increased domestic production, and expanded private sector engagement — especially through improved access to finance. Key policy implementation areas include rice, cassava, livestock, poultry, seed systems, cocoa and agricultural finance. Inland Valley Swamp (IVS) development and rice clusters in Tormabum, Gbondapi, and Kambia will be scaled, alongside new investments in cassava processing to drive value addition and rural jobs. A new Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) will be launched to deploy agricultural finance at scale, supporting agro-processing, enterprise development, and stronger market linkages for farmers, with USD50 million already secured from OPEC Fund.





For more information about the Alliance of Champions for Food System Transformation:

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