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ANNEX

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the annual action plan in favour of the Republic of Sierra Leone for 2024

Action Document for Sustainable Food and Agricultural Value Chains Development in Sierra Leone

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN 2024

This document constitutes the annual work programme within the meaning of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, within the meaning of Article 23 of the NDICI-Global Europe Regulation.

1 SYNOPSIS

1.1 Action Summary Table

1. Title OPSYS business reference Basic Act	Sustainable Food and Agricultural Value Chains Development in Sierra Leone OPSYS number: ACT-62691 Financed under the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI-Global Europe)
2. Team Europe Initiative	Yes - Team Europe Initiative “Green Pact with Sierra Leone”
3. Zone benefiting from the action	The action shall be carried out in Sierra Leone
4. Programming document	EU Multiannual Indicative Programme for the Republic of Sierra Leone 2021-2027
5. Link with relevant MIP(s) objectives / expected results	Priority area 1: Green Economy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific Objective: Improve sustainability, efficiency and inclusivity of oil palm, cassava, and infant food value chains Priority area 2: Human Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific Objective: Improve use of market opportunities by Sierra Leoneans, in particular of women and youth that participated in TVET programmes
PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION	
6. Priority Area(s), sectors	Education (110); Agriculture (311)
7. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	Main SDG (1 only): SDG 1 – No Poverty Other significant SDGs (up to 9) and where appropriate, targets: SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), SDG 15 (Life on Land). SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

8 a) DAC code(s)	110 Education (110) : 30% (more specifically Vocational training (11330)) 311 Agriculture (311) : 70%			
8 b) Main Delivery Channel	41100 – United Nations Agencies and Funds (UN) 47015 – CGIAR Fund 47000– Other multilateral institution 10000– Public Sector Institutions			
9. Targets	<input type="checkbox"/> Migration <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Climate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social inclusion and Human Development <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Gender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Biodiversity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Human Rights, Democracy and Governance			
10. Markers (from DAC form)	General policy objective @	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Participation development/good governance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Aid to environment @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Disaster Risk Reduction @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Inclusion of persons with Disabilities @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Nutrition @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	RIO Convention markers	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Biological diversity @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Combat desertification @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change mitigation @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Climate change adaptation @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11. Internal markers and Tags:	Policy objectives	Not targeted	Significant objective	Principal objective
	Digitalisation @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital entrepreneurship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital skills/literacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	digital services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

	Connectivity @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	digital connectivity	YES	NO	
	energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	education and research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Migration @	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Reduction of Inequalities @	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Covid-19	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
BUDGET INFORMATION				
12. Amounts concerned	Budget line(s) (article, item): 14.020120 Total estimated cost: EUR 35 000 000 Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 35 000 000 Members States supporting the TEI “Green Pact with Sierra Leone” are Ireland, France and Germany with a total estimated amount of EUR 85 million			
MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION				
13. Type of financing	Indirect management with entrusted entities to be selected in accordance with the criteria set out in section 4.4.1			

1.2 Summary of the Action

The Action intends to upgrade the food systems of Sierra Leone, and aligns with the Government of Sierra Leone *Medium Term National Development Plan (MTNDP) 2024-2030* which intends to (i) reduce import substitution of key staples; (ii) boost export earnings from agriculture; (iii) create jobs and generate income; (iv) alleviate hunger and malnutrition; and (v) significantly improve climate resilience. The Action will be implemented through indirect management with entrusted entities. The proposed action intends to (i) Upgrade the selected value chains with low-carbon, efficient, inclusive production, and value addition for market oriented of main products and by-products, using climate smart approaches; and (ii) Improve capacities of Sierra Leoneans, in particular of women and youth, men, girls and boys, through technical and vocational training (TVET) to take full advantage of market opportunities.

The action will focus on three commodities’ value chains: oil palm, cassava, and infant food value chains. Oil palm and cassava value chains are relevant as they: (i) are traditional commodities in Sierra Leone; (ii) provide potential for both import substitution and exports; (iii) have potential to enhance climate adaptation through improved climate-smart practices from production to processing including regeneration of abandoned or non-productive plantations; (iv) offer significant opportunities to economically empower women in farming and other related sectors. The infant food value chain, on the other hand, is a novel value chain which provides great opportunity for more diverse production habits and for reducing malnutrition. Key sets of activities across all value chains include (i) strengthening of input supply system; (ii) introduction of innovative, climate-smart and gender-sensitive technologies at farm level; (iii) strengthening micro-small and medium enterprises across the value chains, including promotion of circular-economy approaches and women-led entrepreneurship; (iv) reinforce producer networks (e.g. out grower schemes and contract farming); (v) strengthening consumer awareness; (vi) building the capacity of membership-based farmer institutions; (vii) strengthening the technical and vocational training sector; (viii) skilling Sierra Leoneans in practicing sustainable agriculture; and (ix) strengthening coordination, and implementation and monitoring of policies in the country.

The approaches promoted will be based on best practices and observed challenges in the current ecosystem for sustainable agriculture and private sector development. Special attention will be given to variety selection and climate smart production techniques, as well as to aspects around business planning, demand and financial analysis for enterprise development, sustainable access to energy for production, and strengthening capacities of

stakeholders to engage in selected enterprises along the value chains. In addition, the action will document and pilot models for strengthening the relation between producers and processors by facilitating these in practice, as well as improving the regulatory environment.

The proposed action directly contributes to the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III¹, and specifically to its key areas focusing “*Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women*” and “*Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation*”.

1.3 Zone benefitting from the Action

The Action shall be carried out in Sierra Leone, which is included in the list of ODA recipients.

2 RATIONALE

2.1 Context

Sierra Leone is endowed with vast natural resources, diverse agro-ecologies, ample water resources, and fertile soil; yet, only 15% of its 5.4 million hectares of arable land is currently under cultivation, leaving the country as a net importer of food. Sierra Leone is one of the most economically volatile in the world, fluctuating from a growth rate of more than 20 percent in 2013 to -20 percent in 2015, to stand at -2 percent in 2020².

Despite good economic recovery after an 11-year civil war ending in 2011, the subsequent crises including Ebola, effects of the slump in iron ore price, the COVID-19 and the invasion of Ukraine have reversed positive achievements. Sierra Leone is vulnerable to fluctuations in world market prices and disruptions of global supply chains. In 2022, it experienced the highest sub-Saharan food price inflation rates (29%). In 2023, it had a GDP growth of 2.7%, below the population growth rate and de-facto shrinking of the economy; and a negative trade balance, increasing debts and limited fiscal space, with budget revenue at only 14% of GDP, causing a currency depreciation by 70%. Income poverty levels increased from 54% in 2011 to 57% in 2019, however, in rural areas it is nearly 74%. UNDP (2023) points out, that multidimensional poverty in Sierra Leone is higher than monetary poverty. While women and men may have income above the poverty threshold, they are deprived in other dimensions, such as health and education. Multidimensional poverty measures almost 65% nationally whereas female multidimensional poverty stands for nearly 66%³.

One quarter of the national population lives in extreme poverty, predominantly rural and almost half of the population are not consuming a sufficiently nutritious diet to live a healthy life. Food insecurity has steadily grown over the last 15 years⁴. 81% of households are unable to meet their basic food and nutrition needs (2022).⁵ While there have been slight improvements in chronic malnutrition levels from 28.8% in 2017 to 26% in 2021⁶, there are challenges in meeting the recommended infant and young child feeding (IYCF) indicators.

Malnutrition among children under the age of five is high. Only 33% and 4.9% children 6-23 months met the recommended minimum meal frequency (MMF) and the minimum acceptable diet (MAD), respectively. In 2021 there were 5.2% of children (aged 6—59 months) suffering from acute malnutrition based on UNICEF figures.

Children are largely fed on low-nutrient foods or expensive, imported infant food packages, availed through health centres for treatment of acute malnutrition. Population growth rates continue to rise, and youth make up 36% of the population⁷. Sierra Leone’s Human Development Index (HDI) score is one of the lowest in the world (0.477)

¹ The Gender Action Plan III is a Joint communication by the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy which was welcomed through EU Presidency Conclusions of 16 December 2020 endorsed by 24 Member States.

² “*Food Systems Profile – Sierra Leone: Catalysing the sustainable and inclusive transformation of food systems*”, FAO, CIRAD and EU (2022)

³ “*Barriers and Enablers of Women’s Participation in Revenue Generation in Sierra Leone*”, UNDP (2023)

⁴ “*2020 Comprehensive Food Security Vulnerability Analyses*,” WFP (2020), indicates food security at 25% in 2010; 45% in 2015; and 57% in 2020

⁵ “*Sierra Leone Economic Update 2023: Enhancing Value Chains to Boost Food Security*”. World Bank (2023)

⁶ Sierra Leone National Nutrition Survey 2017

⁷ Togoh, G.P.V, A.B. Turay, and A. Komba (2015). *Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census: Thematic report on Population Projections*

with an illiteracy rate of 57%. Youth literacy levels have been increasing in the past 10 years but are yet to be paralleled in terms of skills development, and women and girls lag in such progress made⁸.

Agriculture is a main contributor to growth, making up 58% of the economy in 2022. It employs 55% of the workforce (largely self-employed) and is driven by subsistence farming with low input and technology usage; however, the country's national resource endowment is under threat from outdated and unsustainable practices, widespread use of slash and burn for land preparation, reliance on fuelwood for cooking and lack of land use planning and forestry protection⁹, which have led to increased deforestation¹⁰ and contribute to make Sierra Leone more vulnerable to climate change impacts.

Climate change is expected to further impact biodiversity and ecosystems: Sierra Leone is the third most vulnerable nation after Bangladesh and Guinea Bissau to the adverse effects of climate change and one of the least able countries to adapt to climate change, due to capacity and skills gaps.¹¹ The high poverty headcount ratio at national level amplifies the impacts of climate change, especially through deterioration in food security. The National Determined Contribution (NDC) targets a reduction in CO2 emission levels by 25% by 2050, with a transformational shift toward a low-emission development pathway, by targeting priority sectors, implementing REDD+¹² as well as promoting innovation and technology transfer for sustainable breakthroughs in energy, waste management, transport and agriculture.

Agricultural value chains are largely informal, with players poorly connected with limited access to finance. Enterprises struggle to make ends meet in an unfavourable ecosystem. Supply networks towards the industry are not structured and by-products are largely wasted. The needs of the domestic and cross-border markets into Guinea, Liberia and export opportunities beyond are largely unexploited.

Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan 2024-2030 provides a "Transformative and Acceleration Agenda for Food Security, Human Capital Development & Job Creation", prioritizing agricultural transformation to achieve food and nutrition security, adaptation to climate change, youth employment and overall economic growth. The National Sustainable Agricultural Development Plan 2010-2030 serves as Sierra Leone's contribution to the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP), which also prioritizes agricultural productivity. In 2022, in the context of the World Food Forum, the Sustainable Food Systems analysis highlighted the following as threats to the country's food systems: unsustainable production technique and land use practices; exploitation of natural resources; and high food import dependence. Government's current flagship initiative, "Feed Salone," launched in October 2023, aims to boost agricultural productivity, ensuring food security, and fostering inclusive economic growth. With a commitment to allocate 10% of the national budget¹³, Feed Salone will be a central driver of the country's Big 5 Game Changers for accelerated delivery of sustainable development for 2024-2030. It focuses on six pillars: (i) mechanization and irrigation; (ii) seed and input systems; (iii) aggregation, processing, and market linkages; (iv) agricultural finance; (v), ag-tech and climate-smart agriculture; (vi) and empowerment of women in all their diversity and youth. The country suffers from limited data availability, especially post-Ebola and COVID-19.

The EU is a major contributor to Sierra Leone's socio-economic development, including agriculture. The Multi-Indicative Programme 2021-2027 priorities are green economy, human development and governance. The green economy aspect aims to promote a green and resilient economy by providing decent jobs and a sustainable, inclusive green economic transformation, which includes "Sustainable food systems: developing sustainable, employment-oriented agriculture and fisheries food systems for health and nutrition." The human development aspect prioritizes Basic Education and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); supports improving the quality literacy and numeracy, skills and qualifications of the population. The EU is committed to join forces with EU Member States under the Team Europe Initiative "Green Pact with Sierra Leone", to foster (i) Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for jobs and growth; (ii) Sustainable agriculture and seafood systems for employment, health and nutrition; and (iii) Restoring, managing and protecting terrestrial and marine biodiversity and ecosystems.

⁸ Sierra Leone scores in the bottom quarter in both the "life cycle of a working woman", the "Global Gender Gap Index", and the "Gender Inequality Index"

⁹ Forest cover currently stands around 5% (National Forestry Policy, Government of Sierra Leone, 2021)

¹⁰ FAO and USGS data sources report between 30–42 percent forest cover lost between 1960 and 2010 (FAOSTAT, 2021).

¹¹ Notre Dame Global Adaptation Index, ranking of 2021: 68 out of 185 on ability to adapt, and 154 out of 192 on readiness

¹² Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

¹³ In 2022, Government expenditure to the agricultural sector stood at 2.4%.

While priority area 1 “Green Economy” of the MIP contributes directly to the Team Europe Initiative, priority areas “human development” and “governance” shall help to overcome identified binding constraints to Sierra Leone’s development. In the context of Global Gateway Africa-Europe, the European Union launched in December 2021 a support package to accelerate sustainable growth and the creation of decent jobs, notably for the sustainable development of inclusive value chains, with an emphasis on food production, income creation and opportunities for regional and continental integration.

2.2 Problem Analysis

Despite significant agricultural potential, Sierra Leone is a net food importer, suffering from large-scale food and nutrition insecurity, and is characterized by a small private sector that struggles to make ends meet. The economy is largely informal and non-structured, as are relationships between researchers and producers; producers, aggregators and off-takers and between off-takers and processors. Relevant institutions with potential to transform the sector are weak and the human capacity and skills equally so.

Oil palm is a traditional food and cash crop in Sierra Leone. Crude palm oil enjoys almost unlimited demand nationally, regionally, and internationally, if appropriately certified.¹⁴ It is the second most important agricultural export crop¹⁵; with great potential for both foreign exchange generation, women’s economic empowerment at local levels, income generation through less seasonality of harvest and local value addition with small mills. It can also contribute to improved tree cover for biodiversity preservation and to act as carbon-sinks during their productive life (25-30 years)¹⁶. Yet strategic investment has lagged. There lacks information on varieties of oil palm and inadequate research on and development of their germplasms, and mother/father trees and nurseries. Large scale plantations are planted with imported materials. Smallholder farmers (70% of the oil palm production area) have old palm oil farm (more than 30 years old) relying on traditional yet inefficient, unsafe, and polluting artisanal production methods for domestic food markets. There is little or no rehabilitative zoning or planning land use around old plantations.¹⁷ Farmers receive little guidance in terms of limiting land use change, biodiversity preservation and afforestation practices. Quality seedlings are not available for sale on the market, and do not have a local market price. In selected cases, smallholders receive seedlings from companies¹⁸; but majority of farmers harvest wild varieties in old plantations. Smallholder palm oil farmers receive 2-3 MT/ha, whereas commercialised producers with improved inputs and improved, climate-friendly practices reach up to 15MT/ha.

Notwithstanding the abundance of oil palm, the country is not able to meet its local demand and imports about one fourth of its consumption (mainly from Malaysia), both for domestic processing into edible oil, as well as refining of crude oil into soap and other products by a handful of large-scale processors. Crude oil as well as soap products are also traded to neighbouring countries. A few large mills exist (40,000 MT/year) as well as range of smaller mills (1MT/year) in the communities. All have underutilized capacity, and workers lack skills for their maintenance. By-products are used to some extent, for example palm kernel oil, but largescale, systematic exploitation of circular economy opportunities is missing. One larger, though informal, out grower scheme exists in the country and other processors and manufacturers are interested in strengthening their producer networks for stability of supply. Very few projects support the value chain.

¹⁴ The Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil certification (RSPO) is the most prevalent certification, however, RSPO Organic Certification and potentially de-forestation free certification is required to reach premium markets for palm oil. This requires organic land use for 10-15 years prior to achieving certification.

¹⁵ It is the second most important agricultural export crop of the country (FAOSTAT 2021)

¹⁶ In fact, research from Ghana has shown that palm plantations can sequester carbon when residue materials in the form of pruned palm fronds are well managed. While changing land use from primary and secondary forests does lead to an increase in carbon emissions, oil palm plantations are able to sequester more and more carbon as they age (peaking at 20-25 years, after which it declines), given specific practices on farm. (“*Dynamics of soil carbon sequestration under oil palm plantations of different ages*”. Global Symposium on Soil Organic Carbon, Rome, Italy 21-23 March 2017. This Action targets regeneration of old, abandoned oil palm plantations past their useful carbon sequestration potential in order to restore organic materials to the soil, and increased carbon sequestration capacity of the planted areas.

¹⁷ Oil palm plantations emit carbon dioxide when they are young; however, mature plantations can act as carbon sinks in the same way as trees. The productive life of an oil palm ends after 25-30 years. Many oil palms in Sierra Leone are more than 40 years old and thus no longer act as carbon sinks or provide tree cover to the soil and micro-organisms.

¹⁸ Gold Tree, one of the major investors into oil palm processing with both a nucleus estate and an out grower scheme, has made some seedlings available to farmers on loan. However, farmers do not repay in good time, reinforced by the absence of an effective repayment system. This cumulatively affects Gold Tree’s liquidity.

Cassava is a traditional staple crop in Sierra Leone: during lean season, households circumstantially, switch from rice to cassava, the country's second largest crop, with approx. 820.000 MT of annual production (2019); and 19% of agricultural value in the country. Products derived from cassava like gari flour, fufu and cassava flour are in high demand. Average yields of 10MT/ha are high for the region, but still below what could be achieved with improved varieties and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). For example, cassava yields in India are estimated at 25MT/ha. The market for the cassava stems/cuttings is disorganized with little assurance of quality or knowledge amongst farmers on variety selection for selected soil types. The value chain is more mature than others, with various models of sourcing using contracts. Farmers receive about 31% of profits; assemblers 15%; processors 31% and distribution 23%¹⁹. There is high competition, but only a few can live up to certification and export requirements which requires structure and traceability. Processing ranges from small-scale, home-milling activities that provide a quick source of income for households to a limited number of medium- to large sized operations attempting to commercialize processed cassava but struggle with organizing the supply side. Several projects support the cassava value chain, some with provision of free inputs and/or processing equipment, which sometimes ends up abandoned.

Unlike the oil palm and cassava value chains, the **infant food** value chain is an emerging value chain in Sierra Leone. Infant food is a processed porridge of rice, beans, lentils, cowpeas, sesame, orange-fleshed sweet potato and others, packed in daily or weekly sized feeding packs. Most infant foods are imported and provided for free to health clinics; while the rural areas mostly produce homemade infant foods for their young children or resolve to cheap and poor nutrient dense options. There is a national market for 2,000 metric tonnes of complementary food and a further 1,000 metric tonnes for Liberia, as well as favourable trade agreements within the ECOWAS trade block²⁰. The value chain is characterized by limited access to raw materials (partly due to limited variety in production - for example, of roots, tubers and oil seeds, which are rarely marketed; as well as poor nutrition content in selected varieties²¹) and lack of access to affordable and safe equipment and recipes. No cooperatives exist dealing specifically with this value chain. A few small and medium infant food factories currently operate but nutritious, affordable choices are not available. Business planning and structured producer networks are required for a processor to ensure availability of raw material and food safety of the product, for example avoiding aflatoxin developing in stored grains or contamination during manufacturing. Few projects specifically support the value chain, though some actors have received extensive support.

Cutting across the value chains are the following key challenges:

A. Low productivity and poor agricultural practices.

Farmers display limited adoption of improved varieties, partly due to low outreach by research institutions, limited extension services, and limited interaction between the two to provide farmers with advisory services and demonstrations on variety selection and cropping methods. Slash-and-burn techniques are widely practiced. Despite farmers having some awareness on the negative impacts of these practices, feasible alternatives are not provided to farmers (labour costs for weeding and/or prices for certified controlled herbicides are very high). Practices such as intercropping and agro-forestry are not widespread. Limited private sector extension services exist, even within out grower schemes. Furthermore, there are limited models available in the country for nursery operation, either at community-, input dealer- or research-level. This makes inputs difficult to access, and their quality difficult to ascertain. The lack of access to and how to manage and utilize inputs, especially for perennials, hampers the farmers' ability to reap adequate rewards from their investment, especially for perennial crops, thus limiting overall availability of produce on the market, especially of industry-demanded varieties. Farmers tend to grow the same crops with little diversification. **The selected value chains cannot be further commercialized, without addressing the inputs system.** Primary value addition and processing are largely done at farmer level, with limited quantities reaching the markets²². This follows **rudimentary production and processing methods**, both of which contribute negatively to human development (e.g. physical safety and food safety) and depletes environmental resource and in some cases contributes towards deforestation and biodiversity loss (e.g. firewood

¹⁹ *Regional cassava value chains analysis in West Africa: Case study of Sierra Leone*, PPAAO/WAAPP, September 2024.

²⁰ products are zero rated as 'essential social commodities.

²¹ Nutritional varieties include yellow cassava, bio-fortified maize and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes

²² Information on how agricultural households sold crops for the 2015 Census was obtained at three levels, no sale, part sold and all sold. Only 3.3 per cent of agricultural households nationally said they sold all the produce from food crops. A significant proportion (46.8 per cent) said they sold part of the food crop produce while the majority (49.9 per cent) never sold any portion of their produce. "Sierra Leone 2015 Population and Housing Census: Thematic Report on Agriculture" (2015)

usage and lack of waste management). Utilized equipment is less advanced and inefficient to reduce food loss and ensure food safety. Energy comes mainly from firewood and diesel generators, both of which are inefficient. Farmers are often forced to sell raw produce at a low price, negatively impacting their incomes. Furthermore, because of the low input system resulting in low yields and poor soil fertility, the incentive for food production is to clear larger areas of land, which results in accelerated deforestation²³. Addressing inputs system bottlenecks and promoting climate-smart agricultural practices could both increase productivity, as well as enhance climate change adaptation, while preventing further land use expansion.

B. Informal and immature value chains

Many private sector players are informal (34% in 2015) and non-registered (90%), limiting the sectors' ability to contribute, or even drive, economic growth and poverty reduction, as envisaged in Feed Salone²⁴. Enterprises are mostly unprofessional, and lack capacity to access finance and innovative technologies to grow and diversify their business into exports and circular economy approaches²⁵. Finally, **many value chain services are not developed**: these include transport, aggregation, and packaging machinery (packaging is often imported from Kenya at high cost, reportedly up to 25% of the processed product), as well as services such as machine maintenance and electrical services. The SME regulatory is lacking and the registration services hard to access, hampering contract enforcement; adherence to food safety standards; decent employment generation (child labour is at 25%); and enforcement of environmental protection guidelines.

C. Weak human capacity and institutions and penetration of public and finance services

Sierra Leone suffers from **limited human capital (capabilities)**, including **specialized skills**, for example related to agricultural engineering tasks involving solar panels and processing machinery; in GAP; and in business management and entrepreneurship. Skills development and training in the country has been steeped in academia with little attention to, and resources allocated for, agriculture. Tractor mechanics are trained without access to a tractor and women (potential) students lack accommodation options to complete full courses. Moreover, curricula are not specially constructed to reflect the opportunities *in*, and comparative advantages *of*, the communities where educational and skills training institutions are situated.

Farmers are not organized and not well represented as value chain actors, providing space for exploitation, with a gap of trusted brokers to liaise between farmers and larger private sector companies and limiting farmer to farmer knowledge transfer and access to services. Formal contracts are rare, with most relying on Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) or trust-based relationships, with informal negotiations and non-transparent price setting. "Out grower/in grower model" is frequently referred to, but interpretations and implementation vary widely and clear regulations covering the sector are lacking.

The concepts of farmer institutions are already known and practiced in Sierra Leone; and are generally inclusive of men, women, youth and persons with disabilities; however, they are financially and technically constrained in terms of accessing equipment, bulk purchasing from farmers, as well as provision of services, for example climate-smart agricultural advisory services. This in turn translates further into a **weak ability to adapt to climate change**²⁶.

Identification of main stakeholders and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the action:

Farmers usually own between 0.5 and 2 ha of land and gain knowledge from practical experiences of their relatives and other community members and as such limited knowledge of innovations, good agriculture practices and market demands. Good practices exist of farmers trained in groups and promotion of farmer led (or peer learning) mechanisms, for example using a farmer field school (FFS) approach, where a lead farmer acts as a facilitator to host the group on his farm, while conducting agricultural experimentation. A strong FFS is often formalized to act as local processing hubs or informal aggregators. Extension and advisory services fall under the

²³ "Food Systems Profile – Sierra Leone: Catalysing the sustainable and inclusive transformation of food systems", FAO, CIRAD and EU (2022)

²⁴ "Sierra Leone Poverty Assessment: Poverty, Trends, Development and Drivers", World Bank (2022),

²⁵ Circular economy describes the use of products, including waste, from the value chains, for example cassava peels for animal feed or briquettes replacing charcoal.

²⁶ <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

mandate of Ministry for Agriculture and Food security and its research institution and have traditionally been supported in their implementation by FAO, IFAD, IITA and GIZ, among others.

Women and girls, of which 70% are employed in agriculture, provide 75% of the labour along the food value chain, from production, processing to marketing²⁷. Jobs occupied by women in agriculture are characterised by poor working conditions, low productivity, seasonal work and low pay. While women and girls play a crucial role in achieving food security and nutrition as custodians of household food security and health, they have less access than men to productive resources, to extension services and technologies and finances, leaving them excluded and underserved. Women are exclusively responsible for manually processing rice and cassava, which is a heavy burden and usually under small marketing activities as well. In addition to farm activities, women are responsible for most domestic and reproductive chores such as cooking, fetching water and fuel, clean and launder clothes, caring for the sick, elderly and children. They are responsible for nutritional feeding of infants yet have limited decision-making, purchasing power and voice.

Farmers are often part of informal groups, community-based, registered, farmer-based organisations (FBOs), cooperatives, commodity associations, Agri-Business Centres (ABCs), or apex bodies (namely the National Farmers Federation of Sierra Leone (NaFFSL))²⁸. **Cooperatives** are formal legal entities owned and democratically controlled by their members, with a focus on providing services and benefits to their members. A cooperative can be made up of individuals or FBOs. They normally embrace multiple value chains, with some of the farmers participating in one or more value chains; and operate across chiefdoms and districts. **Commodity associations** are commodity-specific, for example, Cassava Growers Association or the Oil Palm Growers Association²⁹. These are formalized, with objectives to seek their common interests and crops grown by members. Some institutions perform well with structured leadership (often headed by women) and record-keeping and sell, buy, and market on behalf of their members, but **require support to fully exploit value chain opportunities and offer services to farmers** for them to commercialize and produce higher value crops. Good practices have been observed in cooperatives taking on production according to quality standards for the international market, for example HACCP, ISO9001, Global G.A.P., organic, or other types of standards, testing and certification for cassava; and in providing master trainers (trained private extension agents) to support farmer field schools. Membership based institutions can act as a platform for enforcing and supporting enhancement across their members and potentially take on direct export functions and/or linkages to industry in the long run, and with the right support. Cooperatives are more likely to be inclusive of women and men living in socioeconomic difficulties and other disadvantaged groups such as persons with disabilities, migrants and seasonal workers. Those who require special attention to benefit from value chain development. In 2021, **NaFFSL** reformed itself from a loose body of farmers reflecting national political considerations into an interim commodities platform of multiple value chains, including food and non-food crop, cash crops and livestock. It is now considered nationally representative, and includes producers, processors, transporters, and marketers, but does not yet provide structured support functions to its members.

Another wing of farmer institutions are the **ABCs**, farmer-based organizations focusing on collective action in terms of input supply, value addition and marketing³⁰. However, many ABCs were constructed in areas without commercial agricultural opportunities and without committed members, making them prone to elite capture³¹. Machinery provided did not always match the comparative advantages in the communities where the ABCs were located, and the ownership and maintenance responsibilities were not clear with users. About 20% of the ABCs are currently well-performing, upkeeping the original principles of their formation, some as membership-based institutions, others operating more like enterprises with sole ownership.

Sierra Leoneans at large include men and boys, women and girls, persons with disabilities, inclusive of farmers, those who are informally or formally employed on or off-farm, and enterprise owners. In the informal sector over 80% of businesses are owned and run by women (UNDP, 2023).

Mothering women /Primary caregivers are pivotal in the acceptance, selection, and purchase of healthy infant foods for their children. However, they are often not sufficiently sensitized on the nutritional compositions of

²⁷ Government of Sierra Leone's and FAO's National gender profile of agriculture and rural livelihoods (2018)

²⁸ These are classified broadly as membership-based institutions.

²⁹ This association presents out growers in price negotiations with Gold Tree, one of the big palm oil producers.

³⁰ <https://www.fao.org/sustainable-food-value-chains/library/details/en/c/276827/>

³¹ 2021 MAFs Inventory and Assessment of ABCs documents examples of family members exclusively constituting the Executive Committee of ABCs.

appropriate foods for young children. **Women and girls in all their diversity** are particularly constrained by lack of access to strategic resources (for example land), learning opportunities and lower levels of human capital due to traditional expectations on division of gender-assigned roles in family and society. Gender Action Learning Systems (GALS) support modalities are not prevalent in Sierra Leone, despite good results for women's economic empowerment and local conflict prevention at grassroots levels. **Young and unemployed women and men** generally lack skills towards sustainable employment either by enterprises, large companies, or even for on- or off-farm self-employment.

Private sector is dominated by micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs).³² Micro and small enterprises have limited access to finance to strengthen their producer networks; to upgrade their production (or sometimes even to maintain broken machinery or invest in stable energy solutions) or to diversify into other, profitable products, such as infant food, waste processing or into formal exports. Medium and large enterprises are formal players with processing and manufacturing facilities. They often aggregate and establish nucleus farms to supplement sourcing. Various models exist for securing supply, including land rental and estate establishment, purchase from smallholder producers through formal or informal arrangements. There is lack of clear regulations defining such models, leading to an uneven power dynamic where off takers often dictate prices to farmers. A few large companies exist within each of the selected value chains; they report challenges to grow, impeded by insufficient finance and land, unreliable electricity, high tax rates, burdensome customs and trade regulations and a general poor eco-system for doing business³³.

MSMEs are key driver for employment and jobs creation, it is estimated that a typical soap factory, employs 18-20 permanent workers, while small gari processors employ 2-3 permanent workers and the same number in day labourers. **Oil palm** processors produce crude oil, which can be used for inputs into a vibrant national and regional market for soap and associated products or for cooking oil, although artisanal processing methods are generally preferred for cooking oil processing due to the colour and consistency of the oil. Soap is produced both by large manufactures and small enterprises. Many small enterprises exist, including several who use kernel oil as a substitute for crude palm oil or as inputs into animal feed value chains. However, they operate inefficiently, with poor extraction rates, expensive and cumbersome supply chains and polluting processing technologies. **Cassava processors** are numerous and varied in terms of scale and size at the national level, with stronger FBO and cooperative structures observed. Processors in this segment primarily focus on gari production, which has a lengthy production cycle and often remains only half-mechanized due to limited power availability. **Infant food processors** are few and operate mostly as small private infant food processing factories registered as sole proprietorship businesses, limited liability companies, or community owned factories (for example, one is owned and run by a mother-to-mother support group). Infant food processors in the country are constrained by limited access to raw materials, low production capacity, low consumer and nutritional knowledge, lack of availability of modern equipment (including packaging and labelling equipment), weak infrastructure and lack of access to finance. Furthermore, limited linkages of value chain actors and lack of capacity building materials and opportunities on the formulations, shelf-life and hygiene practices further limit the sector.

With some success, SME **accelerator labs** in country have been supporting development of the private sector. These accelerators provide tailor-made and hands-on support to companies (selected through, for example, calls for proposals) to improve their business plan, as well as providing opportunities to boost operations and strengthen managerial capacities. They support supply chains and producer networks, economic and financial analysis for bankable business plans. Other important players for private sector development include the **Sierra Leone Chamber of Agribusiness Development (SLeCAD)**; and the Cassava Growers Association but are all small institutions and bear a considerable risk of limited capacity.³⁴ Strong **NGOs/CSOs** support grassroots mobilization,

³² There is no single definition of **enterprise** or SME in Sierra Leone. The SMEDA act defines small enterprise as having annual turnover less than SLL100 million (US\$8,500) and medium enterprise as having turnover larger than this but less than SLL500 million (US\$42,680). The Small and Micro Taxpayer Regime in turn defines SME as having a turnover between SLL10 million (US\$850) and SLL350 million (US\$29,876) for the purposes of taxation. For this Action, enterprises are defined it as *any registered business or commercial entity engaged in economic activities, including production, trade, or services and of small or medium size. They don't necessarily have limited liability.*

³³ Ease of doing business ranking was 163 in 2020.

³⁴ Both are implementation partners under other EU AAPs and other projects of development partners, with which partnerships may be established; but care should be taken not to overburden the organizational structures artificially nor to hinge private sector development upon shoulders of organizations which are not in themselves representative and highly inclusive of farmers.

capacity building and protect rights of all groups in the country, for example around access to land (Namati) and responsible private investment (Solidaridad).

Commercial and community banks exist within the country, though with limited capacities and reach within the agriculture sector. These institutions, including Apex banks, are being supported by several initiatives, including an upcoming Agricultural Credit Facility, as well as an EU support under 11TH EDF through UNCDF and domestic financial institutions, to strengthen the sectors understanding of the agriculture sector, but also to develop appropriate financial products and services for agri-business development.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security is the main counterpart for this project. MAFS hosts *Feed Salone* strategic orientation and is expected to monitor and coordinate its implementation.

The Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MGCA) oversees the advancement of gender parity and well-being of children. MGCA shall be the complementary partner to the Ministry of Health – Directorate of Food and Nutrition in the implementation of activities related to communication campaign on infant nutrition (*read below*).

The Ministry of Trade regulates enterprises and cooperatives, but several policy are currently under review. It also oversees the **Sierra Leone Bureau of Standards (SLBS)**, the national statutory body responsible for the management of the nation's quality infrastructure (metrology, standardization, testing and quality). While the organization has an important mandate for the agricultural sector, especially in the quality assurance of processed products, its outreach and enforcement/inspection capacities are minimal, due to lack of decentralized operational offices. **Cross-sectoral/ministerial coordination** lacks especially to govern the food systems transformation.

Agricultural research is mandated to the **Sierra Leone Agricultural Institute (SLARI)** to enhance sustainable productivity, commercialization, and competitiveness of the agricultural sector and, specifically, the generation and promotion of innovative agricultural technologies and empowerment of stakeholders. This mandate has been augmented to include commercial research enterprise activities, to improve dissemination of innovation and technology, notably quality inputs. Efforts have been made to strengthen action-oriented research (for example at the newly established Technology Lab), but improved varieties are hardly available to farmers. In Sierra Leone, The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) leads in efforts to co-develop and promote climate-smart agricultural innovations in ways that restore soil health and enhance climate change adaptation for increased and sustainable agricultural productivity. Applied research is also happening under the **Ministry of Environment, Department of Forestry**, where a National Forest Inventory is currently underway with EU 11th EDF financing as complementary measures to support to be provided under EU AAP 2023- *Nature Nourishes* to lay down the foundation to carbon markets access, including for agriculture investments.

The Directorate of Food and Nutrition (DFN), at the Ministry of Health, is mandated to advocate on nutritional issues and is responsible for advocating and supporting the adoption of sustainable feeding practices, required to generate demand for infant foods. They work to raise awareness amongst pregnant and lactating mothers on healthy eating, infant and young child feeding practices, dietary diversity, and the production of homemade complementary foods through cooking demonstrations. Yet, the directorate is financially constrained. It also lacks diversity in homemade foods to promote. Their work is supplemented by several NGOs and CSOs, including mother to mother support groups; Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and UN Agencies like UNICEF and WFP.

Technical and vocational Training (TVET) is under the responsibility of the **Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE)**. In Sierra Leone 350 technical and vocational training institutes (TVETs) exist; 11 of which public (**Government Technical Institutes- GTIs**). While most have engaged staff, there is a lack of a decent operational environment to offer much-needed practical training. Courses are also largely out-of-date, and unresponsive to industry demands partly due to slow, centralized accreditation processes. It is estimated that only 40% of TVETs offer programmes that are relevant to economic demands and that only 2% of graduates hold official certificates. The slow and wanting certification process directly impacts the employability of youths. Furthermore, attracting female students is constrained by lack of accommodation facilities. The sector has been supported by AfDB IOM and GIZ, including with EU financing in the past. However, the sector remains underfunded and the National Qualification Framework, which is expected to guide curriculum development at all levels, including for the agricultural sector, is incomplete. The National Council for Technical and Vocational Training and other Academic Awards (**NCTVA**) is charged with providing supervision, quality assurance, approving courses, conducting examinations and certification, but is highly centralized and delays in awarding certificates to graduates, directly impacts employability of graduates.

The **Development Partners group** in Sierra Leone is organized into a sector working group; EU is currently co-chairing with IFAD of the donor agriculture sector working group and will be the chair as of September 2025. EU member states presence is very limited as only **Ireland and Germany** have an Embassy in Sierra Leone. France has limited operations piloted from Guinea. The **United Nations** have a long presence in the country and many agencies (i.e. ILO, UNIDO, FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, etc) are represented and operate as one UN.

3 DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

3.1 Objectives and Expected Outputs

The **Overall Objective** of this action is to strengthen sustainable³⁵ and climate resilient agri-food systems in Sierra Leone.

The **Specific Objectives** of this action are to:

1. Improve sustainability, efficiency and inclusivity of oil palm, cassava, and infant food value chains, using climate-smart approaches in production and processing, while facilitating decent green job creation;
2. Improve use of market opportunities by Sierra Leoneans, in particular of women and youth that participated in TVET programmes.

The **Outputs** to be delivered by this action contributing to the corresponding Specific Objectives are:

Contributing to Output 1 (or Specific Objective 1)

- 1.1) Increased availability of climate- resilient and improved varieties of locally produced inputs for women and men farmers for the oil palm, cassava, and infant food value chain.
- 1.2) Enhanced awareness of women and men farmers of innovative, climate-smart, gender-sensitive technologies and practices.
- 1.3) Enhanced capacity of MSMEs to apply circular economy approach including making full use of value chain products and by-products, with a focus on women in all their diversity and youth.³⁶
- 1.4) Enhanced capacity of producer networks³⁷ in application of pioneering models for processing, supply and market access.
- 1.5) Mothering women / primary caregivers are more aware about the importance of nutritious and safe food for infant feeding.

Contributing to Output 2 (or Specific Objective 2)

- 2.1) Enhanced capacity of farmer-based institutions, including FBOs, ABCs, Cooperatives and Associations for value chain development, including the promotion of climate resilient practices, aggregation, standards, testing and certification, and market linkages.
- 2.2) Enhanced capacity of TVET institutions to deliver on their mandate, in line with the Feed Salone strategic orientation and newly approved TVET Act, including strengthening of the certification function for employability of women in all their diversity and youth.
- 2.3) Increased certification opportunities for Sierra Leoneans, in particular women in all their diversity and youth, for skills required to engage in value chain upgrading

³⁵ Including low-carbon pathways, innovation and technology pathways, and circular economy principles

³⁶ Companies might be formal and informal and will be supported to register in accordance with their operations. ABCs, run as a business by a registered company or group, might also qualify for this support. Other potential targets for support could be micro, small or medium sized enterprises. Examples include women traders in markets; processing mills (e.g. 1 mt/hour for oil palm) in rural areas operated by an FBO; processors and aggregators in urban areas; or existing ABCs, with preference to women, youth or PWD-headed. Larger companies are not eligible for this support.

³⁷ The term “producer networks” is used as a generic term to describe what might be known as formal or informal out grower networks. In Sierra Leone the word out grower is used loosely and with many different understandings

2.4) Enhanced capacity of the Agriculture and TVET sectors actors for coordination, implementation and monitoring of policy and regulatory framework.

3.2 Indicative Activities

SO 1: Improve sustainability, efficiency and inclusivity of oil palm, cassava, and infant food value chains, using climate-smart approaches in production and processing, while facilitating decent green job creation

For oil palm recommendations of the VCA4D study³⁸ will be implemented, notably I) to improve productivity of smallholder farmers i) through better access and availability to improve seedlings for both Tenera and Dura varieties, ii) support a strategic approach at national level for rejuvenation of old plantations with a balanced approach for industrial and artisanal economic development and iii) strengthen good agriculture practices and farm management; and II) improve supply chain efficiency through i) support aggregation and quality assurance; and ii) strengthen buy-products processing (palm kernel, glycerine and recycling of empty fruit bunches).

For cassava, improved cassava varieties (yellow-fleshed, fast maturing, high-nutrient, climate-resilient, disease-resilient); and diverse inter cropping crops like soybean, pigeon pea, sesame, yellow-maize and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes will be promoted. The national applied research system will be strengthened to fulfil its mandate including new policy directions, specifically related to biodiversity conservation, commercial enterprise development for innovation dissemination, action-oriented research and linkages with the private sector. Low cost approaches such as nurseries, will be implemented at community and institutional level to ensure innovation technology dissemination to smallholder farmers. For infant food, action will support improved quality standards, aggregation and market demand.

Activities relating to Output 1.1: Availability of climate- resilient and improved varieties

A.1.1.1 Provision of technical assistance to national research institutions in terms of commercial enterprise and action-research. Relations with private sector will be established.

A.1.1.2 National germplasm survey of oil palm genetic materials to form a baseline for oil palm research in the country; and mapping of oil palm plantations in the country, e.g. degraded land vs abandoned vs forested areas and pedoclimatic conditions, in partnership with the AAP 2023 Nature Nourishes and the EU-financed Forestry Inventory project. This will ensure de-forestation-free production.

A.1.1.3 Establishment of research plantations, mother/father tree identification and germination laboratory for breeder and foundation seed, including wild/traditional varieties for biodiversity protection (related to oil palm).

A.1.1.4 Establishment of nurseries at selected institutions (research sites, cooperatives, TVETs, ABCs or similar), and develop systems for assured quality, certification, and seed multiplication, across the three value chains.

A.1.1.5 Provide technical support to private sector actors (e.g. cooperatives, input dealers or TVETs) to undertake certified seed multiplication. Selected roots, tubers and grains will also contribute to plantation diversity.

Activities relating to Output 1.2: Climate-smart and gender sensitive technologies and practices at farm level

A.1.2.1 Climate-smart, gender sensitive Farmer Field Schools (no slash and burn, pesticide-free weed control, intercropping, use of cover crops, timely replanting practices) are established and areas re-planted or re-generated with improved varieties as per VCA4D study recommendations, managed through good Agriculture Practices and efficient farm management.

A.1.2.2 Demonstration plots are established to showcase inter-cropping of cassava and maize with legumes (soybean, groundnut, pigeon pea and cowpea) and with agroforestry and climate-smart practices, thereby ensuring year-round production for food and income generation. This will target women in all their diversity who are the traditional producers of legumes.

³⁸ Value chain analysis for development- Palm oil value chain analysis in Sierra Leone – EC Sep 2018

Activities relating to Output 1.3: **Enterprise acceleration**, targeting MSMEs across three value chains, by-products and for value chain services, with a focus on women and youth.

A.1.3.1 Mapping of private sector investments, entrepreneurs and FBOs within selected value chains, around a “hub” approach for geographical identification of areas suitable for selected investments; as well as identification of gaps in value chain services.

A.1.3.2 Identification of viable business models within the circular economy approach: e.g. cassava starch for briquettes, fishponds; cassava peels for piggery or poultry feeds and for bioenergy; palm kernel shells for briquettes; palm oil cholesterol for soap making or candles. This will include developing commercial farm models and viable business models.

A.1.3.3 Provision of enterprise acceleration/incubation services to selected entrepreneur within four targeted areas: processing (crude palm oil, palm kernel oil and cassava); circular economy enterprises; transport (especially specialized, safe and crop-preserving ones), aggregation and other value chain services; and infant food processing. Creating linkages with TVET institutions (including GTIs) to take on required skills training and/or identify candidates for incubation³⁹.

A.1.3.4 Investment into equipment for selected enterprises based on performance under the acceleration activities; and who can provide co-financing, potentially through partnerships with financial institutions or projects.⁴⁰

A.1.3.5 Development of uniform, national definition of SMEs and draft harmonized SME policy and regulation as well as centralized registration; Develop draft agricultural export policy and legislative framework including for import of required machinery and other materials needed for production (e.g. packaging), for potential uptake by Government

A.1.3.6 Strengthen existing commodity platforms, including professionalizing their management and operations, enhancing the participation of PO representatives in the multi stakeholder platforms

A.1.3.7 Development of draft regulatory frameworks for harmonization of food safety standards across relevant entities for the selected value chain, in collaboration with the AAP 2023 BEC4S, which also provides strategic support to Sierra Leone Standards Bureau, which needs to set specific standards in relation to processing of ingredients into bio-fortification and other components of complementary foods, and to carry out more and more frequent inspection visits.

Activities relating to Output 1.4: **Strengthening producer networks**, targeting both small and medium enterprises and medium and large companies with technical assistance.

A.1.4.1 **Small producers** (cassava, oil palm (mainly kernel)) are supported in the set up and registration process of FBOs and linked to aggregators and/or off-takers

A.1.4.2 Selected **small/medium processors** are facilitated to act as nucleus and to transition from basic to advanced levels of processing (e.g. cassava to gari, palm kernel oil), with a gradually growing supplier network and/or sourcing scheme.

A.1.4.3 Existing medium/large-sized companies within crude oil processing or refining, cassava, gari, infant food or similar supported to increase their product volume with access to a structured network of producers

A.1.4.4 Development of a legal and regulatory framework for out grower scheme responsible agricultural investment, for example related to establishment of transparent pricing formulas, mechanisms for ensuring equal relations amongst parties and the voice of farmers, as well as a draft contract farming framework.

Activities relating to Output 1.5: **Communications campaign for infant feeding**

A.1.5.1 Support the comprehensive review of national complementary food booklet/manual

³⁹ Incubation is the process of an enterprise establishment, based on a business proposal or call for proposals.

⁴⁰ The project will explore avenues to link targeted rights-holders (beneficiaries to finance, such that they are able to pay a share of any investment supported by the project. This will include under the EU-financed UNCDF Project, which provides blended concessional finance; linkages with the Apex Bank, alongside rural finance associations / institutions and other lines of credit.

A.1.5.2 Embark on strong social and behavioral change communication and cooking demonstrations of local infant foods popularizing baby food through community structures, community champions, promotions, billboards, radio programmes and social media targeting mothering women / primary caregivers.

SO2: Improve use of market opportunities by Sierra Leoneans, in particular of women and youth that participated in TVET programmes.

Activities relating to Output 2.1: **Farmers institutions strengthening**, for service provision, aggregation and value addition, as well as market linkages and potentially export.

A.2.1.1 identification and Selection of strong cooperatives, associations or ABCs (membership-based) active within the selected value chains⁴¹;

A.2.1.2 Training of institutions cooperative principles, business planning, governance and accountability. This includes training of members, staff and lead farmers especially those who are women. Support will be provided through technical assistance, with hands-on, tailor-made, long-term approaches.

A.2.1.3 Train both women and men FFS master trainers amongst institutional staff and/or lead farmers, as a channel for outreach extension and advisory services to farmers

A.2.1.4 Support farmer based institutions to take on aggregation and quality assurance, as well as value addition (primary processing or other), including upgrade of existing infrastructure and/or installation of aggregation capacity. Should more support be required, the institutions may benefit from the acceleration programme.

A.2.1.5 Strengthen the national farmers umbrella institution for farmers, including their role in monitoring and act as guarantors for their members, their representativeness, their ability to negotiate with Government, private sector and others on behalf of the farmers they represent.

Activities relating to Output 2.2: **Enhanced capacity of TVET institutions**

A.2.2.1 National qualification framework and certification/accreditation processes strengthened, including decentralization decision making structures

A.2.2.2 Support review of curricula in line with existing or emerging market and policy orientations.

A.2.2.3 Support retraining of technical instructors (esp. those who are women) at TVET institutions (Government Technical Institutions and selected private TVETs), at universities and from international experts, in selected agricultural courses

A.2.2.4 Upgrade selected GTIs to Centres of Excellence in selected value chains

A.2.2.5 Ensure availability of dormitory facilities to ease access to technical training, especially for women in all their diversity and persons with disabilities

A.2.2.6 Facilitate close and structured dialogue between private sector and TVET institutions

Activities relating to Output 2.3: **Increased certification opportunities** for Sierra Leoneans

A.2.3.1 Conduct a mapping of courses being offered at GTI or other TVET institutions in or around production hubs, to select relevant courses.

A.2.3.2 Provide scholarships to selected students (min. 50% women) acquire agricultural and/or supporting skills (including but not restricted to, agricultural engineering, mechanical- and electric engineering and business-oriented courses) through certified national institutions.

Activities relating to Output 2.4: **Enhanced capacity for coordination, implementation and monitoring of policy and regulatory framework**

A.2.4.1 Provide technical support to sectoral coordination of Agriculture and food systems transformation, including TVET.

⁴¹ Umbrella organizations and regulators may play a role in identification of institutions.

A.2.4.2 Support implementation for joint data collection, planning and monitoring of Agriculture (feed Salone) and TVET sector interventions, including project baseline and endline surveys.

A.2.4.3 Undertake relevant mappings and training to pave the way for accessing carbon markets and compliance with EU deforestation regulation.

Under the EUD MIP 2021- 2027, a Team Europe Initiative (TEI) is implemented with **Germany/GIZ** to support renewable energy development under AAP 2023 while under this AAP 2024 a TEI will be fostered with **Ireland/IrishAid** who co-chairs the Scaling Up Nutrition movement with direct financing to support food and nutrition security. **France/AFD group** is supporting agri-business development notably in the palm oil sector providing de-risking mechanisms to support major industrial palm oil processing investments in the country (Jolaks). The TEI will be further complemented by the **European Investment Bank** “Youth & Gender Value Chains Multi-Beneficiary Intermediated Loans” (if approved) aiming to support access to finance for value chain MSMEs. Additionally, the action could potentially also draw upon the work of the EU-funded VET Toolbox programme⁴² and the TEI Opportunity-driven skills and VET in Africa (TEI OP-VET).

The commitment of the EU’s contribution to the Team Europe Initiative to which this action refers, will be complemented by other contributions from Team Europe members. It is subject to the formal confirmation of each respective member’s meaningful contribution as early as possible. In the event that the TEIs and/or these contributions do not materialise, the EU action may continue outside a TEI framework.

3.3 Mainstreaming

Environmental Protection & Climate Change

Outcome of the SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment) screening: The SEA concluded that key environmental and climate-related aspects need to be addressed during implementation.

Outcome of the EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) screening: The EIA classified the action as Category B (not requiring an EIA, but for which environment aspects will be addressed during implementation).

Outcome of the CRA (Climate Risk Assessment) screening: The CRA screening concluded that this action is no or low risk (no need for further assessment), through climate risk aspects will be addressed during the implementation. Measurement of climate change adaptation (CCA) of smallholder farmers and their value chains, thus measurement of specific CCA capacity improvements achieved by the Action can inform lessons learned and good practices to reduce the climate risk that Sierra Leoneans are exposed to.

Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

As per the OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1. This implies that the Action will take into account the recommendations on “Gender, Environment and Climate Change” from the 2021 National Gender Profile of Sierra Leone and the improved policy environment created by the recently adopted Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Act 2023. Gender equality will be promoted throughout all activities relevant to the Action, as a way to foster women’s active participation in the decision-making processes and equal access to the use of natural resources. The selected value chains all have considerable participation of women and provides opportunities for their economic empowerment, including through local level growth and value addition (as opposed to large scale industrialization, where women often loose out⁴³). **Women** in all their diversity will be specifically targeted both as farmers and in off-farm activities, for example owners of small enterprises⁴⁴, as active members of cooperatives and FBOs, and as mothers (and often primary caregivers). The project will practice purposive targeting throughout all components, ensuring equal (50%) participation of women in all activities, including at leadership levels. As mentioned above the action will also address the implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III, 2021-2025), specifically its key areas focusing on “Promoting economic and social rights and empowering girls and women” and “Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation”).

⁴² <https://vettoolbox.eu/actions/>.

⁴³ “Palm oil value chain analysis in Sierra Leone”, EU/DEV-CO, 2018

⁴⁴ “Sierra Leone Poverty Assessment: Poverty, Trends, Development and Drivers”, World Bank (2022), states that women who engage in off-farm activities are less poor

Human Rights

The Action aims to build upon ongoing grassroots, participatory and rights-based approaches to raise awareness around sensitive issues relating to land user rights, as well as through the GALs approach which is considered transformative at the household and community level, with equal participation promoted of both men and women in all their diversity at the community-level. In Sierra Leone, irrespective of legal provisions, land property ownership is still largely governed by patriarchy. The systematic exclusion of girls and women inheriting land and property arises from their unequal status driven by the traditional belief that men have more responsibilities perpetuating the family name and serving as heads of households⁴⁵.

Disability

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this Action is labelled as D0. The Action is aligned with the Disability Act of Sierra Leone (2011) in promoting equal access for all to education, employment, and basic services, however, its national implementation remains criticised⁴⁶. Inclusiveness and special needs are mainstreamed across all outputs, but only a few specific activities to ensure direct inclusion; namely in enterprise development where those led by persons with disabilities will be prioritized for support. In skills development, efforts will be made towards early identification of disabilities related requirements (assessment, standards, teacher trainings, infrastructure, materials) in direct consultations with CSOs representing persons with disabilities (PWD) - DPOs⁴⁷.

Reduction of inequalities

As per the Inequality Marker, this Action has been labelled as an I. Inequality in Sierra Leone is among the highest in the world, with the country ranking high in both income and economic inequality and confirmed by a Gini coefficient of 0.36 in 2018⁴⁸ (UNICEF, 2023). The top 10% of households have an income that is 28.5 times that of the bottom 10%. The main drivers are related to the country's lack of economic development, including weak economic growth, limited job opportunities, and high levels of poverty. Structural factors, such as gender and ethnic disparities, also contribute to inequality. The population largely rural or live in urban informal settlements, both of which are more likely to experience poverty and lack access to access to quality education, healthcare, and other public services. Women From HRBA are particularly disadvantaged in Sierra Leone, with lower levels of education, employment, and earnings compared to men and boys. Especially their limited access to markets and basic services create major barriers in income generation. Women's right to make decisions on aspirations to start businesses tends to be determined by their spouses, which is socially ascribed by most (rural) communities (UNDP, 2023). Moreover, women's entrepreneurial development has been limited because of inadequate business statistics to carry out business viability assessments (ibid). This has restricted (foreign) investor and donor interest in support of women-led or women-related businesses.

The Action derives clear co-benefits with regards to the reduction of inequalities by promoting economic opportunities for men and women in socioeconomic difficulties living in rural areas leaving no one behind, expanding training, skills and business development as well as promoting technologies that enhance agricultural productivity and income generation options of the rural poor can be expected. Strengthening of farmer's institutions as well as providing strategic technical assistance on how to strengthen producer networks and increase fair and transparent relations between farmers and market operators (private sector development in general) also contribute to this agenda.

Democracy

⁴⁵ "Barriers and Enablers of Women's Participation in Revenue Generation in Sierra Leone, UNDP, 2023"

⁴⁶ "Advancing disability rights in Sierra Leone, WFD, 2020"

⁴⁷ These include i.e. the Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI), Sierra Leone Blind Association (SLAB), the Amputee and War Wounded Organisation (AWWO), the National Leprosy Patient Organisation (NALPA), the Polio Persons Development Association (PPDA), the National Association of Epileptic (NAE), etc.

⁴⁸ "Children and adolescents in Sierra Leone: A snapshot, UNICEF, 2023"

The Action emphasises the importance of good governance, coordination and inclusive participation in the decision-making process and implementation mechanisms related to the promotion of sustainable value chain and agribusiness development. The Action aims to ensure dual-track approach: i) with empowerment at the community-level along with ensuring capacity enhancement of critical rights holders / membership-based organizations, which are an important vehicle for promoting democracy and the voice of those in the agriculture sector, and ii) engagement with duty bearers (government actors) to enhance the regulatory and legislative framework towards greater opportunities for agricultural and business development. All these elements will contribute to strengthening civic participation and democracy in the country and will be regularly accompanied by sustained engagement between the duty bearers and rights-holders, incl. other stakeholders.

Conflict sensitivity, peace and resilience

Sierra Leone has been affected by conflict, poverty and weak governance for decades. In recent years, however, the country has made significant strides in building peace and resilience, with concerted efforts from the government, civil society and the international community. The Action will further promote the momentum of building peace and resilience by promoting dialogue and awareness on factors leading to conflicts and how different actors exert their influence in the management of natural resources, especially through community-based awareness raising (for example on land user rights) and strengthening out grower models (which have in the past led to severe conflict), as well as strengthening of cooperatives and other grassroots based institutions.

Disaster Risk Reduction

Sierra Leone is vulnerable to a variety of disasters linked to climate change induced hazards, including floods, droughts, landslides and wildfires. To reduce the risk of these disasters, the government has implemented various initiatives and strategies, including a national disaster management policy, an emergency response plan and a national disaster risk reduction plan. The Action will support such interventions by investing in climate change adaptation.

Other considerations if relevant

N/A.

3.4 Risks and Lessons Learnt

Cat.	Risks	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating measures
1 External Environment	Deterioration of political and/or social situation of the country leading the private sector to leave.	Medium	High	This Action will support enabling environment in the areas of contract farming and business registration, as well as improve the ease of doing business through strategic investment into value chain services. This, combined with the BEC4S programme is expected to improve the business environment; strengthen the home-grown private sector and attract investment.
	The government's interest in agri-industrialisation (mega-investments of agribusiness organizations) might lead to a marginalisation of smallholders.	Medium	Medium	Smallholder institutions will be strengthened to represent the voice of farmers and M&E systems established to measure key indicators and growth. MAFS has in the past emphasised the need for large investors to partner smallholders, for example, as out-growers. This prioritization of smallholders aims at preventing unfair competition that will disadvantage them, encouraging knowledge transfer to them and to negate conflict in the communities the mega-investments will operate, among others.
	Climate variability/climate shocks	Medium	Medium	This Action supports resilience building and adaptation measures through promoting diversified crop production and inter-cropping practices, as well as promoting training around certified approaches, including GAP and RSPO,

				which take into account sustainability from environmental, social and economic perspective. Additionally, the Action focuses directly on food security and nutrition through the infant food value chains and associated behaviour change communications and campaigns.
2 People and the organization	The limited capacity of key stakeholders could reduce the impact of the project. This includes with implementation partners.	Medium	High	This will be mitigated by the capacity building activities embedded in the project and targeting a wide range of stakeholders. The Project will also link targeted rights holders (beneficiaries) with supported institutions for skills upgrades and certification, which will increase their efficiency and productivity. Implementation partners will be selected based on their mandates and proven track record and experiences in the country.
	Elite capture of investments, with the same beneficiaries (targeted rights-holders) benefitting twice or better-off benefitting at the cost of those rights-holders in socioeconomic difficulties.	High	Medium	Support entry point on track record, not on institutional type, leaving this quite open. FFS also has these risks, which will be prevented by the land use planning exercises, NaFFSL and MAFS.
	Traditional beliefs and societal gender stereotypes crating barriers to full engagement of women and girls in all their diversity.	Medium	Medium	The purposive targeting of women in all their diversity throughout the Action, as well as the deployment of GALs methodologies to empower women at the community level, awareness raising around land user rights, and dissemination of gender-sensitive production and processing technologies.
3 Technical	Financed equipment ultimately being abandoned and/or lack of interest amongst targeted rights-holders (beneficiaries) to co-finance equipment.	High	High	Co-financing will be a requirement for accessing equipment, either cash, in-kind or through partnership with financial institutions to increase ownership and as a measure of assessing engagement; through assessment of institutions/enterprises as well as the SME acceleration model to support; and attention to detail in terms of technical solution and energy source
	VC approach contributing to deforestation and other negative environmental impacts	Low	Low	All interventions will follow climate-smart approaches, including alternatives to slash-and-burn for land preparation and pesticide control; agro-forestry and tree-planting; intercropping; and clean energy (supplemented by usage of value chain waste to power the chain in the circular economy approach) will be promoted. For palm oil, rejuvenation of old farms will be prioritised otherwise degraded land will be used to promote intercropping and agro-forestry approach.
Lessons Learnt: This action builds on previous intervention under 11 TH EDF supporting palm oil and cassava value chain implemented by ILO. Lessons learnt demonstrate that a market system approach proves to be an efficient way to support MSMEs for value chain development in a sustainable manner. It also builds on lessons learnt and recommendations from analytical work financed by the EU (VCA4D, ITC, ILO, UNIDO) in the concerned sub-sectors, which demonstrate that access to innovation and technology directly contributes to productivity and quality				

increase. The Action will capitalise on the on-going joint EU, FAO and AgriNatura initiative supporting Government in transitioning towards more sustainable food system

MSMes operate in a difficult ecosystem and are concerned with the cost of doing business. There are high transaction costs, with limited attention to aggregation and other value chain services. Companies are dependent on access to land to expand their business, but the land act ring fences acquisition of vast land by investors. They hence need to expand their producer networks, to scale up their business. It is often cited that models do not exist; however, they require **investment and systematic assessment** and upgrade to work optimally and for a greater number of cases. **Geographical targeting** has not been commonly practiced with many interventions focusing on specific value chains without considering the geographic location of the investment and the need to develop the area, services and work with farmers **directly** around it, especially when it comes to perishable agricultural produce.

Farmers institutions also require strengthening to upgrade value chains and ensure inclusiveness and access to markets by small scale farmers. **Women's economic empowerment** may further contribute to these goals. Most of the beneficiary farmers, especially women and youth, tend to appreciate the trainings and cooperate during their sessions. Use of **farmer led approaches** to address the huge farmer/extension ratio can reduce weak human resource gap and capacity gaps among ministries, departments and agencies for initiatives that can be implemented by line ministries. Providing agricultural inputs, or equipment, **free of charge** to farmers without any competitive criteria has the tendency to increase over dependency on government/projects and discourage private sector investment in the agricultural sector.

Overlap of **mandates** among key project implementing agencies have the tendency to delay delivery of project activities if not well spelt out from the inception of the project, with partners operating in silos and limited information sharing and coordination. Establishing **standard operational procedures and a lead entity** to coordinate across implementation partners can be a good tool for partnership management to manage expectations and allow the delivery as one approach for projects with multi-sectorial approaches.

3.5 The Intervention Logic

IF The value chain actors, relevant government institutions and farmers institutions are supported to (i) develop and disseminate action-oriented, climate-smart research, innovation and technology; (ii) develop skills of farmers (esp. those who are women) to practice climate-smart production; and (iii) link farmers to market either through structured producer networks or local level value addition (enterprises), with the right balance of soft and hard investment;

AND IF Sierra Leoneans are supported to develop skills with relevant and certified skills training towards a green, low-emission economy, targeting women and girls in all their diversity explicitly;

AND ASSUMING (i) political will to address long standing challenges that continue to inhibit the optimal performance of critical value chains across the agricultural sector and to promote pro-poor growth and a more resilient economy; (ii) there is willingness and interest for local processing of complementary foods and other enterprises, and if these enterprises are actually sustainable, by local entrepreneurs; (iii) small holders can benefit from integration into higher value markets, if access to market is facilitated and specific challenges addressed; (iv) geographic targeting of interventions are a model that are at correct territorial scale to facilitate constraints not addressed by the project directly (e.g. roads).

THEN the selected value chains will be more efficient and inclusive, and able to strengthen the ecosystem in which they operate and ensure that the agricultural sector and related private sector contribute to growth and poverty eradication, dependent upon climate-smart local production, with more efficient processing, added value and market orientation of main products and by-products, green jobs will have been created; **AND**

Companies and enterprises will benefit from increased productivity and incomes **because of** structured business models (e.g. out growers as part of structured business models, contract farming etc.); increased processing capacity, new or more varied products, improved food safety and standards compliance, and more environmentally friendly production, with less loss; professionalization of businesses development of business plans; as well as strengthening supplier networks; increased value-chain services on offer relating to aggregation, transport, processing, through upgrade of existing and support to new MSMEs,

Farmers institutions and membership-based organizations will better represent their members' interests, promote good agricultural practices, increase service provision to members (including off-taking, aggregation, processing etc...) **because of** governance and business development support, training and skills development, investments in upgrading of equipment.

Farmers (esp. those who are women) will have improved production and productivity, incomes and access to markets **because of** climate-smart technologies and practices disseminated through model farms and FFS, including inter-cropping, access to quality inputs, and dissemination of business models that structure farmers organizations and links to value chain actors.

Women in all their diversity will be empowered economically, socially with strengthened skills, access to jobs and entrepreneurship **because of** enhanced access to climate-smart, gender-sensitive production technologies and practices, increased agency through GALs, as well as the purposive targeting of at least 50% of women, especially within actions around enterprise development and scholarships for selected institutions.

Selected government institutions will deliver better on their mandates **because of** enhanced research capacities, updated and relevant curricula, a National Qualifications Framework and well equipped and accessible premises.

Sierra Leonean women and girls, men and boys will have strengthened skills and will enjoy greater food security and nutrition for their children under 5 **because of** a growing infant food industry with locally produced, nutrient-dense and safe crops and legumes and changing behaviours and infant feeding practices of mothering women / primary caregivers in households in socio-economic difficulties.

3.6 Logical Framework Matrix

This indicative logframe constitutes the basis for the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the intervention.

On the basis of this logframe matrix, a more detailed logframe (or several) may be developed at contracting stage. In case baselines and targets are not available for the action, they should be informed for each indicator at signature of the contract(s) linked to this AD, or in the first progress report at the latest. New columns may be added to set intermediary targets (milestones) for the Output and Outcome indicators whenever it is relevant.

- At inception, the first progress report should include the complete logframe (e.g. including baselines/targets).
- Progress reports should provide an updated logframe with current values for each indicator.
- The final report should enclose the logframe with baseline and final values for each indicator.

The indicative logical framework matrix may evolve during the lifetime of the action depending on the different implementation modalities of this action.

The activities, the expected Outputs and related indicators, targets and baselines included in the logframe matrix may be updated during the implementation of the action, no amendment being required to the Financing Decision.

Results	Results chain (@): Main expected results (maximum 10)	Indicators (@): (at least one indicator per expected result)	Baselines (values and years)	Targets (values and years)	Sources of data	Assumptions
Impact	To strengthen sustainable ⁴⁹ and climate resilient agri-food systems in Sierra Leone.	1.Value added of agriculture as % of GDP (WDI data) 2.Global Food security index (GFSI) 3.Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training (SDG 8.6.1) 4. GERF 2.2 Areas of agricultural and pastoral ecosystems where sustainable management practices have been introduced with EU support (ha) [SP][EFSD]† 5. Proportion of agricultural area under productive and sustainable agriculture (SDG 2.4.1) 6. Percentage of targeted rights holders (beneficiaries) of EU VET programmes who have been gainfully employed, disaggregated by sex, age, disability status and population group. 7.Prevalence of malnutrition among children under 5 years of age (Percentage, %) ⁵⁰ (SDG 2.2.2)	1. 60.45 (2022) 2. 40.5 (2022) 3. TBD inception phase 4. TBD inception phase 5. TBD inception phase 6. TBD inception phase 7. TBD inception phase	1. 60% (2030) 2. 50.0 (2030) 3. TBD inception phase 4. TBD inception phase 5. TBD inception phase 6. TBD inception phase 7. TBD inception phase	1. World Bank data ⁵¹ 2. Baseline and endline surveys conducted and budgeted by the EU-funded intervention 3. Global Food security index (GFSI) Baseline and endline surveys conducted and budgeted by the EU-funded intervention SDG report Baseline and endline surveys conducted and budgeted by the EU-funded intervention SDG report	Not applicable

⁴⁹ Including low-carbon pathways, innovation and technology pathways, and circular economy principles

⁵⁰ OPSYS core indicator

⁵¹ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NV.AGR.TOTL.ZS?locations=SL>

Outcome 1	Improve sustainability, efficiency and inclusivity of oil palm, cassava, and infant food value chains, using climate-smart approaches in production and processing, while facilitating decent green job creation	<p>1.1 Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions avoided (tonnes CO₂eq) with EU support (GERF 2.7)**</p> <p>1.2 GERF 2.6 Number of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises applying Sustainable Consumption and Production practices with EU support [NDICI-Global Europe][SP][EFSD]†</p>	<p>1.1 TBD in inception phase</p> <p>1.2 Stunting 26.3% (2021) Wasting 6.3% (2021) 1.1.</p>	<p>1.1 TBD in inception phase</p> <p>1.2 TBD in inception phase</p>	<p>1.1. Baseline and endline surveys conducted and budgeted by the EU-funded intervention</p> <p>1.2. Baseline and endline surveys conducted and budgeted by the EU-funded intervention</p>	Political commitment towards agriculture development remains.
Outcome 2	Improve use of market opportunities by Sierra Leoneans, in particular of women and youth that participated in TVET programmes.	<p>2.1 Percentage of targeted rights holders (beneficiaries) of EU VET programmes who report having gained relevant skills and experience, disaggregated by sex, age, disability status and population group.</p> <p>2.2 Percentage of targeted rights-holders (beneficiaries) of EU-funded interventions with increased income 6 months after EU support, disaggregated by sex, population group, disability status, age⁵²</p>	<p>2.1.TBD in the inception phase</p> <p>2.2 TBD in the inception phase</p>	<p>2.1.TBD in the inception phase</p> <p>2.2 TBD in the inception phase</p>	<p>2.1.SDG / MTDP report</p> <p>2.2 Baseline and end line surveys conducted and budgeted by the EU-funded</p>	Political commitment and policies are implemented
Output 1 relating to Outcome 1	1.1 Increased availability of climate- resilient and improved varieties of locally produced inputs for women and men farmers for the oil palm, cassava, and infant food value chain.	1.1.1 Number of climate-smart, quality seedlings produced and made available to producers with support of the EU-funded intervention (disaggregated by value chain type)	1.1.1- 0 (2023)	1.1.1 12,500 (oil palm seedlings), 10,000 (cassava cuttings), 8,000 (pigeon pea seedlings), 33,000 (OFSP seeds) (2026)	1.1.1 Baseline and end line surveys conducted and budgeted by the EU-funded	<p>Availability of seedling inspection and certification processes</p> <p>Willingness of institutions to establish and maintain nurseries</p>

⁵² OPSYS core indicator

Output 2 relating to Outcome 1	1.2 Enhanced awareness of women and men farmers of innovative, climate-smart, gender-sensitive technologies and practices.	1.2.1 Number of nurseries established at research, community- and institutional-level with support of the EU-funded intervention	1.2.1- 0 (2023)	1.2.1- 17 (2026)	1.2.1 Baseline and end line surveys conducted and budgeted by the EU-funded	Willingness of farmers to engage in capacity building activities
		1.2.2 age, population group and disability status. (GERF 2.1)**	1.2.2 (TBD) in the inception phase	1.2.2 TBD inception phase		
Output 3 relating to Outcome 1	1.3 Enhanced capacity of MSMEs to apply circular economy approach including making full use of value chain products and by-products, with a focus on women in all their diversity and youth. ⁵³	1.2.3 Number of Demonstration plots established on selected value chains with climate-smart and biodiversity promoting practices with support of the EU-funded intervention	1.2.3- 0 (2023)	1.2.3 238 ha (oil palm); 150 ha (cassava and infant food inputs intercropped) (2026)	Baseline and end line surveys conducted and budgeted by the EU-funded	Enterprises are willing to receive support
		1.2.4 Agricultural and pastoral ecosystems where sustainable management practices have been introduced with EU support (ha) (GERF 2.2)**	1.2.4 TBD in the inception phase	1.2.4 TBD in the inception phase		
Output 3 relating to Outcome 1	1.3 Enhanced capacity of MSMEs to apply circular economy approach including making full use of value chain products and by-products, with a focus on women in all their diversity and youth. ⁵³	1.3.1 number of MSME supported with EU funding	1.3.1- TBD in the inception phase in the inception phase	TBD inception phase	Baseline and end line surveys conducted and budgeted by the EU-funded	Enterprises are willing to receive support
		1.3.2 Number of smallholders reached with EU interventions to increase sustainable production, access to markets and/or security of land ⁵⁴ disaggregated by sex,	1.3.2 TBD inception phase	TBD inception phase		

⁵³ Companies might be formal and informal and will be supported to register in accordance with their operations. ABCs, run as a business by a registered company or group, might also qualify for this support. Other potential targets for support could be micro, small or medium sized enterprises. Examples include women traders in markets; processing mills (e.g. 1 mt/hour for oil palm) in rural areas operated by an FBO; processors and aggregators in urban areas; or existing ABCs, with preference to women, youth or PWD-headed. Larger companies are not eligible for this support.

⁵⁴ EU Corporate result FWC and MIP indicator

Output 4 relating to Outcome 1	1.4 Enhanced capacity of producer networks ⁵⁵ in application of pioneering models for processing, supply and market access.	1.4.1 Number of sourcing schemes for small/medium processors developed with support of the EU-funded intervention.	1.4.1- 0% (2023) 0% (2023) 0% (2023) 0% (2023)	1.4.1 95% (2028) 25% (2028) 50% (2028) 25% (2028)	Project report	Willingness and ability of farmers to engage into formalize marketing Willingness and effort provided by private sector towards farmer engagement
			1.4.2-0 (2023)	1.4.2. – 5 (2027)		
Output 5 relating to Outcome 1	1.5 Mothering women / primary caregivers are more aware about the importance of nutritious and safe food for infant feeding.	1.5.1 Number of mothering women/primary caregivers trained by the EU-funded intervention with increased knowledge and/or skills on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) practices under this Action, disaggregated by age, population group, and disability status	1.5.1 -0 (2023)	1.5.1 17,000 (2029)	1.5.1 Pre- and post-training test reports Project report	
Output 1 relating to Outcome 2	2.1 Enhanced capacity of farmer based institutions, including FBOs, ABCs, Cooperatives and Associations for value chain development, including the promotion of climate resilient practices, aggregation, standards, testing and certification, and market linkages. .	2.1.1 Number of membership-based farmers' institutions that take on value chain functions and provide services to their members	2..1.1 -0 (2023)	2.1.1-TBD in the inception phase	Baseline and end line surveys conducted and budgeted by the EU-funded	Cooperatives have active memberships Lack of elite capture
		2.1.2 Hectares under Good agriculture practices or other certified production standard	2.1.2- TBD (2023)	2.1.2- TBD inception phase		
		2.1.3. Number of members of farmer based institutions trained with support of the EU-funded intervention with increased knowledge and/or skills on climate smart techniques and technologies, disaggregated by sex, age, population group and disability status.	2.1.3- 0 (2023)	2.1.3- 15 (2026)		
		2.1.4 Number of smallholders with access to appropriate storage facilities constructed with EU support disaggregated by sex and age	2.1.4 TBD inception phase	2.1.4 TBD inception phase		

Output 2 relating to Outcome 2	2.2 Enhanced capacity of TVET institutions to deliver on their mandate, in line with the Feed Salone strategic orientation and newly approved Act, including strengthening of the certification function for employability of women in all their diversity and youth.	2.2.1 Number of TVETs upgraded with support of the EU-funded intervention. 2.2.2 Number of TVET curricular and courses supported with EU funding	2.2.1-0 (2023) 2.2.2- TBD (2023)	2.2.1-6 (2028) 2.2.2- TBD (2028)	Project report	Willingness o concerned institutions to cooperate
Output 3 relating to Outcome 2	2.3 Increased certification opportunities for Sierra Leoneans, in particular women in all their diversity and youth, for skills required to engage in value chain upgrading	2.3.1 Number of students benefitting from formal VET programmes supported by the EU disaggregated by sex, disability status and population group (MIP Indicator; 2.3.2 GERF 2.14a, P2 b1) (through improved curriculum and scholarships– min.50% of women recipients) *, **	2.3.1 TBD 2.3.2- 0	2.3.1 TBD 2.3.2 3600 by 2028	baseline and endline survey of EU funded project	TVETs are able to attract students Affordability of courses
Output4 relating to Outcome 2	2.4 Enhanced capacity of the Agriculture and TVET sectors actors for coordination, implementation and monitoring of policy and regulatory framework.	2.4.1-sector donor group is meeting regularly 2.4.2 Status of setting up the food sector M&E framework 2.4.3 baseline completed at inception phase	2.4.1 twice a year (2023) 2.4.2 no existent (2023) 2.4.3 baseline data for some indicator not available	2.4.1 every quarters 2.4.2 – existent (2025) 2.4.3 Baseline data available for all indicators	baseline and endline survey of EU funded project	Willingness of MAFS to engage in framework development Clear communications channels with project beneficiaries are established

⁵⁵ The term “producer networks” is used as a generic term to describe what might be known as formal or informal out grower networks. In Sierra Leone the word out grower is used loosely and with many different understandings

4 IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 Financing Agreement

In order to implement this action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the partner country.

4.2 Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 60 months from the date of entry into force of the financing agreement. Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission's responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

4.3 Implementation of the Budget Support Component

N/A

4.4 Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures⁵⁶.

4.4.1 Indirect Management with an entrusted entity

This action may be implemented in indirect management by one or more entities, which will be selected by the Commission's services using the following criteria:

- Entities must have solid technical knowledge, for example on climate smart practices or processing; and prove able to sub-contract required technical expertise for selected activities for which they may not have comparative advantage.
- Demonstrate extensive experience in Sierra Leone and comparative advantage, including availability of offices, staff and operational structures. In selected cases where expertise might not be available in country, a selected entity must be willing to establish local presence for the duration of the project implementation.
- Entities must have a solid relationship and existing partnership with the government institutions in charge of the sectors of support: TVET and Agriculture.
- Entities must be able to work with government's institutions and local agencies through performance-based financing.

4.4.2 Changes from indirect to direct management mode (and vice versa) due to exceptional circumstances (one alternative second option)

Grants: (direct management)

(a) Purpose of the grant(s)

⁵⁶ www.sanctionsmap.eu. Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails.

SO 1: Improve sustainability, efficiency and inclusivity of oil palm, cassava, and infant food value chains, using climate-smart approaches in production and processing, while facilitating decent green job creation.

SO2: Improve use of market opportunities by Sierra Leoneans, in particular of women and youth that participated in TVET programmes.

(b) Type of applicants targeted

Potential applicants will be local authorities, public bodies, NGOs and economic operators such as SMEs.

Applicants should be established in Sierra Leone or be part of a consortium with at least one partner established in Sierra Leone.

4.5 Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The Commission's authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

4.5. Indicative Budget

4.5.1 Summary budget table

Indicative Budget components	EU contribution (EUR)
Implementation modalities c.f. section 4.4.1	
Outcome 1: Improve sustainability, efficiency and inclusivity of oil palm, cassava, and infant food value chains	20 000 000
Indirect management with an entrusted entity c.f. section 4.4.1	20 000 000
Outcome 2: Improve use of market opportunities by Sierra Leoneans, in particular of women and youth that participated in TVET programmes	14 700 000
Indirect management with an entrusted entity c.f. section 4.4.1	14 700 000
Evaluation – cf. section 5.2	200 000
Audit – cf. section 5.3	100 000
Contingencies	
Totals	35 000 000

4.6. Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION:

The programme will be jointly implemented by entities under indirect management in partnership with government institution and agencies, NGO, CBO and the private sector. One entity under indirect management (with the largest budget share and/or implementation capacity) may be selected to coordinate the implementation. The coordinating entity could ensure that proper planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring and reporting is undertaken, and could be charged with ensuring the Action's inclusivity and ability to ensure stakeholder voices are heard, and that a proper grievance redress mechanism is put into place. Regular meeting will be held, ensuring efficient coordination of activities on ground as well as assessments of methodologies being followed. Most importantly, annual workplans will be reviewed and finalized jointly,

to ensure coherent approaches on the ground. Where more than one entity operates in the same geographical area, or with the same stakeholder on ground, division of labour will be practiced.

PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE:

The overall implementation will be guided at strategic level by a Steering Committee, co-chaired by the Government of Sierra Leone and the European Union. Members of the Steering Committee include the main public institutions (Ministry of Agriculture and food security, Ministry of Technical and Higher Education,) and private sector representatives (Sierra Leone Chamber of Agriculture Development, Farmers representatives,) and implementing partners. The Steering Committee will meet on a yearly basis quarterly. Technical working groups will be established for each of the four components to monitor implementation and provide recommendations for adjustment as required. They will consist of responsible Government entities, European Union, Implementing Partners and private sector, where appropriate.

Other members from government ministries/agencies, development partners, civil society or private sector may also be included on a case-by-case basis. Existing local civil society organisations – like women's farmers organisations (i.e. *Women in Agriculture Network Sierra Leone*) and those representing persons with disabilities (as mentioned in the *Mainstreaming* section of this AD) shall be involved in the design and participation of the implementation processes. The composition of the Project Steering Committee shall strive for equal representation of women and men in the Committee.

A Technical Advisory committee may be established to ensure technical and financial monitoring to inform the steering committee about progress and challenges. The technical advisory committee will meet on quarterly basis.

5 PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

5.1 Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner's responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical, and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its results (Outputs and direct Outcomes) as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the individual financing agreement. The lead entity under indirect management shall report on overall achievements vis a vis the Action logframe matrix.

The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

Roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring: implementing partners will be responsible to define, before implementation or within 90 days of the start of the action, baseline and targets for each of the output and activity indicators included in their respective project implementation document and ensure continuous learning during implementation and provide precise recommendations that are action-oriented, practical, and specific and define who is responsible for the proposed action. Each implementation partner will be responsible for, based on the Action, developing their own reporting templates and key indicators.

Data (including baseline and endline surveys) will need to be collected to report on indicators and process, unless national data sources exist. Provision must be made for this by the implementing agency, including analysis. Effort must be made to ensure that data is disaggregated at least by sex, age, ethnicity, disability and geographical location. Other disaggregation may be made. All interventions are to be made based on sound economic analysis, to be constantly monitored as changes happen in the market or surrounding environment. This includes farm models for any extension-related activity; economic and financial analysis for processing equipment; and business planning tools for support to SMEs. Baseline survey will have to be completed

during inception phase of the project (first 6 months of project implementation) and endline survey will have to be executed within 6 months before completion.

Narrative and financial reports will also be developed by each entity, in compliance with the Contribution Agreement.

5.2 Evaluation

Having regard to the nature of the action, mid-term, final and/or ex-post evaluations may be carried out for this action or its components via independent consultants contracted by the Commission as well as by implementing partners.

A mid-term evaluation will be carried out for problem solving and learning purposes, in particular with respect to (i) performance of research system in performing action-oriented research; (ii) model for enterprise acceleration as well as equipment support; (iii) access to finance; and (iv) model for provision of support to Cooperatives. Other aspects may also be assessed and adjusted accordingly.

A final or ex-post evaluation will assess successful approaches, impacts and potential for upscaling to achieve longer term objectives such as export orientation and general strengthening of the food systems. It will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision), mindful that several policy interventions and Government commitments are required for value chain upgrade, as a critical actor of the ecosystem.

All evaluation shall assess to what extent the action addresses the human rights-based approach and well as how it contributes to gender equality and disability inclusion. Expertise on human rights-based approach, disability and gender equality will be ensured in the evaluation teams.

The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least one month in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports may be shared with the partners and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination. The Implementing Partner(s) and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, apply the necessary adjustments.

Evaluation services may be contracted under a framework contract.

5.3 Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

6 STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

The 2021-2027 programming cycle will adopt a new approach to pooling, programming and deploying strategic communication and public diplomacy resources.

In line with the 2022 “[Communicating and Raising EU Visibility: Guidance for External Actions](#)”, it will remain a contractual obligation for all entities implementing EU-funded external actions to inform the relevant audiences of the Union’s support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. This obligation will continue to apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, partner countries, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU member states.

However, action documents for specific sector programmes are in principle no longer required to include a provision for communication and visibility actions promoting the programmes concerned. These resources

will instead be consolidated in Cooperation Facilities established by support measure action documents, allowing Delegations to plan and execute multiannual strategic communication and public diplomacy actions with sufficient critical mass to be effective on a national scale.

Appendix 1 REPORTING IN OPSYS

A Primary Intervention (project/programme) is a coherent set of activities and results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Identifying the level of the primary intervention will allow for:

Articulating Actions or Contracts according to an expected chain of results and therefore allowing them to ensure efficient monitoring and reporting of performance;

Differentiating these Actions or Contracts from those that do not produce direct reportable development results, defined as support entities (i.e. audits, evaluations);

Having a complete and exhaustive mapping of all results-bearing Actions and Contracts.

Primary Interventions are identified during the implantation of each action by the responsible service (Delegation or Headquarters operational Unit).

The level of the Primary Intervention chosen can be modified (directly in OPSYS) and the modification does not constitute an amendment of the action document.

The intervention level for the present Action identifies as (tick one of the 4 following options);

Action level (i.e. Budget Support, blending)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Single action	Present action: all contracts in the present action
Group of actions level (i.e. top-up cases, different phases of a single programme)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of actions	Actions reference (CRIS#/OPSYS#): <Present action> <Other action(s)>
Contract level		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 1	<foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract)>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single Contract 2	<foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract)>
	(...)	
Group of contracts level (i.e. series of programme estimates, cases in which an Action includes for example four contracts and two of them, a technical assistance contract and a contribution agreement, aim at the same objectives and complement each other)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Group of contracts 1	<foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract) 1> <foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract) 2> <foreseen individual legal commitment (or contract) #>