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THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION ADVISORY SERVICES POLICY OF SIERRA LEONE

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Agribusiness Centre
BES	Block Extension Supervisor
CNFA	Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs
CRS	Catholic Relief Service
DAO	District Agriculture Officer
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FEW	Field Extension Officer
FBO	Farmers Based Organization
FFS	Farmer Field School
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ),
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IITA	International Institute for Tropical Agriculture
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INGO	International Non Governmental Organization
IVS	Inland Valley Swamp
MAFFS	Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security
MEAS	Modernizing Extension Advisory Services
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NAFFSL	National Farmers Federation of Sierra Leone
NATC	National Agricultural Training Centre
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NU	Njala University
SLARI	Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute
SMP	Seed Multiplication Programme
SMS	Subject Matter Specialist
USAID	US Agency for International Development

THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION ADVISORY POLICY OF SIERRA LEONE

Executive Summary

Role of the Agricultural Sector in the National Economy

Agriculture is the dominant sector of the Sierra Leone economy, contributing 45% of the national GDP. Along with forestry and fisheries it contributes an estimated 51% of total GDP, compared to 14.9% for industry and 33.6% for services (2012 est). Foreign Direct Investment FDI in the sector is also increasing rapidly. The predominant actors in the sector are smallholder farmers cultivating between 1 to 3 hectares of land for arable crops production, mainly rice and cassava each year, mostly with hand tools and employing traditional husbandry methods. The sector is administered by the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security under 6 divisions three of which (Crops, Livestock and Forestry & Fisheries) are core service divisions and the other three (Engineering, Extension and Projects Evaluation Monitoring and Statistics Division PEMSD) are support services divisions. The Extension Division was only upgraded from being a unit of the Crops Division into a separate division in 2009.

Role of the Agricultural Extension Service

The role of the Agricultural Extension Service is to transfer knowledge, technologies and agricultural information to farmers and to link them to other value chain actors in the economy to enhance their productivity and motivate them to become market oriented. At the National level the Division is headed by the Director of Extension Services who is responsible for coordinating all extension activities in the Ministry. He is assisted by one Deputy Director and three Assistant Directors for Research and Extension Liaison (REL), Field Operations and Cross-Cutting Issues. At district/field level, the District Agriculture Officer DAO is responsible for extension activities assisted by Subject Matter Specialists (SMSs -6), Block Extension Supervisors (BES -5), Field Extension Workers (FEW-40) and Para-Professionals. An assessment of the current national extension system revealed technological and operational constraints that impede its functionality (see Annex 3).

Situational Analysis

The Farmers' Field School (FFS) is the primary methodology and approach used by MAFFS frontline extension workers. However, other service providers currently deploy numerous other extension methods and techniques. While the operations and funding for most MAFFS activities have been decentralized to District Councils, funding of extension services has still not been fully decentralized. And in spite of there being a plurality of service providers there is no system of national registration and regulation of extension workers and no code of conduct and standards have been developed and enforced. There is a high degree of collaboration among MAFFS extension staffs and the extension staffs of NGOs and donors as well as with the staffs of SLARI, the institution that develops and packages production technologies for extension. However, there is need for human resource development for the effective delivery of advisory services and the efficient use of Information and Communication Technology for technology dissemination. Government has a great responsibility in providing the enabling environment for facilitation of extension service provision and for encouraging farmers, entrepreneurs and financial institutions to invest in agricultural value chains. Policies that address cross cutting issues such as the environment, farmers' health, nutrition, literacy, numeracy, governance and community-decision making, youth, and gender also have to be mainstreamed in the national extension system.

VISION

"Small-holder medium and large-scale investment farmers in Sierra Leone are empowered to demand the extension and advisory services they need to become highly productive and a well-financed and capable pluralistic extension system supplies the needed services".

Objectives

The overall objective of the national extension policy is to guide the development and delivery of agricultural extension advisory services in Sierra Leone to primarily small-holder farmers and other actors in the agricultural value chain for; the adoption of innovative technologies, commercialization, enhanced productivity and increased incomes.

Summary of Policy Statements

- (i) **Role of government in a pluralistic extension service**
The public sector shall play a central role in the development and operation of a pluralistic extension system in Sierra Leone.
- (ii) **Privatizing and commercializing extension service:**
The private sector has the ability to harness private capital and supply and logistics systems to deliver inputs and also provide related training on their use.
- (iii) **Decentralized planning and delivery of extension services**
The decentralization of the national agricultural extension advisory service will be strictly aligned to the principles and objectives of the National Decentralization Policy as guided by the Decentralization Secretariat.
- (iv) **Extension approaches and methods**
The national extension policy promotes pluralism in both the provision and delivery of extension programs and messages.
- (v) **Content and choice of extension messages**
The national extension policy supports pluralism in the content and choice of extension messages.

- (vi) Decentralization of decision making and empowering of extension clientele**
The national extension policy promotes decentralization and empowerment of farmers in their ability to demand and receive quality extension services.
- (vii) Stakeholder collaboration and networking**
The national extension policy promotes stakeholder collaboration, networking and sharing in any number of ways within a regulated framework.
- (viii) Regulating extension services and service providers**
The national extension policy supports the creation of a governing body, a public-private partnership to regulate all extension services, service providers and agents, from the public and private sectors.
- (ix) Institutional and human resource capacity building**
Support strengthening of the capacity of human resources and institutions delivering extension advisory services through increased commitment and investment in training and other activities.
- (x) Technology development, packaging and dissemination**
Farmer-led technology development, packaging and dissemination of key extension program areas are emphasized by the national extension policy.
- (xi) Use of information and communication technology in agricultural knowledge and information system**
The extension policy promotes the effective and efficient use of information and communication technologies in agricultural extension in Sierra Leone.
- (xii) Extension facilitating factors**
The national policy identifies facilitating factors as important factors that influence the success and impact of agricultural extension.
- (xiii) Governance of extension services**
The governance frameworks for the national extension system should reflect the central role of farmers and other key stakeholders in all agricultural value chains.
- (xiv) Monitoring and evaluation of extension services**
Monitoring and evaluation of services shall be emphasized and strengthened, particularly for the public sector extension services.
- (xv) Financing extension services**
The policy supports increased level of resources for agricultural extension from domestic revenues, projects, private sources, donors, fees for services delivered and cost-recovery.
- (xvi) Mainstreaming crosscutting issues**
The pluralistic extension system can reach farmers and other rural people with educational messages on a wide-variety of topics to improve their quality of life through knowledge on health, food, nutrition, youth and gender issues and social protection etc.

Summary of Policy Implementation Action Plan

- (i) Role of government in the pluralistic extension service.**
Enact the National Agricultural Extension Advisory ACT 2014 and Regulations.
- (ii) Privatizing and commercializing extension service**
Establish a set of national extension guidelines, a code of extension provider ethics, and a set of standards for providers.
- (iii) Decentralized planning**
Link planning to budgeting and M&E at the Chiefdom/Block level and at the District level.
- (iv) Extension approaches and methods**
The primary extension approach is to utilize farmers' groups to deliver programs and messages and technologies.
- (v) Content and choice of extension messages**
Content for extension programs and extension messages should be made widely available for peer review and public examination.
- (vi) Decentralization and empowering of extension clientele**
Strengthen farmer groups, farmer-based organizations, and community-based organizations to build their capacity to demand extension services.
- (vii) Stakeholder collaboration and networking**
Promote stakeholder collaboration, networking and sharing in a number of ways through consultations at the national level and local level through joint programming efforts and sharing of resources.

(viii) Governing body for regulating extension services and service providers

- A national-level public-private partnership should be established (A Directorate of Extension Advisory Services under the supervision of the Minister of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security) that would be the overall governing body for agricultural extension in Sierra Leone. Its roles would include developing and vetting a statement of extension ethics and code of conduct for extension providers, as well as a policy on expectations for continuing education and training of extension service providers on an annual basis.
- The national-level public-private partnership should establish a registration for extension service providers and means to track their annual in-service continuing education and training hours as well as any complaints or performance issues reported by the public or clients.
- The national-level public-private partnership should have a governing board consisting of at least 30 percent farmer and private sector representatives, and at least 30 percent NGO and INGO representatives. **The governing board should include MAFFS, SLARI, local governments and educational and research institutions.** The governing board approves regulatory and registration principles, as well as actions against an extension provider based upon complaints about performance.
- The national-level public-private extension partnership would have as a mission the promotion of the pluralistic extension system and quality services delivered in a professional manner.
- A national certification program that emphasizes both process and technical skills for extension field agents should be developed and pursued.

(ix) Institutional and human resource capacity building

Support training opportunities and in-service training events for MAFFS extension staff as well as for other extension service providers.

(x) Technology development, packaging and dissemination

Promote a collaborative process involving research, extension and farmers and their representatives for technology and practice testing and extension program development.

(xi) Use of information and communication technology in agricultural knowledge and information system

Build the capacity of actors throughout the pluralistic extension system to develop, deploy, and utilize ICT approaches in extension programs.

(xii) Extension facilitation

The Government of Sierra Leone will work to rehabilitate and improve farm to market roads and the feeder road system in rural Sierra Leone.

(xiii) Governance of the national extension service

An Extension Act should be drafted and enacted following a review of the legal basis of the current extension system. Key elements of the national extension policy should be incorporated into the Act regarding the roles of various actors, the commitment of GoSL to pluralism in the delivery of extension services, and other dimensions.

(xiv) Monitoring and evaluation of extension services

Develop service charters that clearly lay out the expectations for service delivery terms and conditions in how providers are to work with clients.

(xv) Financing extension services

Fully devolve to District Councils the recurring funds for support and delivery (not wages and benefits) of agricultural extension services.

Require that a minimum of 15 percent of the devolved agricultural funds at the District level be allocated to agricultural extension activities, with a priority on front-line and Block level staff and their mobility, programmatic support, and in-service training.

(xvi) Mainstreaming crosscutting issues

Bring cross-cutting topics into extension program design and implementation. Such topics include gender awareness and gender equality, natural resource management and environmental protection, governance and community decision making, youth access to opportunities, health and nutrition, among others.

Transition Management

The implementation of the National Extension Advisory Policy will be managed by a transition management team to achieve a seamless transition from the laissez faire modus operandi of the current system to the more regulated, demand driven, multi-stakeholder, multi-objective and professionally accountable system proposed by the new policy. The team will guide the implementation of all changes in the operations of the current extension system to align it to the new system proposed in the new national policy.

THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION ADVISORY POLICY AND ACTION PLAN SIERRA LEONE**CHAPTER 1****INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND****1.1 Role of the Agricultural Sector in the National Economy**

Sierra Leone has recovered from recent economic setbacks that resulted from the decade long civil war that ended in 2002 and the recent global economic recession. Annual real Gross Domestic Product GDP growth was estimated at an impressive 19.8 % in 2012.² Agriculture continued to be the dominant sector of the economy, contributing 45% of the national GDP. Along with forestry and fisheries the sector contributes an estimated 51% of total GDP, compared to 14.9 for industry and 33.6% for services (2012 est).³ Agriculture also employs approximately 70% of the national labour force and is the source of livelihood of almost 90% of the rural population. The major products of the sector are rice, cassava, sweet potato, coffee, cocoa, palm kernel, palm oil, peanut; poultry, cattle, sheep, pigs and fish.

Agricultural commodities are the major exports from Sierra Leone, after minerals (diamond, iron ore, rutile etc). Commodities exported include cocoa, coffee, fish, garri,⁴ rice and palm oil. The last three commodities which are exported to regional markets are not currently included in the official export trade statistics. Exports of processed products from agricultural raw materials are soon to commence. ADDAX Bio Energy Company and First Step enterprise will soon be producing and exporting ethanol and fruit juice concentrates respectively.

The agricultural sector is also attracting significant attention of foreign investors and Foreign Direct Investment FDI in the sector is increasing rapidly. Notable new investments in the sector include the ADDAX Bio-energy (Sugar cane cultivation for ethanol production), Gold Tree (oil palm cultivation for palm oil production), The Sierra Leone China Agricultural Development Company (100,000 ha Rubber and 35,000 ha rice production), Genesis Farms (Seed rice production), First step (production of fruit juice concentrates), Africa rice and Agri-Capital (rice production), Africa Cocoa and Coffee Company (investing in Cocoa transformation). Bio United and Kailahun Produce Company (in quality cocoa beans processing and export). There are other foreign companies such as Equatah plc that are currently negotiating for land to develop rice production projects.

These investments and the increasing impact of the SCP on small farmers' productivity and output indicate promising growth prospects for the agricultural sector and its increasing importance as the acknowledged driver of economic development in Sierra Leone.

1.2 Structure of the agricultural sector

The Agricultural sector of Sierra Leone consists predominantly of smallholder farmers cultivating between 1 to 3 hectares of land for arable crops production, mainly rice and cassava each year, mostly with hand tools and employing traditional husbandry methods. Large oil palm and coffee plantations that were established in colonial and early post colonial⁵ period still exist but they have aged beyond their productive lives⁶. Upland rice and cassava, planted in rotation with bush fallow, is the main farming system practiced. However, current agricultural development programs are promoting lowland rice cultivation and the use of innovative cultural practices with a view to increasing productivity, and the commercialization of small holder farming throughout the country. This effort is being supported by donor programs and NGO projects.

The sector is administered by the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security under 6 divisions three of which (Crops, Livestock and Forestry & Fisheries) are core service divisions and the other three (Engineering, Extension and Projects Evaluation Monitoring and Statistics Division PEMSD) are support services divisions. The Extension Division was only upgraded from being a unit of the Crops Division into a separate division in 2009.

At the national level the sector is under the political leadership of the Minister of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security and two Deputy Ministers. The Administrative Head is the Permanent Secretary while the Professional Head is the Director General of Agriculture. Divisional Directors serve as subject matter specialists for programming the ministry's interventions. At the district level, District Agriculture Officers supervise activities at the District Agriculture Offices, supported by district level subject matter specialists. For extension service delivery, each district is divided into blocks⁷ headed by Block Extension Supervisors, BES, who deploy and supervise Frontline Extension Workers FEW in the field. The Ministry collaborates with NGOs, development partners and private service providers at both the national and district levels in the delivery of extension services to farmers. Under the current decentralized governance policy, most of the operational activities of the Ministry have been devolved to the District Councils. Six of the seven central divisions have been fully devolved.

1.3 Role of extension service in the agricultural sector

The role of the Agricultural Extension Service is to transfer knowledge, technologies and agricultural information to farmers and to link them to other value chain actors in the economy to enhance their productivity and motivate them to become market oriented commercial producers. The extension service in a country like Sierra Leone is therefore a vehicle for bringing about transformation of traditional farming systems into modern commercial agriculture. The national objectives of the service are to promote national food security, improve farmers' incomes, create employment in the sector and generally reduce poverty.

A well functioning extension service is demand driven. It sets out to meet all the identified needs of farmers in their communities for inputs and services that enable them to increase their productivity and enhance their wellbeing. In this regard, agricultural extension services also address crosscutting issues that affect the communities that farmers live and operate within, such as health, nutrition, natural resource management and environmental issues.

During the colonial and early post colonial period, the public sector dominated in the provision of extension services. Both human and financial resources were adequately provided in support of the introduction of new technologies and crops for which ready markets, principally export markets were available and secured in the mother country, the UK. In addition to the ready market, incentives in the form of subsidies, reasonably good infrastructure, financing and extension facilitating factors were also readily available. However, Post independence, the extension service declined due to declining available human capital and financial resources for the public extension service. Private sector input into service provision could not bridge the resulting gaps. Government therefore encouraged the development of the pluralistic extension system to cater for diverse needs of extension clientele and service providers alike. In practice the pluralistic extension system is a multi-actor and multiple-objective system that includes various categories of actors. These include public agricultural extension service providers, public research and extension organizations, donor-supported rural development programs, international and private research centres, farmers' associations, NGOs and bilateral donors, private input suppliers and Commodity processors, procurers and exporters. Examples of the actual actors in the categories of service providers in the pluralistic extension system in Sierra Leone are shown in the table in Annex 2.

CHAPTER 2

THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION ADVISORY POLICY

2.1 Current Status of extension advisory services.

A summary of the current status of the extension advisory services is the following:

- 2.1.1 **Extension Methods:** The Farmers' Field School (FFS) methodology and various modifications are the primary extension approach used by MAFFS frontline extension workers and others. Along with FFS, MAFFS, NGOs and other service providers currently deploy numerous other extension methods and techniques.
- 2.1.2 **Decentralization of extension service delivery:** While the operations and funding for most MAFFS activities at the District have been devolved to the District Councils, funding for extension operating expenses have still not been decentralized.
- 2.1.3 **Client empowerment:** At the present time, farmers are not well empowered to receive the services they desire at the time they are required and in the desired quality. Developing the capacity for farmer voice in the extension system remains a work in progress where more efforts are needed. At the present time there is no system of national registration of extension service providers.
- 2.1.4 **Collaboration and networking:** MAFFS staff assist donor-funded and NGO programs and routinely coordinate with projects being implemented in their District. Furthermore, at the District level, monthly coordination meetings for the agricultural sector occur and updates across providers are shared but farmers are not represented at these meetings.
- 2.1.5 **Regulating extension service providers:** At the present time there exists no system of national registration of extension service providers. Codes of conduct and standards should be developed with the full participation of leading NGOs involved in agricultural development and extension (such as World Vision, WHH, and CRS and others) and with farmer representatives.
- 2.1.6 **Technology development, packaging and learning:** SLARI undertakes research on all the main crops of Sierra Leone as well as on basic processing. However more work is required in other value addition activities in their value chains.
- 2.1.7 **Human resource development:** Human resource development for the agricultural extension system includes developing the capacity of farmers, MAFFS extension staff, NGO and INGO staffs, leaders of CBOs and FBOs as well as the capacity of private sector providers of information.
- 2.1.8 **Information and communication technology use in agricultural knowledge information system:** Information and communication technologies (ICTs) and their application in agricultural extension are somewhat limited at this time in Sierra Leone, especially when compared to countries like Ghana and Kenya. That area needs more attention resources.
- 2.1.9 **Extension facilitating factors - enabling environment:** In Sierra Leone some of the key dimensions of the enabling environment which pose barriers for the success of the extension system are the poor state of rural roads, limited access to credit, the state of farmer-based organizations and their capacity for governance, management, market development, and value addition.
- 2.1.10 **Financing extension services:** Government is financially constrained to adequately fund agricultural extension services. In this case, pluralism in the sources of finance as well as the organizations for delivery of services has distinct benefits.
- 2.1.11 **Crosscutting issues in agricultural extension service delivery:** Cross-cutting issues involving gender, natural resources and the environment, farmers health, nutrition, literacy and numeracy, governance and community-decision making, youth, and information and communications technologies all deserve greater attention at the level of the extension system.

2.2 Objectives of the extension policy

The overall objective of the national extension policy is to guide the development and delivery of agricultural extension advisory services in Sierra Leone to primarily small-holder farmers and other actors in the agricultural value chain for; the adoption of innovative technologies, commercialization, enhanced productivity and increased incomes.

2.3 The need for a legalized agricultural extension policy

The National Agricultural Extension Advisory Policy provides a framework for organizing, improving and strengthening the delivery of agricultural extension services in Sierra Leone by clarifying roles and identifying responsibilities of all the stakeholders within the extension system. The policy will help in avoiding duplication of effort and in high-lighting where management attention should be placed in order to function effectively. When put forward in the form of a law, it will have the legal imprimatur that lends weight and support of the law to changes brought about by the policy.

2.4 National and sectoral strategies guiding the extension policy

The national and sectoral strategies around agricultural and rural development that guide the national extension policy are consistent with the overall approach to agricultural development and poverty reduction of the Government of Sierra Leone. National level strategies that direct and inform the national extension policy include the improvement of the overall business investment climate, the reduction of poverty, increased transparency and responsiveness of public services, open citizen participation in public services delivery, and equity in access to services of youth and women and vulnerable groups. At the level of the agricultural sector, guiding strategies include decentralization of services, increasing commercialization of the agricultural sector, pursuit of value-addition opportunities such as processing and storage, an orientation towards markets and market opportunities, and an increase in the production of higher value crops and livestock products.

2.5 Historical and legal framework of the national extension policy

2.5.1 Historical Precedents and Best Practices:

It is well documented that countries that have enacted extension policy through legislative action tend to have well-organized, financially stable extension systems that have sustained effectiveness and a cumulative impact. Early examples of legislated extension policies which have worked well include the Cooperative Extension Service in the United States known as the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914, the Japanese Agricultural Promotion Law of 1948 which created and provided funding for Japan's Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service, Agricultural Extension policy in South Korea embodied in the 1957 Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Law of 1962, Thailand's agricultural extension policy which was codified in the 1956 law that created the Department of Agricultural Extension as one of nine departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. Many African countries (Liberia, Kenya, Zimbabwe etc.) are good examples of countries which have recently enacted national extension policies.

2.5.2 Complementarities with other Legal Statutes

The Local Government Act 2004 of Sierra Leone specifies 80 functions to be devolved to local government, all of which were to be devolved by the end of 2012. Among the first functions devolved were agriculture extension services and community development. The Act required that Government Ministries shall, in respect of any function devolved to local councils under this Act or any other enactment which relates to them, be **responsible for the formulation of national policies**, and local councils shall act in accordance with such policies.*

2.5.3 National Policy Framework

This Extension Policy falls within the foregoing legal framework and is aligned to the development objectives enshrined in other current national development programmes and policy statements:

- (a) In launching the National Sustainable Agricultural Development Plan (NSADP) 2010 – 2030, the President declared that the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS) was developing a new vision with efficient service delivery mechanisms to "Make agriculture the 'engine' for socio-economic growth and development through commercial agriculture". To realize this vision the following objectives (all of which are embodied in this national extension policy) are to be achieved:
 - (i) Fostering increased agricultural productivity (intensification)
 - (ii) Promoting commercial agriculture through Private Sector (extensification)
 - (iii) Improving Research & Extension Service Delivery
 - (iv) Promoting effective and efficient Resource (financial, physical and human) Management
 - (v) Mainstreaming cross-cutting themes: gender and youth promotion, farmer health care issues (including HIV/AIDS, IVS sicknesses and hazards, malaria etc)
- (b) The NSADP in 2010 envisaged rehabilitation of the Competent Fisheries Authority and revision of the fisheries legal framework. In pursuance of this proposal a (complementary) Fisheries Act is already in preparation.
- (c) In both spirit and letter, the Agenda for Change and its successor the current Agenda for Prosperity 2013-2018 are hinged on agriculture sector development being the driver of national economic development in Sierra Leone. The Agenda for Prosperity identified a weak extension service* among the key challenges facing the sector.

The Extension Advisory Policy takes full cognisance of the provisions of the Forestry Act of 1988, which remains the principal legislation guiding the management and regulation of forestry and Forest Reserves in Sierra Leone and the Wildlife Conservation Act of 1972, which is the principal legislation on the management and regulation of wildlife and protected areas.

2.6 VISION

The vision guiding this policy statement for the national extension system and the state of agricultural extension advisory services in Sierra Leone over the longer term is:

"Small-holder medium and large scale investment in famous Sierra Leone are empowered to demand the extension and advisory services they need to become highly productive and a well-financed and capable pluralistic extension system supplies the needed services".

2.7 Issues addressed by the policy

The national policy on agricultural extension services addresses key questions surrounding the structure, operation, financing, and performance of the pluralistic national extension system. The key questions are: how extension services should be financed? Who are the main clients of the extension services? Which organizations should be involved in delivering extension services? What services and technologies should be extended? Who decides on what is extended? How to ensure that all target groups, especially women and youth farmers and vulnerable farmers, receive services? How are the services to be evaluated?

By way of overview, this policy proposes a pluralistic, decentralized, demand-driven and market-oriented extension system that also responds to important cross-cutting issues. The overall purpose of the national extension policy is to create the conditions where farmers and farmer-based organizations are empowered and enabled to demand and access extension services they need. Farmers and farming are defined in the widest sense to include crops and livestock husbandry and fish farming¹⁰. On the supply side, the system should be capable of delivering the demanded extension services efficiently and effectively. An essential component of efficiency is that over time, services which can be delivered on commercial basis by private sector firms are taken over by the private sector. Similarly, over time, public sector funding and delivery of services should be targeted at programs which the private sector cannot finance commercially and to issues, such as natural resource management and the problems of poor and under-resourced farmers, which have a public goods or national priority dimension.

The policy identifies small-holder farmers as the primary clientele of the national extension system. We identify two reasons for this focus. First, the great majority of Sierra Leonean farmers are small-holder farmers. Improving their access to improved technologies and practices will serve to increase the productivity of national food system. Secondly, small-holder farmers are predominantly poor farmers with many of them operating around or just above subsistence level. Reaching them with effective extension services will lead to productivity increases, which directly imply increases in the household incomes of the farmers.

Beyond the clients of the system, other key stakeholders in the national extension system include MAFFS, donor-funded projects, agricultural input dealers, private sector firms including commercial scale farms and processing industries, NGOs and INGOs, SLARI, other research and educational institutions. While some countries focus their scarce extension resources to certain critical zones in terms of agricultural importance or socio-economic factors, the geographic coverage of the national extension system in this policy is nationwide.

The content for the pluralistic extension system is to come from MAFFS, SLARI, as well as international centres (IITA and African Rice and others) and NGOs and INGOs and private sector firms. Thus, the source of extension program content is meant to be pluralistic, with a variety of sources and approaches supported. In terms of methods, a primary method is to focus on delivery to groups such as farmer field schools, farmer groups, and farmer-based organizations. Extension program deliverers can utilize other methods of delivery such as individual consultations and ICT messaging campaigns and strategies. A principle around content is to make extension training manuals and materials widely available, so that local NGOs and MAFFS frontline workers can obtain extension programming resources inexpensively.

A summary of extension system actors and their responsibilities starts with the farmers. Over time, farmers become empowered to demand and communicate their requirements in terms of extension services. MAFFS takes a role of program delivery with adequately financed and resourced staff and programs. Additionally, MAFFS fulfils a coordinating role at the national and local levels for agricultural extension services. As such, MAFFS continues the devolution process and works to insure its management is sufficient to deliver services at the local level. Over time, local government and private sector firms and NGOs (through devolved funds, performance contracts, and donor funds) take over more of the implementation and delivery of extension programs. Functions such as fertilizer sales and distribution and seeds sales and distribution and training around these products can increasingly be handled by private sector input supply firms.

To strengthen farmer input and overall system coordination and consultation, the policy proposes the development of two institutions and the strengthening of others. First, at the local level (Chiefdom or Ward and District level) farmer platforms with MAFFS extension staff and others involved with extension service delivery in the area should be developed. The role of these farmer platforms is to solicit direct input into the work plan of extension providers and in the monitoring and evaluation, and program and staff appraisal, of programs operating in the area.

Second, a national committee with strong farmer and research representations should operate to help formulate research proposals and review MAFFS extension programs and other major project and NGO and INGO extension efforts. Lastly, the national Chapter of the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAAS) should be strengthened and supported in its capacity building and advocacy role for extension services in Sierra Leone.

2.8 Policy Statements on Management of National Extension Advisory Services

An essential aspect of the national extension policy is the definition of roles and mandates of various stakeholders in the pluralistic extension system.

(i) Role of government in a pluralistic extension service

The public sector shall play a central role in the pluralistic extension system. The government delivers services, funds programs, provides training programs for extension staff, sets policy, coordinates with civil society and private sector actors, and provides a legal and regulatory framework for extension.

(ii) Privatizing and commercializing extension service:

The private sector has the ability to harness private capital and supply and logistics systems to deliver inputs and also provide related training on their use. Moreover, the private sector, through a number of business models, can deliver extension services in an efficient and effective manner that responds directly to clients' demands.

(iii) Decentralized planning and delivery of extension services

The decentralization of the national agricultural extension advisory service will be strictly aligned to the principles and objectives of the National Decentralization Policy as guided by the Decentralization Secretariat.

(iv) Extension approaches and methods

The national extension policy promotes pluralism in both the provision and delivery of extension programs and messages. Therefore, while group approaches such as the farmer field school and village level farmers groups and ABCs and other FBOs are the predominant approach, other extension approaches should be supported in a "best fit" spirit. Where another approach is useful or complementary to the group approach it should be utilized. The policy shall support use of innovation platforms and product specializations at district levels to benefit from local comparative advantage.

(v) Content and choice of extension messages

The national extension policy supports pluralism in the content and choice of extension messages. Farmer platforms should play a role in identifying the emphases of extension programs, as should MAFFS, NGOs and INGOs, research organizations such as SLARI and educational institutions, and others including private sector firms. Extension programming materials should be shared publicly by providers on a website and there should be an opportunity to present and share a public presentation on extension programs and their content at the national and district level to the farmer platforms and the already existing monthly sector coordinating platforms.

(vi) Decentralization of decision making and empowering of extension clientele

The national extension policy promotes decentralization of decision-making in the provision and delivery of extension services and the empowerment of farmers in their ability to effectively demand and receive quality extension services.

(vii) Stakeholder collaboration and networking

The national extension policy promotes stakeholder collaboration, networking and sharing in a number of ways. Through consultations at the national level and at the local level, through joint programming efforts and sharing of staff, and through involvement directly with clients in the form of FBOs, CBOs, and others.

(viii) Regulating extension services and service providers

The national extension policy supports the creation of a governing body for the development of a national level registry and system (with shared governance in a public-private partnership) of regulation that would cover all extension services, service providers and agents, from both the public and private sectors.

(ix) Institutional and human resource capacity building

Strengthening the capacity of the human resources and institutions delivering extension advisory services requires an increased commitment and investment in quality training and strengthening activities. The sources of funding for these efforts should come from both the public and private sectors.

2.8 Policy Statements on Management of National Extension Advisory Services

An essential aspect of the national extension policy is the definition of roles and mandates of various stakeholders in the pluralistic extension system.

(i) Role of government in a pluralistic extension service

The public sector shall play a central role in the pluralistic extension system. The government delivers services, funds programs, provides training programs for extension staff, sets policy, coordinates with civil society and private sector actors, and provides a legal and regulatory framework for extension.

(ii) Privatizing and commercializing extension service:

The private sector has the ability to harness private capital and supply and logistics systems to deliver inputs and also provide related training on their use. Moreover, the private sector, through a number of business models, can deliver extension services in an efficient and effective manner that responds directly to clients' demands.

(iii) Decentralized planning and delivery of extension services

The decentralization of the national agricultural extension advisory service will be strictly aligned to the principles and objectives of the National Decentralization Policy as guided by the Decentralization Secretariat.

(iv) Extension approaches and methods

The national extension policy promotes pluralism in both the provision and delivery of extension programs and messages. Therefore, while group approaches such as the farmer field school and village level farmers groups and ABCs and other FBOs are the predominant approach, other extension approaches should be supported in a "best fit" spirit. Where another approach is useful or complementary to the group approach it should be utilized. The policy shall support use of innovation platforms and product specializations at district levels to benefit from local comparative advantage.

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(ix) Institutional and human resource capacity building

Strengthening the capacity of the human resources and institutions delivering extension advisory services requires an increased commitment and investment in quality training and strengthening activities. The sources of funding for these efforts should come from both the public and private sectors.

- (x) **Technology development, packaging and dissemination**
Farmer-led technology development, packaging and dissemination of key extension program areas are emphasized by the national extension policy. Technologies and agricultural practices, including management practices and process skills for marketing and farmer group organization, will be developed in a process that involves farmer input. Extension messages and programs will be developed with farmer input and in a collaborative process that involves research, extension, farmers and other value chain actors. Extension programs shall comply with all national environmental standards as established in the Environmental Protection Act of 2000 and subsequent Acts and regulations.
- (xi) **Use of information and communication technology in agricultural knowledge and information system**
The extension policy promotes the effective and efficient use of information and communication technologies in agricultural extension in Sierra Leone. The policy seeks to support and strengthen capacity for ICT deployment in agricultural extension by actors throughout the pluralistic extension system.
- (xii) **Extension facilitating factors**
The national extension policy identifies extension facilitating factors as important contributing factors that influence the success and impact of agricultural extension efforts in Sierra Leone. Extension facilitating factors include; rural infrastructure, communications infrastructure, literacy and numeracy levels, rural finance policies and the overall agricultural policy framework and context, along with macroeconomic and trade policies.
- (xiii) **Governance of extension services**
Governance of extension services, from the national-level enabling legislation, to the local level decision-making about program priorities, determines whether or not a national extension policy is likely to be adhered to, followed, and implemented. The governance frameworks for the national extension system should reflect the important and central role of farmers within the system, government's commitment to poverty reduction and the inclusion and involvement of other key stakeholders in all agricultural value chains.
- (xiv) **Monitoring and evaluation of extension services**
For extension services to have an increased national impact, the monitoring and evaluation of services shall be emphasized and strengthened, particularly for the public sector extension services.
- (xv) **Financing extension services**
Adequate support in terms of funding and accountability provides a key link in the implementation chain for the national extension policy. The policy supports and calls for an increased level of resources in the national budget for agricultural extension from both domestic revenues and from projects, as well as a focus on mobilizing resources from private sources including donors, fees for services delivered and cost-recovery.
- (xvi) **Mainstreaming crosscutting issues**
The pluralistic extension system has the unique capability of reaching farmers and other rural people with educational messages and programs regarding a wide-variety of topics, some not directly related to agricultural production. This capacity can help rural communities improve their quality of life through knowledge on health, food and nutrition, youth and gender issues, social protection and other topics, as well as capacity building on community management of common property resources and environmental issues.

2.9 Policy Updates and Review

The policy will be updated every two years based on lessons learned in the course of its implementation. Proposals for updating policy shall emanate from representative District Policy Consultative Committees of stakeholders and approved by the National Policy Consultative Committee. The policy shall be comprehensively reviewed by a consulting firm every five years and validated and approved by a stakeholders' Policy Review Validation Workshop convened by MAFFS. However, extraordinary circumstances requiring urgent action could necessitate earlier review of the policy in whole or in part, in the same manner.

CHAPTER 3

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

The implementation of the National Agricultural Extension Policy will follow the following thematic actions:

3.1 Role of government in the pluralistic extension service.

- (i) Initiate and follow through on actions with the Law Officers Department for the enactment of the National Agricultural Extension Advisory ACT 2014 and Regulations.
- (ii) Promote an agricultural enabling environment of good incentives to agricultural producers, private sector input suppliers and processors, and a plurality of extension service providers.
- (iii) Actively promote the development and strengthening of competition in the supply of agricultural inputs by the private sector and in the provision of related training.
- (iv) Actively support the independence and strengthening of civil society groups (FBOs, CBOs, NGOs, INGOs) in their capacity for financing, designing, delivering and evaluating extension services.
- (v) Support pluralism in the provision of extension system through collaboration with INGOs, NGOs, private sector firms and extension providers.
- (vi) Fund MAFFS extension services at a sufficient level to ensure reasonable conditions of service for frontline extension personnel that are comparable to the conditions of service of field research personnel in the same levels.
- (vii) Ensure that funds (both devolved and centrally delivered) dedicated for extension programs reach frontline staff and local level extension activities.
- (viii) Ensure that sufficient funds for transportation, program expenses, and in-service training are adequately provided.
- (ix) Actively pursue opportunities to collaborate with recognized international NGOs and private sector implementers to privatize delivery of extension services at a local level through performance contracts.
- (x) Build the capacity of MAFFS extension service staff as well as the capacity of other extension service providers.

3.2 Privatizing and commercializing extension service

- (i) Establish a set of national extension guidelines, a code of extension provider ethics, and a set of standards for providers.
- (ii) Government shall strengthening farmer based organizations and their ability to co-fund extension services for their members through contracting with private sector providers to deliver extension services in specific areas and on specific commodities or crops.

3.3 Decentralized planning

- (i) Link planning to budgeting and M&E at the Chiefdom/Block level and at the District level.
- (ii) Develop farmer advisory committees with at least 30% representation from women farmers, to provide direct input at the Chiefdom and Block level on the annual work plan and extension program and budget.
- (iii) Support training and capacity building of farmer advisory committees and District Councils and District Council Agriculture Committees on the role and importance of extension services.
- (iv) Implement external audits and annual sector reviews of public sector extension activities and programs at regional level.

3.4 Extension approaches and methods

- (i) The primary extension approach is to utilize farmers' groups to deliver programs and messages and technologies.
- (ii) "Best fit" approaches including, farmer field schools; village-level savings and loans groups and other documented effective approaches should all be utilized by extension programs as appropriate.
- (iii) As a general extension principle, farmer participation in the development, design, and implementation and evaluation of extension programs should be incorporated.
- (iv) Methods which develop both farmer technical capacity as well as process capacity (group governance, farmer advocacy and empowerment) should be employed.

3.5 Content and choice of extension messages

- (i) Content for extension programs and extension messages should be made widely available for peer review and public examination. Copies of printed manuals and training materials should be made widely available on a website repository.
- (ii) Extension messages should be clear and made available to all stakeholders through innovation platforms based on clientele demand.
- (iii) Extension messages and program plans should be shared publicly with MAFFS and District and National level agricultural coordinating meetings.
- (iv) Extension messages should be reviewed by developers and program planners at the design stage for consistency with the overall national agricultural strategy and development plans.
- (v) Program design features regarding input provision, credit provision, and service provision should follow GOSL policies and should support the strengthening of the private sector and commercial role in the sale and delivery of inputs and in credit and agricultural services.
- (vi) NGOs and iNGOs who collaborate with MAFFS extension workers should provide the extension workers with copies of written manuals and training materials.

3.6 Decentralization and empowering of extension clientele

- (i) Strengthen farmer groups, farmer-based organizations, and community-based organizations to build their capacity to demand extension services.
- (ii) Ensure that operating funds for field-level extension services reach the front-line extension staff and programs at the field level.
- (iii) Implement innovation platforms with at least 30% of the representatives being women farmers, to provide input and approval to extension work plans and budgets at the District and lower levels.

3.7 Stakeholder collaboration and networking

- (i) The national extension policy promotes stakeholder collaboration, networking and sharing in a number of ways through consultations at the national level and local level through joint programming efforts and sharing of resources.
- (ii) Openness in communication about programming in the field and conscious efforts to avoid duplication in extension programs, contradictions in programming approaches, and unnecessary competition.
- (iii) Programming materials such as manuals and handouts and flyers should be widely available for distribution, including with copies available in an online repository.
- (iv) Reporting on ongoing extension programs should occur both at the local level to District Council Agriculture Committees as well as at the national level in open forums.
- (v) Peer review and expert visitations are encouraged for extension programs at the local level and at the national level.
- (vi) Farmer input and representation to collaborative bodies is promoted.

3.8 Governing body for regulating extension services and service providers

- (i) A national-level public-private partnership should be established (A Directorate of Extension Advisory Services under the supervision of the Minister of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security) that would be the overall governing body for agricultural extension in Sierra Leone. Its roles would include developing and vetting a statement of extension ethics and code of conduct for extension providers, as well as a policy on expectations for continuing education and training of extension service providers on an annual basis.
- (ii) The national-level public-private partnership should establish a registration for extension service providers and means to track their annual in-service continuing education and training hours as well as any complaints or performance issues reported by the public or clients.
- (iii) The national-level public-private partnership should have a governing board consisting of at least 30 percent farmer and private sector representatives, and at least 30 percent NGO and iNGO representatives. **The governing board should include MAFFS, SLARI, local governments and educational and research institutions.** The governing board approves regulatory and registration principles, as well as actions against an extension provider based upon complaints about performance.
- (iv) The national-level public-private extension partnership would have as a mission the promotion of the pluralistic extension system and quality services delivered in a professional manner.
- (v) A national certification program that emphasizes both process and technical skills for extension field agents should be developed and pursued.

3.9 Institutional and human resource capacity building

- (i) Support training opportunities and in-service training events for MAFFS extension staff as well as for other extension service providers.
- (ii) Regularize the availability of in-service training for MAFFS field staff so that both extension process skills as well as agronomic and other technical skills remain current and up-to-date.
- (iii) Provide training for staff through multiple methods, including via video, audio, print, and other media, as well as through face-to-face meetings.
- (iv) Promote collaboration between MAFFS, projects, NGOs and INGOs and the private sector to develop and deliver training programs.
- (v) Review and assess the provision of training courses and programs related to agricultural extension at Njala University, NATC, and other sites for their quality and standards relative to international norms for best practices in extension training programs.
- (vi) Insure that extension topics are integrated with agricultural training courses in fields other than agricultural extension and adult education, so that graduates in fields like agronomy and animal science and agricultural engineering have at least a basic understanding of extension process skills.

3.10 Technology development, packaging and dissemination

- (i) Support feedback and input from farmers and farmer-based organizations into the process of research-problem and issue identification.
- (ii) Promote a collaborative process involving research, extension and farmers and their representatives for technology and practice testing and extension program development.
- (iii) Utilize farmers and farm-based demonstrations and examples in the dissemination of new technologies and recommended practices. This can involve on-farm demonstrations, master-farmer examples, farm-based videos and other dissemination methods.

3.11 Use of information and communication technology in agricultural knowledge and information system

- (i) Build the capacity of actors throughout the pluralistic extension system to develop, deploy, and utilize ICT approaches in extension programs.
- (ii) Support the use of multiple ICT approaches including but not limited to farm radio broadcasts, print media, internet and web-based programming and information systems, cell phone systems and Smartphone-based systems, community knowledge workers, community-knowledge centres and information kiosks, market information systems, audio messages and podcast-type messages, videos, farmer and community-based group dramas, and other ICT approaches.
- (iii) Promote the role of farmers in the development and use of ICT-based extension approaches.
- (iv) Encourage the sharing of ICT-based extension through websites and other information portals.
- (v) Develop ICT and media for an extension unit with capacity to produce and deploy agricultural video, audio and print messages within or in partnership with MAFFS.
- (vi) Train and build the capacity of front-line extension workers as well as more senior staff in MAFFS and in INGOs and NGOs in the development and use of ICT approaches in agricultural extension.

3.12 Extension facilitation

- (i) The Government of Sierra Leone will work to rehabilitate and improve farm to market roads and the feeder road system in rural Sierra Leone.
- (ii) Communications infrastructure, including cell phone coverage in rural areas, will be supported.
- (iii) Rural education will be strengthened to lead to higher literacy and numeracy levels.
- (iv) Interest rate policies and financial policies will promote the sustainable private sector provision of credit to agricultural and rural development, as well as for inputs and agricultural equipment.
- (v) Pricing policies and import and export trade policies will be maintained at levels that allow producers to face world prices, and regulatory policies will take into account the need for competition within the agricultural marketing, processing, logistics, and distribution sectors.
- (vi) The GoSL will pursue a national macroeconomic policy with a fiscal balance and a regime of openness in terms of the exchange rate and the interest rates in the economy.

3.13 Governance of the national extension service

- (i) An Extension Act should be drafted and enacted following a review of the legal basis of the current extension system. Key elements of the national extension policy should be incorporated into the Act regarding the roles of various actors, the commitment of GoSL to pluralism in the delivery of extension services, and other dimensions.
- (ii) Develop and utilize farmer platforms at the local level and national level for program planning and input into M&E and other key program management decisions.
- (iii) Fully devolve to the District Councils the responsibility to deliver extension programs in the districts.
- (iv) MAFFS Extension Division retains the functions of supervision, M&E, regulation, ICT-enabled extension, and national level program support.

3.14 Monitoring and evaluation of extension services

- (i) Develop service charters that clearly lay out the expectations for service delivery terms and conditions on how providers are to work with clients.
- (ii) Promote the use of participatory monitoring and evaluation that allows clients (small-holder farmers) to provide input on the quality and extent of extension services received.
- (iii) Implement a performance monitoring and measurement framework that measures the coverage of extension services, the intensity of services provided, and the impact of services.
- (iv) Utilize peer visits and peer review and evaluation of extension programs and offices and demonstration sites.
- (v) Train stakeholders on participatory monitoring and evaluation for extension services after conducting a training needs assessment.

3.15 Financing extension services

- (i) Fully devolve to District Councils the recurring funds for support and delivery (not wages and benefits) of agricultural extension services.
- (ii) Require that a minimum of 15 percent of the devolved agricultural funds at the District level be allocated to agricultural extension activities, with a priority on front-line and Block level staff and their mobility, programmatic support, and in-service training.
- (iii) Ensure that activity plans and work plans match with the budgetary plans so that activities committed to receive the necessary resources.
- (iv) Strengthen accountability and financial monitoring systems to ensure funds flow to areas and activities for which they are intended and front-line extension workers and their immediate supervisors receive adequate support. Such strengthening measures could include outside, third party international audit firms to review the control measures and actual flow of funds.

3.16 Mainstreaming crosscutting issues

- (i) Bring cross-cutting topics into extension program design and implementation. Such topics include gender awareness and gender equality, natural resource management and environmental protection, governance and community decision making, youth access to opportunities, health and nutrition, among others.
- (ii) Ensure adequate representation of women farmers and youth farmers on farmer platforms at the local and national levels. Representation for women should be at least 30 percent of farmer representatives at the local and national levels.
- (iii) Provide in-service training on cross-cutting topics for front-line extension workers including MAFFS FEWs and BESs.
- (iv) Provide training manuals or materials on gender equality in agricultural extension, natural resource management and environmental protection, climate change adaption and mitigation, youth opportunities in agriculture, HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness, and other health and nutrition topics to extension workers.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSITION MANAGEMENT

4.1 Need for Transition Management

The implementation of the National Extension Advisory Policy must be carefully managed to achieve a seamless transition from the *laissez faire modus operandi* of the current system to the more regulated, demand driven, multi-stakeholder, multi-objective and professionally accountable system proposed by the new policy. Providing that persons who would guide the implementation would require the appointment of strong multi disciplinary team to competent. This Transition Management Team would need to function for a period of two to three years.

4.2 Terms of Reference of the Transition Management Team:

The duties of the Transition Management team are to:

1. Guide the implementation of all changes in the operations of the current extension system to align it to the new system proposed in the new national policy.
2. Liaise with the MAFFS for the smooth and timely implementation of the actions identified in the policy document for implementation.
3. Provide technical support to the legal team that will be writing up the regulations to the National Extension Advisory Services Act.
4. Strengthen the organizational and human resource capacity of the national extension system in line with the new policy proposals.
5. Ensure the full devolution of field operational activities of the extension system to the Districts and ensuring that the field extension services are adequately resourced with funds and sufficiently trained personnel.
6. Prioritize components of the extension system that should be privatized and set up a process for their privatization.
7. Sensitize all extension service stakeholders and clientele (farmers, processors, marketers, input suppliers, service providers etc) on their roles in the implementation and operation of the national extension policy.
8. Identify and implement any other activities in furtherance of the main objective of these terms of reference, which is the effective and efficient implementation of the new national extension advisory policy.

4.3 Composition of the Transition Management Team:

The team should be technically competent and have a full understanding of the provisions of the policy document. It shall be composed of:

- (i) Dean of the School of Agriculture of Njala University
- (ii) Director General of SLARI
- (iii) Chairman of a District Development Committee
- (iv) Director of an agricultural NGO
- (v) Representative of NAFFSL (Female)
- (vi) Representative of NAFFSL (Male)
- (vii) A Consultant

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ANNEX 1

DETAILED SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE OF SIERRA LEONE**Evolution of the extension service in Sierra Leone**

Up to 2009, agricultural extension services were performed by respective subject matter divisions; crops, forestry, livestock and fishery. Being the dominant sub sector, the Crops Division was the major focus of the extension activities of Government/Ministry and received greater attention and allocation of resources, including human resources. This was the situation until the Extension Unit of the Crops Division was upgraded into a Division of the Ministry and an Agricultural Extension Director was appointed, with the responsibility of coordinating agricultural extension activities in the country.

The current extension delivery service

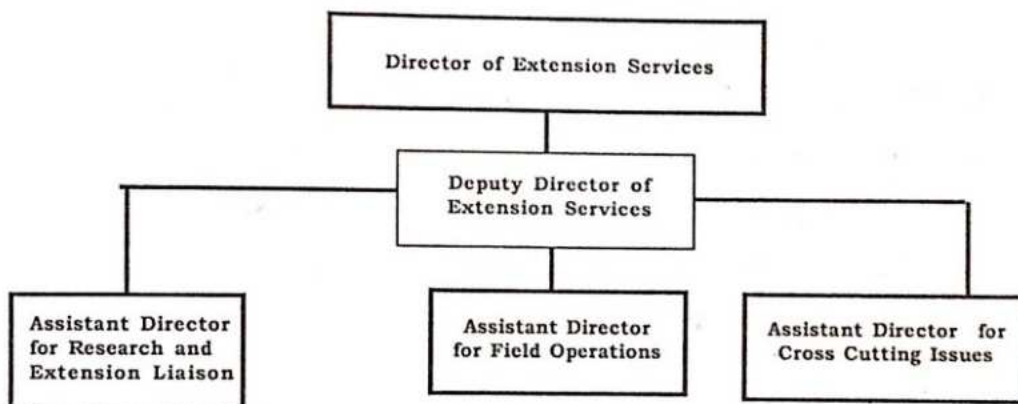
Agricultural extension services in Sierra Leone are currently provided by the Agricultural Extension Division of the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security. The division comprises of six operational units:

1. Staff Training and Development;
2. Women in Agriculture and Nutrition,
3. Agricultural Information and Communications;
4. Research - Extension Liaison;
5. Field Operations;
6. Cross-cutting issues (Youth Engagement and Empowerment and Farmer health-HIV/AIDS, malaria, river borne diseases);

Structurally, the division operates at two levels: National and District level.

The Extension Division at the National Level

At the National level the Division is headed by the Director of Extension Services who is responsible for coordinating all extension activities in the Ministry. He is assisted by one Deputy Director and three Assistant Directors for Research and Extension Liaison (REL), Field Operations and Cross-Cutting Issues.



The Assistant Director for Research and Extension Liaison is responsible for ensuring proper liaison with the Agricultural Research and related institutions (SLARI, NU, NATC, IITA, Africa Rice etc). He also plans and facilitates training programs. The Assistant Director for Field Operations is responsible for all field extension programs, coordinates the activities of NGOs, Projects and Farmer organizations. The Assistant Director for Cross-Cutting issues is responsible for the coordination of programs in the respective departments of WIAN, Youths, Farmer Health, Extension Communication, Farm Mechanization, and Irrigation.

The Extension Division at District Level

At district/field level, the District Agriculture Officer DAO is responsible for extension activities assisted by Subject Matter Specialists (SMSs -6), Block Extension Supervisors (BES -5), Field Extension Workers (FEW-40) and Para-Professionals. Other support services are also provided in Finance, stores, and farmer organisations. To supplement the national extension service and enhance outreach to small farmers in remote areas at the block level, MAFFS collaborates with functional organizations and associations as vehicles for extension service provision and delivery. These include:

- Farmer Based Organisations (FBOs).
- Agricultural Business Centres (ABCs)
- NGOs.
- Development partners projects

District Agriculture Officer

6 subject matter specialists, Crops, livestock
Agric engineering, forestry, extension and PEMSD

4 to 6 Block extension supervisors

40 Frontline extension workers and support services

District farmers and agribusiness practitioners

Privatization of Extension Service Provision

- (a) MAFFS intends to build the capacities of well performing ABCs to a point where they could be successfully transformed into registered co-operatives or agribusiness companies capable of providing commercial extension services to their members and other clients that are able and willing to pay for services.
- (b) Crop input supplies in the form of seeds and fertilizers, and mechanical cultivation services are extension services that MAFFS traditionally provided for farmers. However the performance of the Ministry in the delivery of these services has often been called into question, most often due to late deliveries of inputs. MAFFS intends to privatise these services by the following actions:
 - (i) An Agro - Dealership pilot project was implemented by MAFFS in 2010 with technical assistance from CNFA. Fifteen (15) trained dealers have been capacitated to establish community agro-dealerships in the Northern, Southern and Eastern Provinces. Input suppliers to the dealers have been identified and paired with the agro-dealers. The pilot project needs to be evaluated, adjusted as necessary and up-scaled.
 - (ii) For the privatization of seed production and distribution, MAFFS and the FAO have decided to privatize the Seed Multiplication Project SMP which was established by Government and GTZ, now GIZ, with facilities in Kobia in the Kambia District and Makeni in the Bombali District.
 - (iii) Private Seed Companies notably Genesis Farm are also being encouraged. This seed project is equipped with the necessary facilities of a modern seed company and is already in production.
 - (iv) Mechanical Cultivation equipment were imported in 2008 and sold at subsidized prices to progressive farmers on hire purchase terms with a view to privatizing mechanization services.

Sector Constraints Affecting Extension Service Delivery

An assessment of the current national extension system revealed technological and operational constraints that impede its functionality:

Technological Constraints

1. The low scientific base of traditional subsistence farming systems inhibits alignment with technical innovations.
2. High illiteracy and low level of education among farmers limit receptivity to training and their ability to absorb, retain and use technical information, productively.
3. Continued use of basic traditional tools and appliances with low mechanical advantage.
4. Poor land development and seed bed preparation

5. Repeated use of poor quality seeds and other planting materials.
6. Failure to use recommended proven yield enhancing inputs.
7. Continued use of basic traditional harvesting, storage and processing technologies.
8. Poor market development with no market information systems.

Operational Constraints

The quality of staffing in the extension service is generally improving due to the production of quality technical staff by Njala University and the certificate training institutes this is not evident in the quality of extension services delivered due to poor conditions of service of extension staff and consequent lack of motivation. The table Annex 2 reports clients' comments on the services currently provided.

Extension methods

Currently in Sierra Leone the Farmer Field School (FFS) approach and various modifications are the primary approach used by MAFFS frontline extension workers and others. This approach has been supported by the FAO (which has supplied a manual on FFS to some in the extension system) and by numerous NGOs. Groups are formed and meet during the agricultural cycle once every two weeks. The extension worker attends group meetings and provides trainings which are implemented by the farmers on their farms in an on-going fashion. Overall the approach appears to be a useful method for organizing and working with farmers on new techniques, such as plant spacing and seeding density, varietal choice for seeds, application of fertilizer and other agro-chemicals, integrated pest management, and marketing. Some groups have advanced beyond simply the training and education function to groups that do business together. This development has been supported by donor-funded projects such as the USAID PAGE project and others.

Along with FFS, MAFFS and NGOs and others currently deploy numerous other extension methods and techniques. Some which were observed include:

- Use of radio through weekly radio broadcasts and call-in shows at the District level (MAFFS);
- Newspaper with agricultural information and extension-type articles for field workers and farmers;
- Demonstration plots (SLARI and others);
- Tests and investigations of alternative practices in farmers' fields (World Vision and PAGE in Kailahun);
- Out grower programs and distribution of seedlings in a commercial relation between processors and small-holder farmers (Bio United and Gold Tree - Daru and Pendembu);
- Input dealers trained to provide higher quality advice and service on use and application of fertilizer and chemicals (MAFFS and donor-funded projects);
- ICT-enhanced extension programming in the cocoa sector with radio and other media approaches (BBC Media Action in Kenema and Eastern Region); and,
- Agricultural fairs and field days (MAFFS, Njala University, NGOs and donor-funded projects).

Decentralization of extension service delivery

While the operating funds for most MAFFS activities at the District have been decentralized to the District Councils, funds for extension's operating expenses have not been decentralized. Thus, the funds for extension operating costs are supposed to come from the central MAFFS budget, but most local-level extension staff reported that such funds have not been forthcoming. To the extent that extension staffs in MAFFS receive funds, they come via the District Agricultural Officer allocating some of the Crops funds or other decentralized funds to the extension program. This situation should be remedied with a defined portion of the District Council agricultural funds being allocated directly to the extension program for the use of the BES and FEWs and the Extension Officer. Such funds would pay for transportation and maintenance, program development costs, in-service training, fuel, and other charges. Additionally, they could pay for the costs of demonstration plots and farm-level trials and tests of practices.

Additionally, while most supporters of decentralization provide local control and the possibility of improved governance as reasons for decentralization, some farmers and extension workers at regional meetings and in the field indicated that control issues and governance concerns remain.

Client empowerment

Do farmers report feeling in control of extension services in Sierra Leone? Do they have a voice in demanding and receiving the services they desire? At the current time, farmers are not very well empowered to receive the services they desire at the time they are required and in the quality that is sufficient. Farmers reported being engaged in the design of development projects and in the operation of farmer groups. Furthermore, farmers do seek out services and inputs from MAFFS at the local level and from projects funded by donors and implemented by MAFFS and NGOs. However, many farmers do not interact regularly with source of extension services (MAFFS or MAFFS and NGOs). Furthermore, some farmers with specific needs or desires outside current projects and programs receive a little support. For example, if a project in their area was supporting backyard poultry and maize production, a farmers group that wishes to work on rehabilitating an old swamp that was out of production, that support may not be forthcoming.

Developing the capacity for farmer voice in the extension system remains a work in progress where more efforts are needed. Having advisory committees at the District level and sub-District level where farmers or farmer representatives play a role in deciding extension priorities may help in building this capacity. Other methods to build client empowerment include:

- Building the capacity of major farm business organizations such as APEX organizations to directly hire extension services through a program of declining external support over time so that after a number of years the FBOs are paying the full cost of their services;
- Using programs such as coupons with FBOs to hire directly their extension services; and,
- Utilize farmer provided tickets to extension agents or use date and time and GPS stamped photos of farmer groups receiving services in a prize lottery to incentivize greater interaction with farmers.

Collaboration and networking

Collaboration and networking occur between providers of extension services in a number of ways in Sierra Leone presently. It is common for MAFFS extension staff to cooperate and be seconded to assist donor-funded projects and NGO extension programs. MAFFS staff assist donor-funded and NGO programs and coordinate with projects being implemented in their District as a matter of routine practice. Furthermore, at the District level, monthly coordination meetings for the agricultural sector occur and updates across providers can be shared at these meetings. Similarly, at the national level a monthly agricultural sector meeting for coordination occurs with MAFFS, NGO staff, and others (FAO, IFAD, and other donor-funded projects and agencies).

Areas where coordination may be lacking and needs improvement include the development of private sector seed marketing channels and private sector input distribution and sales networks. In these two areas the extent of current MAFFS involvement in these activities precludes some private sector involvement and MAFFS activities probably crowd-out private sector sales and marketing for fertilizer and other inputs. This is an area where extension policy needs better alignment and coordination.

Regulating extension service providers

At the present time there exists no system of national registration of extension service providers. Although there are few if any complaints about NGO and private sector providers, complaints were voiced about late delivery of inputs in public sector extension and difficulties in interfacing with some MAFFS programs and the time cost in obtaining organizational registration for FBOs. Some farmers complained that the efforts taken to register their groups was not commensurate to the little value of the benefits received from the MAFFS programs (small allotments of fertilizer and seed received per farmer).

At the current time, efforts such as improving the in-service trainings for front-line extension workers in MAFFS and strengthening the support these staff receive is a higher priority than developing a regulatory system for extension service providers. That being said, a code of conduct and standards should be developed with the full participation of leading NGOs involved in agricultural development and extension (such as World Vision, WHH, and CRS and others) and with farmer representatives. MAFFS staff should be subject to any regulatory standards of practice along the lines of education and continuing education and in-service training.

Technology development, packaging and learning

The development and packaging of new technologies in Sierra Leone is handled by a number of organizations. First, at the present time there exists no system of national registration of extension service providers. SLARI undertakes research on all the main crops of Sierra Leone as well as on processing and handling and other value addition steps. SLARI operates research centres at Njala (roots and tubers and food crops), Rokupr (cereal crops), Teko (livestock), and at Kenema (tree crops and forestry). Other centres are planned but not fully operational and functioning at present.

Farmers and field extension staff reports of the lack of strong linkages between the extension staff and the research program of SLARI. Some of this is to be expected simply because of the number of staff in the extension system at the local levels and the difficulty of communicating with them due to their lack of mobility, the lack of organized in-service training events where new technologies and techniques would be discussed and presented, and the lack of internet and good communications access for the extension field staff. Some field staffs have received training on new technologies and techniques through projects, events with SLARI, and collaborations with NGOs, but this linkage does not occur across the board for all extension staff. Strengthening the links between the research system and the extension staff and presence of MAFFS as well as field staff from NGOs and other projects and FBOs and CBOs is a requirement for increasing the productivity of farmers in Sierra Leone and the national extension policy should support these efforts.

Another important dimension of the research and technology link to extension services is the important role played by projects, both projects coordinated by MAFFS as well as projects coordinated and delivered by other organizations such as SLARI, INGOs and others. Projects in their design often include an outreach and dissemination component of the project. Sometimes, however, the role provided in the project for MAFFS extension is minimal or non-existent or so narrowly targeted geographically that widespread dissemination to extension field staff and then to farmers and farmers' groups does not occur. Project and research planners and designers need to build these links in the conception and design stage if widespread dissemination of technologies is to occur.

Human resource development

Human resource development for the agricultural extension system includes developing the capacity of farmers, information and leaders of CBOs and FBOs and INGO staff as well as the capacity of private sector providers of state of agricultural training programs in the country and their offerings relevant to extension services in both the technical and extension process skills and abilities. Training programs at the pre-service level set the base for requirements and practices related to the level and quality of education for extension staff candidates contributes to the stock of human capital within the extension service and its quality and ability level. In-service training and programs constitutes an important dimension of human resource development.

Information and communication technology use in agricultural knowledge information system

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) and their application in agricultural extension are somewhat limited at this time in Sierra Leone, especially when compared to countries like Ghana and Kenya. However, there are some promising aspects of ICT deployment in Sierra Leone that provide a glimpse of what else might be possible with ICT approaches. ICTs refer to print, radio, podcasts and audio files, video, television, drama, applications of technology to deliver extension messages and programs.

Presently in Sierra Leone the ICTs included weekly radio shows at the District level, print newsletters of projects that address agricultural themes, videos for farmer training such as the "Agricultural as a Business" training program based in Kenema. Doubtless, other media approaches are being employed in the agricultural extension area in Sierra Leone. However, it is clear that more could be done and more farmers reached with messages delivered in multiple ways to reinforce agricultural development messages.

In some African countries cutting edge ICT developments and deployments include:

- Cell phone based market information systems like Esoko;
- Market information systems like 'MarketMaker' which is planned for deployment in Kenya and provides a dynamic database on the internet of agricultural marketing information on both the supply and demand side;
- Use of smart phones and an agricultural call centre for subject matter specialist support of a community-based extension program (Grameen's Community Knowledge Worker approach in Uganda);
- Farmer training videos to disseminate new and improved practice information for rice farming and other crops in Uganda, Ghana, and other countries;
- Delivery of training programs for extension field staff in the Ministry via the internet supported by additional face-to-face training (eg: Catholic Relief Services and MEAS supported "5 Skill Sets" training);

Some useful steps forward in the use of ICTs in Sierra Leone at this time would include developing the capacity of MAFFS field staff and other extension field staff in the use of ICT approaches in extension. Also there is a need to develop capacity within MAFFS national office to utilize and deploy ICT-based extension messages, especially those already developed and appropriate for Sierra Leone. This effort could involve a public-private partnership with leading NGO/NGOs committed to long-term agricultural development in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, the partnership could become involved in developing a web or internet portal for the sharing of agricultural market information and research results and extension training materials (fact sheets, manuals, videos and audio files, etc.).

However, a note of caution with respect to ICTs is needed. Uses of ICTs require a significant investment into tech-savvy staff and they require ongoing investments to maintain. Many ICT approaches in extension are expensive. Furthermore, small-holders that are the primary clients of the pluralistic extension system in Sierra Leone require face-to-face training and demonstrations with capable extension agent facilitation to learn new approaches and build their own and their group's capacity. Moreover, ICTs are no replacement for the ongoing work of providing subject-matter specialist support for training and program development, in fact, ICTs require such support. ICTs are best seen as a way of improving communications and offering other methods for delivering lessons and extension messages. Extension policy makers should probably think of ICTs like web-based extension information portals as complements to existing and ongoing programs and not as a substitute for programs delivered in the field.

Extension facilitating factors - enabling environment

Factors outside of the control of actors in the pluralistic extension system such as agricultural prices, agricultural input and output markets, levels of risk, the overall business climate, the courts and enforcement of contracts, the macroeconomic variables such as the exchange rate, the inflation rate, the interest rate and availability of credit, and institutions such as property rights and access to land altogether constitute enabling environment for agricultural development in a country. The enabling environment plays a large role in whether or not farmers have the incentive to adopt new technologies and to invest in agricultural production. Therefore, a well-structured extension system and a set of extension programs that display "best fit" properties is not sufficient to guarantee success and positive impact. In a similar vein, if the overall enabling environment for agricultural development is favourable, with well-defined property rights and well-functioning legal and financial institutions, along with sound macroeconomic policies and favourable macroeconomic variables, then it is much easier for the extension system to induce technological change and increased incomes for farmers.

The state of market integration and marketing of both inputs and agricultural outputs still requires development in Sierra Leone. Many producers complain of lacking good price information for use in their marketing decisions, and many remain dependent upon traders who call on their villages to buy produce near their farms. Variations in product quality and the lack of producer knowledge of standards and grades impacts agricultural marketing in Sierra Leone. With respect to inputs, the private sector's role in the financing, delivery and marketing of critical inputs such as fertilizer is not well developed. Government still plays a key role in the financing, importation, distribution and marketing of fertilizer in Sierra Leone according to our interviews with farmers and extension staff. This is likely a sub-optimum or negative use of scarce public funds and management resources, when in many other African countries the private market plays a much larger role in fertilizer distribution and marketing and financing. Observers concerned with the very low level of fertilizer use by small holders in Sierra Leone should keep in mind that having a private sector role with competition in the financing, sales, distribution and marketing of fertilizer does not preclude subsidies should the Government of Sierra Leone decide producer subsidies for fertilizer are warranted. However the most efficient means of financing and marketing fertilizer does involve direct government role in the control, importation, and marketing of fertilizer or related inputs. Moving government out of the direct involvement of managing and financing fertilizer marketing would free up extension staff resources and MAFFS staff and management for more critical public goods type activities in agricultural extension.

Best fit practices in financing extension services observed worldwide range from an overwhelmingly public sector financed and delivered system with a strong national government control of the system, such as observed in Vietnam, to a mix of public and private funds and donor funds, such as found in many Sub-Saharan African countries at the present time. Additionally, there are countries with virtually no agricultural extension system and there exist countries at nearly all points along the spectrum from highly centralized finance and delivery to highly pluralistic systems in terms of organizations and finance.

Another case arises where government seeks to get out of the business of having a staff intensive program like agricultural extension on its books. In this case government often seeks a means of off-loading the burden of funding extension services and decreasing its fiscal commitment to agricultural extension services. In cases where farmer-based organizations (FBOs) have some significant financial and organizational capacity, FBOs can play a very important role in the financing and delivery of extension services. For example, in Ghana in the cocoa sector, the cocoa growers have a dedicated extension service which is funded through marketing margins and public funds. In Columbia, the coffee grower's federation delivers extension services to over 500,000 coffee farmers and its program assists these farming communities with accessing road improvements and services like public schools and health care. When FBOs have a strong organizational capacity they can deliver directly to their members a program of highly accountable services. However, where capacity is weak, the service delivery may not materialize or be strong enough to provide benefits.

The current system of financing extension services in Sierra Leone involves a mix of several streams of funds. First, and primarily, are the public funds that are expended on wages and benefits of MAFFS extension staff and their supervisors through the national budget allocated to MAFFS. The second public sector flow of funds to extension involves devolved funds which the District level governments allocate to extension activities. These devolved funds often are channelled through the Crops Division and then to the field extension worker. It is not clear the amount of the devolved funds that actually reach the field extension level but the amount of funds received by the Frontline Extension Workers for transportation and program development, such as building and planting a demonstration plot or attending a training event or organizing and delivering a farmer exchange visit, is minimal. A third, public source of funds, involves donor-provided funds for projects and activities which donors channel to the MAFFS (or they could go through another Ministry or public agency) to provide extension services.

These projects provide much of the actual day-to-day extension work that is being delivered because the projects have sufficient resources to provide mobility and some support to the frontline extension workers and field staff.

Another stream of funding involves donor funds for extension programs delivered through NGOs. This might involve a program funded by USAID and delivered by World Vision of Sierra Leone or some other INGO or local NGO. The NGO may or may not collaborate directly with the MAFFS extension staff, but in many cases such collaboration does occur.

Private sector firms, such as Bio United (cocoa) and Gold Tree (oil palm) and others in the rice and tree crop sectors actively finance some agricultural services in Sierra Leone. Bio United and Gold Tree disseminate improved varieties of tree crop seedlings to outgrowers in their outgrower programs. While it may not be common to observe private firms in the table rice sub-sector that are providing inputs such as improved seeds and fertilizer and advice on their use to growers, this model appears to be feasible in Sierra Leone, assuming the government policy on fertilizer, seeds, and agricultural finance does not disadvantage firms from bundling inputs into their marketing arrangements with growers.

In terms of pressing issues in the financing of the extension system there is a set of critical concerns that the extension policy will need to address in order to move the financing of extension services into a more sustainable pattern. These issues include:

- An insufficient overall level of financing of field-level extension services (both for salaries and conditions of service and for programming – transport, supporting materials, demonstrations, farmer exchanges, equipment, etc.) in Sierra Leone, particularly in the public sector
- Delays in receipt of funds at the local level necessary for delivery of extension services, such as seed distribution and fertilizer and transport for trainings and demonstrations
- Low level of farmer repayment on seeds and fertilizer distributed through the public sector, and some farmer disappointment with the timing of the distribution of these inputs
- Crowd-out of private sector firms in the marketing and supply of fertilizer and other seasonal agricultural inputs because of public sector actions

While there are issues of concerns in the financing of agricultural extension services in Sierra Leone, promising examples exist of different financing approaches that serve to improve the quality and quantity of extension services delivered. These "best fit" approaches in financing include a wide set of practices. For example, the sharing and seconding of extension field staff from MAFFS to NGO projects and donor-funded projects utilizes relatively scarce staff resources. Another promising practice, is the use of pay-back schemes upon harvest for seed rice and fertilizer, such as practiced by some NGOs, community-level seed banks, and donor-funded projects (for example the Chinese-funded South-South cooperation in Bo). Further, the outgrower extension model of some firms in the tree crop sector holds promise as a means of mobilizing private sector finance to support farmer investment in new, more productive, trees.

Overall, the survey of financing approaches internationally and the examination of financing conditions in Sierra Leone for agricultural extension reveal elements that should be a part of the national extension policy regarding the sustainable financing of services. The policy should help direct scarce public financial resources for extension into most important areas which cannot be addressed by private sector firms and extension providers. The policy ought to encourage and support the mobilization of finance from private sector firms that are responding to the overall government policy of increased commercialization of the agricultural sector. Examples, of the agricultural services which ought to be the domain of the private sector include the distribution system for seed rice and fertilizer and other consumable agricultural inputs and other services, such as tractor services and machine repair services. The public sector finance and resources should best be focused on the delivery of agricultural extension services which will not be done by private sector firms and firms such as training farmers on techniques and new technologies, organizing and strengthening farmer groups and farmer-based organizations, linking farmers and groups to research, market opportunities, agricultural inputs and finance, coordinating other MAFFS services such as plant disease prevention and animal health services, and teaching and delivering programs on natural resource management.

Crosscutting issues in agricultural extension service delivery

Cross-cutting issues involving gender, natural resources and the environment, farmer health, nutrition, literacy and numeracy, governance and community-decision making, youth, and information and communications technologies all deserve attention at the level of the extension system. Cross-cutting issues place implications on the delivery of extension programs, for example, with the issue of youth in agriculture requiring that extension programs and farmer-based organizations have clear methods to address the needs of youth in rural communities. Some cross-cutting issues like health and HIV/AIDS may require partnering with other organizations such as the Ministry of Health or NGOs to obtain and deliver health training for front-line extension workers and staff. Then NGO staff can come to farmer group meetings to deliver health messages or provide videos in an appropriate language for the extension worker to present and discuss.

Gender issues cut across extension programming and services in a number of ways. First, a significant percentage of farmers in Sierra Leone are women and they face some unique challenges in their agricultural activities. Many women farmers are looking for small-scale agricultural activities that bring in some earnings and some food into the household and that can be done along with the other responsibilities they manage in care-giving and household activities. Often this means they are not the lead on commercial crops such as cocoa or oil palm, though they may provide valuable labor resources to those cropping activities. Extension programs need to be sure to target the crops and activities that women focus on so activities like high value vegetables and fruit production, small

ruminants and poultry (including backyard poultry and layers for egg production). Also, women often face difficulties in agricultural groups if their levels of education are lower than the males. Having a significant voice and making sure the control systems within any group business activities are transparent is important for the long-term functioning of groups for women farmers. A related point is that women farmers have a stronger preference for group agricultural activities than men.

While it may be the case that more than 50 percent of Sierra Leonean farmers are women, only a small percentage of agricultural extension staff (whether MAFFS or NGO or other) are women. Attracting talented women into agricultural training programs that lead into extension or other agricultural careers is difficult in Sierra Leone as in many other similar countries. The strongest women students may prefer careers in health or business which have the potential to pay more and offer better conditions and the likelihood of a better work/life balance. However, increasing the numbers and ratio of extension workers who are women will help improve the services' outreach to women farmers. Additionally, all extensionists can receive training on issues of gender equality in agriculture and how to improve women's access to services in extension programs. (Ref. MEAS training program on gender in extension)

Environment and natural resource management issues cut across many extension programs. The issues range from safe handling of agricultural chemicals such as pesticides to common property management of watersheds and watercourses and forested lands. Management issues include the topic of burning and preservation and recycling of biomass through conservation agriculture techniques. Additionally, soil health increasingly requires attention whether a program focuses on rice, vegetables, or tree crops. Significant synergies exist between animal programming and soil health too. Land management issues, including security of land use arrangements, can be important natural resource management questions that cut across program areas.

Topics like nutrition and health can both complement programming aimed at higher value crops and activities, such as poultry and small ruminants or high value fruits and vegetables. Extension lessons and programming like nutrition education and teaching on food storage and processing techniques can increase household availability and intake of important sources of micronutrients and nutrient dense foods. Additionally, health topics, such as domestic violence and HIV/AIDS, can be addressed within extension education platforms. For example, farmer field schools can receive guest teachers on HIV/AIDS or lessons from the group facilitator who has received training on the topic as well as appropriate supporting materials.

Gender issues, particularly in contexts where gender-based differentials in access to productive inputs and financing and labor exist, pose another important cross-cutting concern for extension programs. Extension programs need to recognize gender-based patterns of agricultural production and make sure that extension programs provide services relevant to the predominant activities of women farmers. Such activities in many circumstances include backyard and small-scale poultry production, vegetable production, upland rice, cassava and other root and tuber crops, processing and storage. Additionally, in some contexts, the social norms on the acceptability of a woman receiving training or advisory services from a man not from her family may restrict access to some extension services. While this was not reported in Sierra Leone, if this concern appears in a community, in some cases older women farmers might serve as peer-trainers for other women. Women farmers in Sierra Leone also face challenges in accessing the necessary farm labor for tilling and swamp development, in part due to a rise in off-farm employment for young males in sectors such as mining. A useful practice for an extension system is to undertake a gender-review and assessment from time to time to have an outside team look at the current program and assess its effectiveness in promoting gender equality in agricultural services.

Other important cross-cutting issues include literacy and numeracy since they affect a farmer's ability to absorb information from a variety of sources and to understand written instructions. Numeracy is also an important dimension of farm business in tracking production, calculating budgets and costs, as well as marketing and comparison shopping for inputs and services. Environmental concerns cut across program areas since all agricultural activities are rooted in the soil and water and broader ecological system. An awareness of environmental concerns from soil health to proper handling of farm chemicals can support extension programming across a broad spectrum of crops and other activities. Additional cross-cutting issues might include sensitivity to youth issues in agriculture as well as governance and management.

ANNEX 2

The pluralistic agricultural extension system in Sierra Leone

<i>Item</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Description of Service Provided</i>
1	Public agricultural extension service providers Eg: MAFFS	Conventional public funded agricultural and other rural development extension service providers
2	Public research-cum-extension organizations Eg: SLARI	Public agricultural research establishments directly or indirectly involved in agricultural extension as a result of their mandates
3	Donor-supported agricultural and rural development programs Eg: IFAD -SCP	Donor initiated and supported rural development programs which are usually well-defined vehicles of agricultural extension and other rural development information such as IFAD- SCP.
4	International and private research centres Eg: FARA-NERICA, AR4D	Institutions that are directly or indirectly involved in agricultural extension work usually for a wider adoption of developed technologies and the transformation and evolution of research and extension approaches.
5	Farmers' associations and Cooperatives Eg: NAFFSL	Farmers' associations which apart from being primary beneficiaries also participate in policy formulation through advocacy.
6	NGOs and bilateral donors Eg: World Vision, CRS, Action Aid GIZ and USAID	Both local and international NGOs represent some of the most prominent effective actors in rural development due to their being relatively better resourced for their programs.
7	Private input suppliers Eg: SMP, Genesis Farm	Private input suppliers' involvement in agricultural extension is a marketing strategy to increase farmers' awareness of their products and increase their market share.
8	Commodity processors, procurers and exporters WFP - P4P ABCs	Downstream value chain actors providing information technical production aspects to farmers producing on contract basis on their behalf.

ANNEX 3

Performance Matrix of the Extension Division in the Delivery of Essential Extension Services

Item	Extension Service Provided	Farmers Comments on Service Provision	Policy Prescriptions
1	Training	Training offered by Division staff is very limited. FFS training is too temporary and comes to an end with each project that employs the methodology. It is a useful method but should be continuous	District Agricultural Extension Demonstration Centres DAEDC should be established in each District and serve as training school for new agronomic technologies, varieties of the most important crops/livestocks in each District
2	Dissemination of information	MAFFS has still not designed and launched an effective means for the timely dissemination of information to farmers. Farmers believe that regular local FM radio broadcast would be effective	FM radio networks are available in almost all Districts. These should be used for farm broadcast programs regularly every week in the local vernacular. Where they do not exist, the DAEDC should set up and operate one.
3	Supply of inputs	MAFFS does not consult farmers about procurement although farmers have reliable suppliers of products supplied, especially seeds. Input supplies are almost always late and of poor quality.	The ABCs and Certified Agro dealers should be capitalized by the District Councils through Council guaranteed bank loans to stock essential inputs. An Apex Agro Dealership Company should be established, by the District Councils to serve as suppliers to the district Agro dealers, ABCs and Coops
4	Responding to emergencies	Crop protection and pest control officers do not come around often enough to detect outbreaks in time. Response to reports of outbreak events is often too late to save crops.	Frontline Extension workers must be resident in each Ward of every district and must be provided with accommodation, a bicycle and mobile phone with charging set. They will attend to all reports of disease outbreaks and other concerns and call for specialist assistance. Block Extension supervisors must each have a motorbike and fuel for official work on a daily basis.
5	Routine monitoring of sector operations	MAFFS District Extension staffs do not maintain routine monitoring visits to farmers. Farmers understand that they often lack means of transport and are poorly rewarded for undertaking such visits.	Each block must have a mobile M&E staff who should visit each ward at least once a month and submit monthly M&E report to the DAO
6	Access to market	The vegetable farmers of Koinadugu have had marketing issues for over 20 years. They have acquired a cold room but not a reefer truck to complete the cold chain from farm to market.	Each District must have an Agricultural Credit and Marketing Officer. His duties would include; identifying markets for the major products of the District and broadcasting weekly market information to farmers for traded commodities
7	Access to credit	Farmers need access to production and marketing loans not just microfinance.	Each District must have a District Agricultural Credit and Marketing Officer. His duties would include; identifying sources of financing available for farmers, assisting with the development of farm records, business plans and investment proposals.
8	Mechanical cultivation services	This is a service women farmers crave for to minimize their dependency on unsympathetic male workers	Each District must have a qualified District Agricultural Engineer, with a minimum of a B.Sc. in Agricultural Engineering. He must be trained in surveying and land a water resource development
9	Inland Valley Swamp development services	Farmers estimate that well developed swamps yield 45 bushels for every bushel of lowland Nerica rice planted. The same variety on poorly developed swamps yields only 35 bushels.	Each District must have a qualified District Agricultural Engineer, with a minimum of a B.Sc. in Agricultural Engineering. He must be trained in surveying and land a water resource development