

Concept Note 1

Provision of inputs to Farmerbased organisations

A. Strategic context of the project

The Government of Sierra Leone launched its second Poverty Reduction Strategy paper for 2008-2012 (PRSP II) the “Agenda for Change,” with a focus on four key priorities: energy; transportation; agriculture; and human development. Following the commencement or completion of several large road and energy infrastructure projects, agriculture has been identified as the President’s top priority. This has been reflected in steadily increasing public investment in the sector, with a budget allocation at 9.9 percent in 2010 and expected to increase to 10 percent in the near future. In September 2009, the Government launched NSADP, the Country Compact under the CAADP. The vision of the NSADP is to make agriculture the engine for socioeconomic growth and development through commercial agriculture. More specifically, its aim is to provide short, medium and long term Investment Programmes to increase commercialisation of the sector and promote “farming as a business.” The Smallholder Commercialisation Programme (SCP) is identified as the priority to delivery this goal.

9. In addition to the CAADP and NSADP, the Government has in place a number of other policies to support the agriculture sector. The Decentralisation Policy has been revised and the Local Government Act (2004) approved into law, to accelerate the transfer of power to local communities and chiefdoms, and enhance service delivery to small farmers through an ongoing process of devolution of technical and financial resources. With a view to supporting small farmers to make the transition toward commercialisation, the Government’s Private Sector Development Strategy has been put in place, focusing on (i) improving access to finance; (ii) improving the legal and regulatory framework; (iii) promoting and supporting entrepreneurship; (iv) making markets work better; and (v) improving physical infrastructure. Agriculture is also one of the key target growth sectors in the National Export Strategy (2010-2015), including through the mobilisation of Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SLIPA). The Government has also made significant efforts to support its young population through establishing a number of initiatives to promote employment, such as the Youth Agricultural Farm Scheme.

10. Over the last decade, donor activity has been making a transition from post-conflict and emergency relief to longer-term development. After the war, donors and NGOs were primarily focused on resettlement and rehabilitation of farming land and rural communities, using project-based approaches. More recently donors shifted to more programmatic designs, and refocused activities towards building rural infrastructure including feeder roads.

B. Justification

14. While production increased dramatically after the war, the sector continues to be driven by subsistence farming rather than commercial agriculture. Crop yields remain low at: 0.72 and 1.23 metric tons for upland and lowland rice respectively; 2.2mt/ha for maize; 5.5mt/ha for cassava; 6mt/ha for sweet potatoes; 1.8mt/ha for groundnuts; 100-200kg/ha for cocoa; and 4t/ha for oil palm. The supply of and demand for better and improved technologies is limited. Physical infrastructure for the research system was dilapidated even before the war and requires rehabilitation.

16. There are multiple constraints commercialising smallholder production. Higher levels of agricultural technology are not affordable due to low economic returns from commodities. There are a lack of rice milling facilities, feed mills and mechanics to ensure that farmers can benefit from sales of their final products and use of mechanized technologies. Fertilizer use at 4kg/ha compared to 9kg/ha for sub-Saharan Africa is low due to high prices and lack of commercial markets for fertilizable commodities such as rice. With some exceptions, these farmers produce low value commodities which have experienced declining real prices over the past decades and increasing competition from medium to large-scale producers. As such, the majority of smallholder families are trapped in a low-intensified production cycle, whereby many farmers produce the same commodities, using traditional, low input/output systems and invest little to gain greater productivity levels and profits.

In spite of these difficulties there is a real potential for more intensified agricultural production, greater value addition and marketing – through domestic and international outlet. Only 10 percent of cultivable land is cropped each year, amounting to around 600,000 hectares. With around 5 percent of smallholder farmers using fertiliser, herbicides and pesticides and mechanised machinery, any increase from this low base will lead to higher production figures. Furthermore, post-harvest losses are estimated to stand at around 40 percent. Reducing these losses would generate considerable additional income for farmers and also increase food security.

C. Potential intervention zones and target groups

Potential intervention areas include major rice growing areas in Sierra Leone

Target groups will be FBOs.

D. Main Objectives of the Project

Global objective: To improve the ability of smallholders to intensify rice productivity and production through input support inclusive of seed and agro-chemicals.

Specific Objectives:

- To enhance access to planting materials and other inputs

E. Description of the Components, Outputs and Activities

Component 1: Provision of seeds to FBOs

Component 2: Provision of agro-chemicals equipment and to FBOs

Component	Output	Activity
1. Provision of seeds to FBOs	400 FBOs provided with planting materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Identify FBOs.b. Procure good quality planting materialsc. Distribute planting materials to FBOs
2. Provision of agro-chemicals and equipment to FBOs	Community members trained	<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Identify FBOs.b. Procure recommended agro-chemicals and equipmentc. Distribute agro-chemicals and equipment to FBOs

G. Implementation Strategy of the project

The implementation strategy of the project will encompass the following:

- i. Purchased seeds will be checked for percent purity and viability
- ii. Seeds, agro-chemicals and equipment will be given to FBOs on a cost-recovery basis
- iii. Seeds will be distributed based on the requirements of the target groups

H. Project Organization and Management

- MAFFS assumes overall responsibility for the project implementation
- MAFFS provides technical support to the project
- District councils will provide oversight

I. Monitoring and Evaluation

The District Agricultural Officers will produce monthly reports based on submissions of M&E officers in the District.

Local councils to carryout independent assessment and distribution of inputs

J. Risks

- Willingness of the communities to participate fully in the project
- Favourable political climate for the implementation of the project
- Timely release of funds
- Contract award and service procurement are done on time
- Staff of various institutions are well motivated to participate in the project

Project/Program	Objectively Verifiable indicators	Means of Verification	Important Assumptions/ Risks
1. Global objective:			
To improve the ability of smallholders to intensify rice productivity and production through input support inclusive of seed agro-chemicals and equipment.	Number of FBOs supplied with inputs Quantity of seeds and agro-chemicals supplied to FBOs	Seed rice agro-chemicals and equipment supplied Increase in rice production output Farmer income increased	Timely availability of funds Farmers receive viable seeds Farmers utilize seed for planting Favourable climatic conditions Yield levels will increase by 30-40% under farmer condition using improved seeds and agro-chemicals
2. Specific Objective			
To enhance access to planting materials and other inputs		Progress reports	Funds are made available
3. Outputs/Results	% yield increase	Reports	-do-

Component1: Provision of seeds			
Identify FBOs. Procure good quality planting materials Distribute planting materials to FBOs		Progress reports -do- -do-	
Component 2: Provision of agro-chemicals and equipment			
Identify FBOs. Procure recommended agro-chemicals and equipment Distribute agro-chemicals and equipment to FBOs		Progress reports -do- -do-	