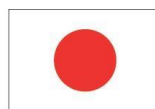




Statistics Sierra Leone
Stats SL



From
the People of Japan



Figure 1: Damaged rice fields in Karlu, Yukumu Kpukumu Krim chiefdom, Pujehun district, October 2019

FINDINGS OF SIERRA LEONE JANUARY 2020 FOOD SECURITY MONITORING

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Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



For a world without hunger

Preface

Timely provision of food security and monitoring data is critical to tracking Sierra Leone's progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger. To provide accurate food and nutrition security data, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS), Statistics Sierra Leone (Stats SL), the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and Food Security Working Group (FSWG) partners are collaborating to strengthen the Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) aspect of the national Early Warning System (EWS).

The FSMS is implemented twice per year, once in the immediate post-harvest period (January – February) and again during the height of the “lean season” (August – September) - when access to and availability of food is reduced - in order to effectively monitor food security levels in Sierra Leone, better understand their dynamics and compare the situation with other West African countries through the Cadre Harmonisé.

Overall, the findings of the 2020 FSMS show a concerning deterioration in food security in Sierra Leone compared to February 2019, with the total food insecure population increasing from 34 percent to 47.7 percent. This implies that almost half of the population of Sierra Leone (3,921,752) are not consuming a sufficiently nutritious diet to live a healthy life. The population categorised as being severely food insecure also steeply increased, from 0.7 percent reported by the February 2019 FSMS to 4.6 percent in January 2020 (382,389 people).

The deterioration in food security levels is concerning and reflects increasing vulnerability of poor households in Sierra Leone over the past two years. Likely drivers of increasing food insecurity in Sierra Leone are recurrent climatic shocks, including flooding and erratic precipitation levels during the seasonal rains, in addition to a challenging macroeconomic situation. These shocks have not only increased short-term hunger, but also compromised the resilience of poor households. Whilst food insecurity is highest in rural districts, it should be noted that the January 2020 FSMS shows a sharp increase in the number of urban residents living in food insecurity.

Successfully reducing food insecurity in Sierra Leone requires a concerted and collaborative response by food security partners to successfully tap into the country's huge potential for agricultural production. This response should strive to find innovative solutions to support Sierra Leoneans to optimally and sustainably utilize their natural resource base, whilst at the same time implementing measures to enable Sierra Leone and its farmers to effectively adapt to a changing climate.

We are highly appreciative to all the data collection staff from MAF, MOHS, Stats SL, WFP and FAO for their hard work and commitment to making the January 2020 FSMS a success. We are also indebted to the 3,066 households who provided the time and information required to compile the report. Many thanks to FAO and Welthungerhilfe for supporting implementation of the FSMS. Moving forward, this strong spirit of partnership and collaboration will lay the foundation to building a more resilient Sierra Leone.



Mr Dennis K Vandi
Hon. Minister of Agriculture & Forestry



Dr. Housainou Taal
WFP Rep. & Country Director



Mrs. Nyabenyi Tito Tipo
FAO Representative

Executive Summary

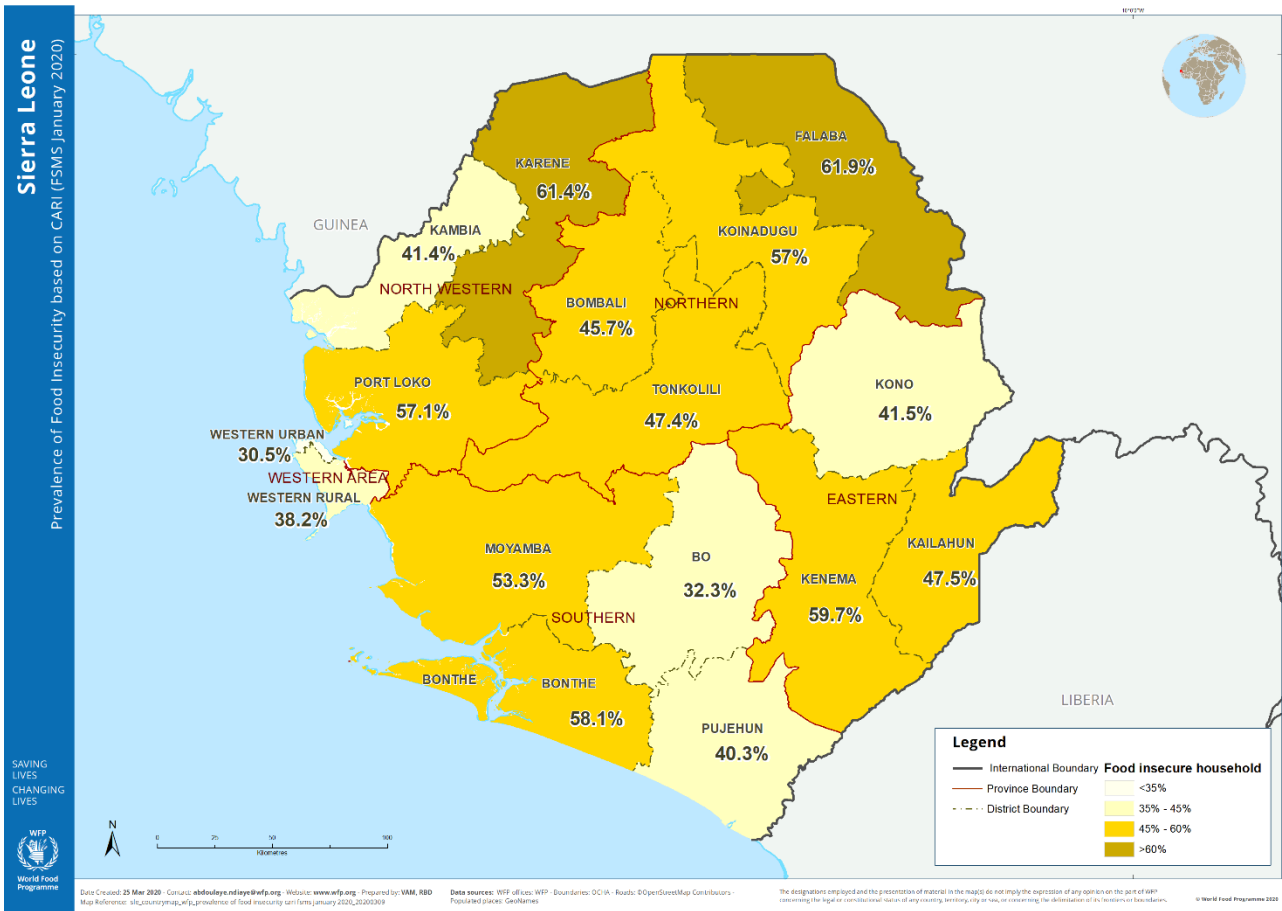
- Overall, the total food insecure population increased from 34 percent in February 2019 to 47.7 percent in January 2020. This implies that almost half of the population of Sierra Leone (3,921,752)¹ are not consuming a sufficiently nutritious diet to live a healthy life.
- Severely food insecure population increased from 0.7 percent in February 2019 to 4.6 percent (382,389 people) in January 2020.
- Among the districts, Falaba recorded the highest proportion of food insecure households (61.9 percent), followed by Karene (61.2 percent), Kenema district (59.8 percent), Bonthe (58.1 percent) and Koinadugu districts (57.0 percent).
- In absolute terms, food insecurity increased markedly in Western Area Urban (Freetown), from 4.6 percent to 30.5 percent.
- The highest proportions of households living in severe food insecurity were found in Moyamba (13.8 percent), Falaba (10.8 percent), Kenema (10.5 percent) and Pujehun (10.2 percent) districts.
- Market price data for 2019 shows significant increases in the price of imported and local rice (both 33 percent), cassava (52 percent) and *bonga* fish (67 percent).
- The proportion of households categorised as having poor Food Consumption Score (FCS) increased four-fold from 6.8 percent in February 2019 to 24.8 percent in January 2020.
- Households are resorting to more extreme livelihood coping strategies to survive, with the proportion of households adopting “emergency” measures doubling from 6.9 percent in February 2019 to 13.7 percent in January 2020.
- The proportion of households spending over 65 percent of their household expenditure on food increased from 52.7 percent in February 2019 to 58.5 percent in January 2020.

Recommendations

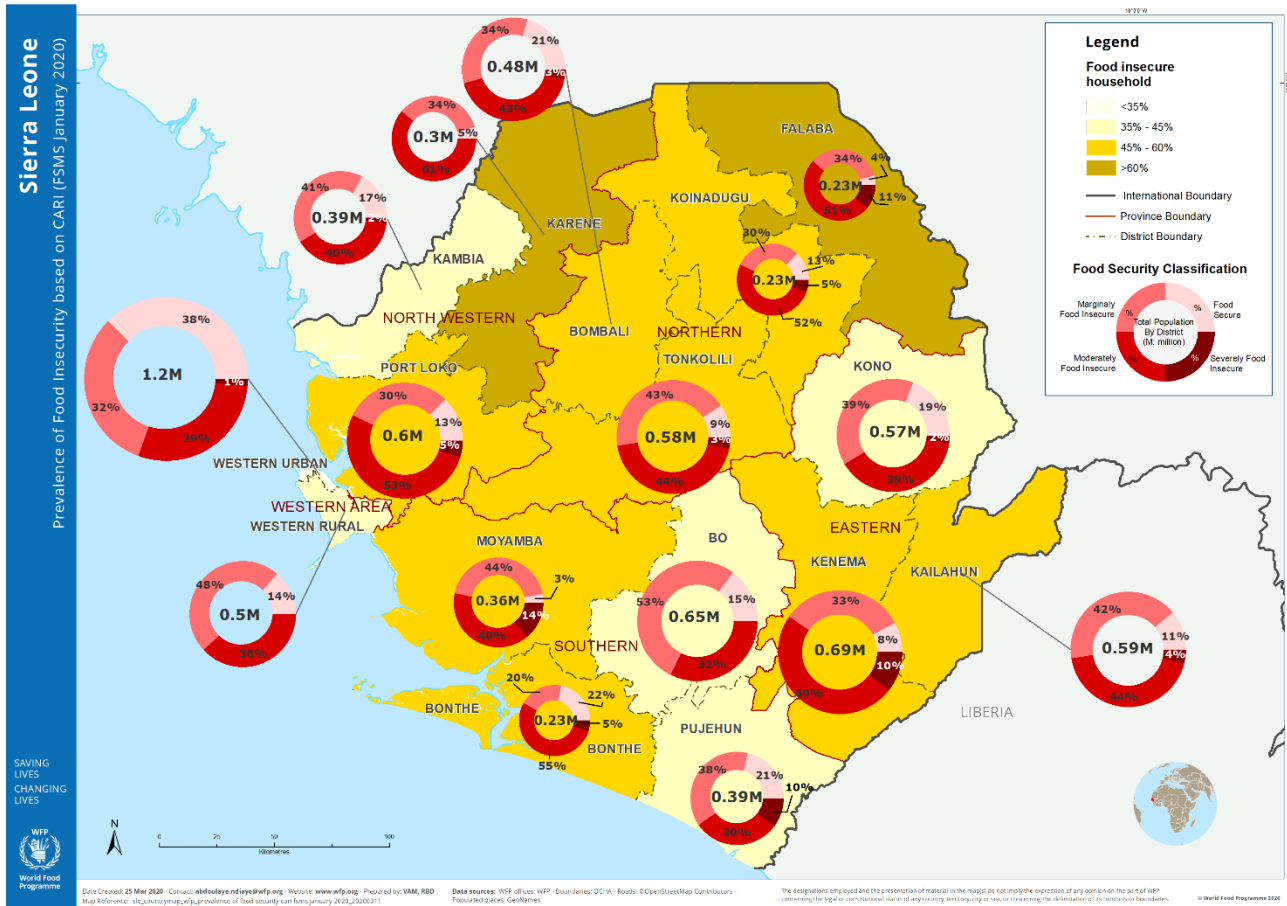
1. Food assistance in the form of a Cash Based Transfer [CBT] to severely food insecure households in urban areas to enhance short-term food security and prevent adoption of increasingly risky coping strategies.
2. Support vulnerable, rural, farming communities, prioritizing the participation of severely food insecure households, to develop productive agricultural assets.
3. Support severely food insecure households in most affected districts with agricultural and livelihood start-up kits and conditional cash-based transfers.
4. Provide targeted unconditional in-kind food assistance to severely food insecure households in affected districts from May to reduce short-term hunger.
5. Continue to support smallholder farmers to increase their yields through timely provision of improved seeds, agricultural inputs and training in improved practices.
6. Reduce post-harvest losses and increase efficiency by building farmer capacities and capabilities in post-harvest management.
7. Scale-up stunting prevention initiatives focusing on rolling out Social, Behavioural Change Communication activities on optimal dietary practices and support farmers with inputs.
8. Build the sustainability of the artisanal fishing sector by supporting fishermen and women with cold storage capabilities to reduce need to smoke fish.
9. Strengthen existing Early Warning Systems, including national meteorological forecasting capabilities, and support timely dissemination of weather information to smallholder farmers.

¹ 2015 Sierra Leone Housing and Population Census, *projected population*

1. Food security by district, January 2020 FSMS



2. Consolidated Approach to Reporting Indicators of Food Security, by district January 2020 FSMS



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3. Overview of food security situation in Sierra Leone, January 2020 FSMS

Methodology and objectives

In January 2020, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), Statistics Sierra Leone (Stat-SL), the Food and Nutrition Directorate (FND) of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS), the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), Welthungerhilfe (WHH) and other members of the Sierra Leone Food Security Working Group (FSWG) undertook a Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) exercise. MAF, Stats-SL and WFP coordinated and supervised data collection, cleaning and undertook joint verification and analysis. FAO, WHH and WFP provided financial resources to undertake the January 2020 FSMS. It should be noted that as the February 2019 FSMS used the 2004 Stats-SL sampling frame – i.e. before de-amalgamation of 14 districts to 16 districts in 2017, district level data for Falaba and Karene could not be disaggregated. For January 2020 FSMS, the 2015 Stats-SL sample frame was used, thus district-level data is provided for all 16 districts.

The purpose of the January 2020 FSMS was to measure and understand the dynamics of food security in Sierra Leone during the post-harvest period. The FSMS is undertaken twice per year – once in the post-harvest period and again during the lean season – to provide empirical information on food security in Sierra Leone throughout the year and has been implemented since 2018. The FSMS collects food security data at the district-level across Sierra Leone's 16 districts. The January 2020 FSMS targeted a total of 272 enumeration areas using the 2018 sentinel sites across 16 districts using the 2015 sampling frame of Stat-SL. Out of a planned 3,240 household interviews, the FSMS interviewed 3,066 households, representing a 95 percent response rate. Data was digitally collected between 25 January – 5 February 2020 by a team of 120 enumerators and supervisors from MAF, Stat SL, FND, FAO and WFP staff using the Open Data Kit (ODK) platform. After downloading, cleaning and analysing, data was presented to a team of statisticians from MAF, Stats SL, FND, FAO and WFP on 25th February 2020 for validation.

National level trends

Overall, the January 2020 FSMS shows a deterioration of the food security situation when compared to the February 2019 FSMS, also collected during the post-harvest period and thus comparable. Nationally, the total food insecure population increased from 34 percent in February 2019 to 47.7 percent in January 2020, a significant increase and of high concern considering that access to and availability of food should be highest during the post-harvest period. This implies that almost half of the population of Sierra Leone (3,921,752 people)² are not consuming a sufficiently nutritious diet to live a healthy life. The January 2020 FSMS showed that 4.6 percent (382,309 people) of Sierra Leoneans are severely food insecure, the same as recorded by the August 2019 FSMS (lean season) and a significant increase from 0.7 percent reported by last FSMS undertaken in the post-harvest period in February 2019.

Potential drivers of food insecurity: climate and macroeconomic shocks

The significant deterioration of national food security during 2020 post-harvest period likely reflects the impact of erratic rainfall patterns observed in both 2018 and 2019 on agricultural production, in addition to a challenging macroeconomic situation and a trend of recurrent economic and environmental shocks that have exacerbated hardship among already vulnerable households. Rapid assessment reports on the impact of late onset of the rainy season and lower than average precipitation levels undertaken by MAF with support from WFP and other FSWG partners indicated that erratic rainfall – defined as late, unevenly distributed and flooding - had had a profound impact on already very low productivity levels, contributing toward poor germination of seeds, die off of seedlings and waterlogging of fields and crops, etc., further reducing yields, reducing food availability and depleting household food stocks.³ It should also be noted that widespread seasonal flooding events in August 2017 and August 2019 combined with long-term socio-economic impacts of the 2014-15 Ebola Virus Disease outbreak may have also contributed toward increasing food insecurity.

² 2015 Sierra Leone Housing and Population Census, *projected population*

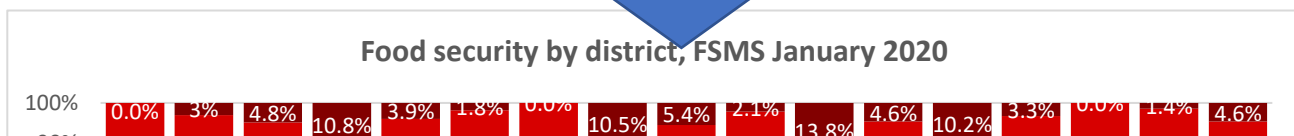
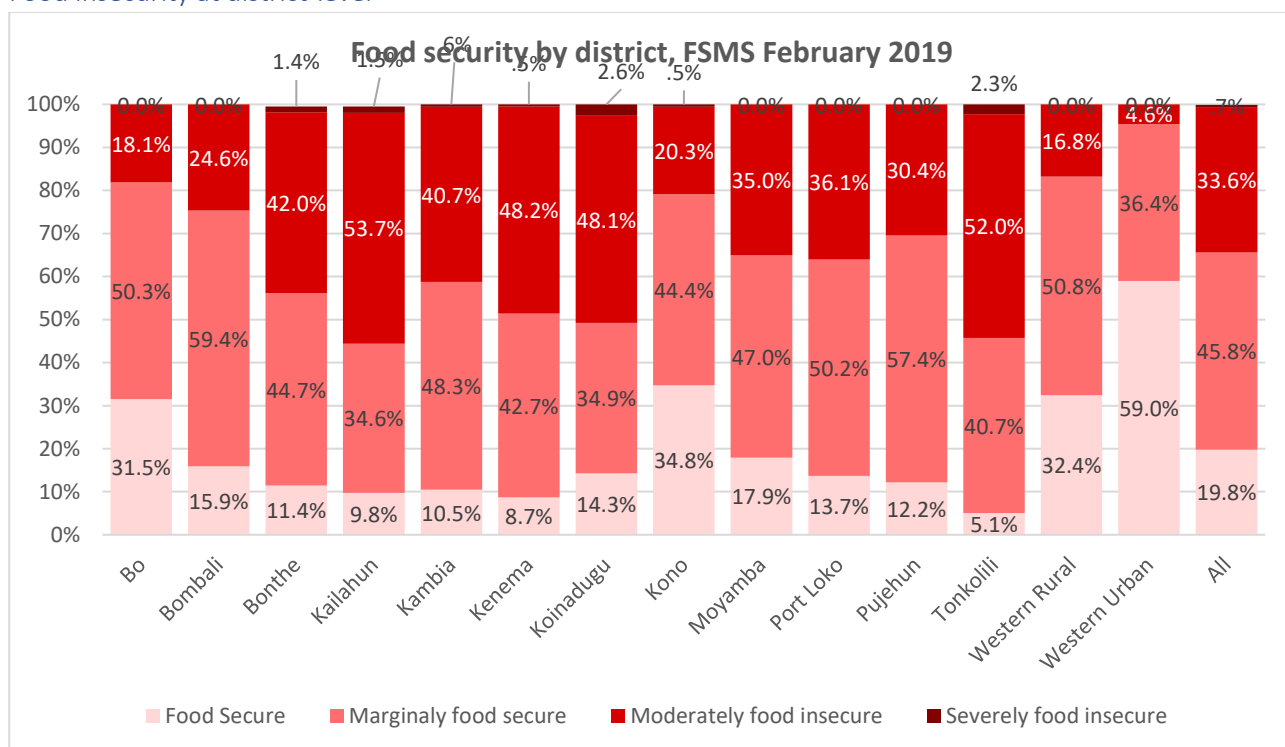
³ June 2018, MAF, FAO and WFP, *Rapid Assessment of the Impact of Erratic Rainfall on Agricultural Production in Sierra Leone* and October 2019, Government of Sierra Leone, FAO and WFP *Crop Damage Assessment*

Furthermore, climatic variations have been compounded by a challenging macroeconomic situation characterised by high inflation, increasing food prices and reducing income generating opportunities for Sierra Leoneans, negatively impacting all Sierra Leoneans but disproportionately being borne by urban dwellers who rely on wage labour opportunities and market purchases to meet their food needs.

Households increasingly implementing negative coping strategies

Considering extreme poverty pervasive across Sierra Leone characterised by very low household incomes and extremely high proportion of available expenditure dedicated to buying food, recurrent climate and economic shocks have contributed toward vulnerable households having to adopt a range of negative coping strategies, including increasing “emergency” and “crisis” types of coping strategies that entail the distress sale of productive livelihood assets. This trend had a disastrous impact on poor households, undermining long-term resilience.

Food insecurity at district-level



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