



World Food Programme

SAVING LIVES  
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## Value Chain Assessment for Home Grown School Feeding- In Brief

At present, Sierra Leone is undergoing a transition away from an import based school feeding model, to one that centres on local production, benefiting smallholder producers, most of whom are women, and engaging rural communities. This shift to a “National Home Grown School Feeding Program” aims to support a sustainable school feeding program that ensures nutritious and healthy school meals to children enrolled in schools in Sierra Leone, using, to the largest extent possible, food produced and processed by local producers, and implemented by national actors and agents. <sup>1</sup>

“Home-grown approaches, in particular, are a **mechanism for creating sustainable markets for local crop production, processing, and procurement** that can trigger rural development and increase incomes for smallholder farmers in Sierra Leone”

### CURRENT STATUS OF SCHOOL FEEDING IN SIERRA LEONE

In the 2020/21 school year, approx. **469,190** children received some level of school feeding, at an estimated cost of **58 USD/child** per year. Or, **34.2%** of children nationwide across **32.8%** of schools.

Currently, WFP provides food to **237,000** primary school children in **918** schools within **5** districts; Kambia, Pujehun, Bonthe, Karene and Kenema.

WFPs support in the introduction of an Home-Grown School Feeding Programme (HGSFP) is to pilot one model in 15 schools in the Kambia and Pujehun districts.

<sup>01</sup> GoSL, 2021, National School Feeding Policy, September, pp. 22-23, available at: [https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/National-School-Feeding-Policy\\_May2021.pdf](https://mbsse.gov.sl/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/National-School-Feeding-Policy_May2021.pdf)

# VALUE CHAIN ASSESSMENT

The Home Grown School Feeding Program (HGSFP) highlights the importance of sustainable structures and integrated stakeholder engagement. As set out in the Government of Sierra Leone's (GoSL) first National School Feeding Policy, the long term objectives of an integrated approach will be to provide locally produced and processed nutritious school meals in primary schools, contributing to the improvement of children's nutritional status.<sup>2</sup>

Investing in a cost-effective home-grown school feeding programme will improve the nutritional status, health, and cognitive development of children; facilitate access to school, increase enrolment and attendance rates, improve education performance; as well as creating a structured market for smallholders, stimulating agricultural productivity, and enhancing present and future economic growth opportunities. Given the multiple benefits of HGSFP, similar programmes have been implemented in many countries across the globe.

## The Value Chain Assessment

In its capacity as a key school feeding implementing partner, WFP commissioned an agricultural value chain assessment, between December 2020 and March 2021, to determine how best to support Sierra Leone's successful transition to HGSFP.

The assessment examined and qualified a range of locally available commodities, namely; rice, cassava, orange flesh sweet potatoes (OFSP), pigeon peas, cowpeas, broad beans, groundnuts, dried fish, palm oil, sesame, and micronutrient rich vegetables and fruits, based on their potential to contribute to the nutrition status of school age children and the economic wellbeing of smallholder farmers and rural communities.

To conduct this assessment, WFP used secondary data and engaged with relevant agricultural and education stakeholders as well as gathered qualitative data from key district level informants and focus group discussions.

The assessment's findings form the basis of priority interventions and recommendations that can guide WFP and other partners as they bolster the government of Sierra Leone in transitioning to a Home Grown School Feeding Program.

The HGSFP value chain assessment was conducted with the active participation of those wider stakeholders who have been involved in the production and value addition process. During the assessment, WFP simultaneously scrutinized the capacity of local producers and identified the strengths, limitations, and barriers that potential partners face. Further evaluation is required to build the capacity of local stakeholders/actors and integrate with the HGSFP.

### KEY FINDINGS BY COMMODITY:

**Rice:** Due to its low and variable rice yields Sierra Leone is a net importer of rice. Large post-harvest losses, in large part due to the perpetuation of traditional methods, combined with limited access to reliable markets mean local rice prices are likely to remain higher than international prices.

As such, sourcing sufficient quantities of local rice for the HGSFP carries notable cost implications. **The assessment identified there are immediate opportunities for smallholder rice producers to participate in HGSFP where FBOs, ABCs, and cooperatives are organized, storage and processing issues are resolved, and producers aggregate collectively to supply foods directly to schools.**

**Cassava:** As the second major staple after rice in Sierra Leone, the products of the drought-resistant cassava are a promising incorporation into a range of HGSFP meals. Cassava is a main income source for many farmers — men and women— across the country, yet **a lack of appropriate machinery and tools needed for processing presents the biggest strain on the cassava value chain. Thus, an opportunity exists to greatly increase the processing capacity of FBOs and ABCs through appropriate equipment.**

**Orange Flesh Sweet Potato (OFSP):** Nutrient and vitamin rich, the OFSP can be grown three times a year in all agroecological zones of Sierra Leone. Regardless of the high nutrition value of OFSP, the assessment observed that the OFSP value chain is limited by market demand. **As such, presenting an excellent opportunity for HGSFP to create additional market demand through the inclusion of OFSP in HGSFP meals.**

**Legumes:** Given their high protein content — a notable alternative to animal proteins— legumes are a nutrient rich, affordable and locally available source of plant protein to be considered for HGSFP meals. Local legumes crops such as pigeon peas, cowpeas, and groundnuts, have the added benefit of higher levels of female engagement in their production. **Overcoming transportation issues and high costs associated with proper storage while enhancing processing offers would offer legumes as an excellent inclusion in HGSFP meals.**

Additionally, the existing production base of pigeon peas in part of the country presents an opportunity to introduce early interventions, in turn providing critical insights in legume value chain enhancement that can be applied to cowpeas and so forth.

**Vegetables** present a vital aspect of HGSFP meals as an important source of vitamins and minerals for young children. In Sierra Leone vegetables are cultivated in every part of the country. Mostly grown by women who interplant them with other crops in backyard gardens, and farmers alike. **The assessment identified immediate opportunities to implement a multifaceted approach that combines sourcing from local home gardens, community and school gardens, together with improvements in storage systems to enhance the shelf life of less perishable vegetables.**



**Fish:** After farming, fishing is the second largest livelihood activity in chiefdoms in close proximity to rivers and the Atlantic Ocean. Even though for most Sierra Leoneans fish is the main source of their animal protein intake, both the freshwater capture and aquaculture value chains remain underdeveloped. **For the purposes of HGSFP, fish is an important inclusion given its popularity as a protein. The primary opportunities for supporting fishing value chains are those that supply artisanal smoked marine fish.**

**Palm Oil:** Traditional to the cooking of Sierra Leonean dishes, palm oil production can be found across the country. Commercial oil production also exists and expanding at the at the expenses of disrupting smallholders arable lands some communities express their dissatisfaction. **For these reasons, palm oil is not a recommended HGSFP crop. Rather, vitamin A fortified vegetables will be procured from the market or from women.**

## SUPPLY- SIDE INTERVENTIONS AT A GLANCE:

- **Advance commercialization of small holder rice farmers /FBOs to participate in the HGSFP** by providing enhanced drying, milling and parboiling equipment and connecting smallholder producers with value chain actors, in particular, financial actors.
- **Promote the cultivation and consumption of drought resistant rice alternatives** such as Cassava and OFSP through on farm trials, storage trials, community-based food demonstrations and nutritional Social Behaviour Change and Communication (SBCC) social marketing campaigns directly linking with schools.
- **Promote an uptake in the cultivation of Kabala variety pigeon pea** through the adoption of agroecological practices, provision of effective storage methods, enhanced marketing by FBOs to schools, and food/recipe demonstrations.
- **Increase micronutrient intake and support women's farmer groups** by introducing vegetable seed nurseries, vegetable aggregation hubs, school gardens, complementing with the capacity building and SBCC interventions.
- **Support artisanal fisher livelihoods** by promoting legal and sustainable fishing, fish preservation programs, fuel efficient cooking methods/ovens.
- **Boost micronutrient intake** and support women's growing groups by introducing vegetable seed nurseries, vegetable

## A LOOK FORWARD:

The roll out of the HGSFP in Sierra Leone over the next years provides an opportunity to feed and educate children nationwide while supporting both sustainable agricultural and rural development.

Introducing pilot HGSF projects that capitalize on excess rice production, provide locally available nutrient dense legumes and vegetables to schools through predictable market linkages to smallholders, together with other school based integrated interventions, will significantly contribute to human capital development and stimulate the local economy.

The GoSL developed the school feeding policy and recommended a home grown approach as an investment that would connect smallholders with schools, eradicate poverty and lay the foundations for sustained growth in order to attain the Medium-Term National Development Plan goals.

The success of the programme requires strong coordination and active involvement by various local sectors and stakeholders at all stages across the HGSF value chain.

As HGSF in Sierra Leone is implemented for the first time in the 2021/2022 Academic year, the pilot project will conduct rigorous monitoring, evaluation and documentation of good practices, to eventually scale up those interventions that proved effective and successful.

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