



**REMARKS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. JULIUS MAADA  
BIO, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA  
LEONE, AT THE FORMAL HANDING OVER OF  
AGRICULTURAL MACHINERY DONATED BY THE  
GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF THE PEOPLE'S  
REPUBLIC OF CHINA -  
TEUSDAY 1 NOVEMBER 2022**

Ministers of Government,  
The Chargé d'affaires of the People's Republic of China, Li Xiaoyong (Li shiao-yon)  
Friends, distinguished ladies and gentlemen,  
Good morning.

1. Let me, from the outset, thank the Government and the friendly people of the People's Republic of China for yet this other intervention.
2. I am reminded of the Chinese proverb that "Old friends and old wine are best". As the saying continues, "everything is good when it is new, but not friends." Indeed, "real friends are like wine; the older the friendship, the better it is."
3. Our country's longstanding friendship with the People's Republic of China will continue to thrive not only because of our mutual respect for one another, but also our shared values, interests, and aspirations that have informed our mutual cooperation for over half a century. We will work to deepen that relationship because it is in our common interests and for a shared future of prosperity for our people.
4. So as another Chinese saying goes, even though "Gold is easy to get, a close friend is harder to find." As a nation, we will continue to cherish our deep relationship with the People's Republic of China. So let me once again thank President Xi Jinping and the friendly people of the People's Republic of China for yet again this very special gesture of friendship.
5. But in this instance again, as in the past, the friendly people of the People's Republic of China, have demonstrated their shared belief in our sustainable national development priorities – in this case, our drive to achieve food security and to strengthen food systems in Sierra Leone.
6. It is our belief, as a Government, that a well-fed and healthy population that is equipped with the right skills is the critical accelerator of transformative and sustainable national development. This is at the core of our human capital development priority as a nation.

7. To tackle food insecurity and the over-dependence on foreign food imports, we must put more high-yielding seeds into larger expanses of our very fertile soil. Hoes and cutlasses cannot prepare and till those large tracts of land that we need to expand agricultural cultivation.
8. It has therefore been my vision that as part of our transformation of the agriculture ecosystem, we must introduce large-scale mechanisation closer to farm sites and make them accessible and affordable for rural farmers eager to expand their small holdings and to support the private sector determined to commercialise their production scales.
9. The minister has already indicated that we have established operational machine rings managed by the private sector throughout Sierra Leone. So the idea of more mechanisation is not new to rural farmers. This, coupled with quality inputs made available through an e-voucher system, have helped communities produce more rice this year.
10. We believe that we can further expand and enhance the role of the private sector in agriculture with more government-supported and mediated policies and measures. Our focus as a Government is not only to feed more mouths and fill more stomachs at lower costs, but also to create more jobs, and create more agriculture sector wealth.
11. So at the overarching level, these machines donated through the generosity of the People's Republic of China, is a structural complement to the machine rings. The machines and tools that we are taking delivery of will be deployed in Farm Services Centres. These will be located at strategic centres that will serve farmers around rice-producing centres.
12. One Farm Service Centre will be located at Gberay Junction in Port Loko District to serve farmers around 100,000 hectares of the rice bowl of Kambia, Port Loko, Tonkolili, Falaba and Koinadugu Districts in the northern region.

13. Another will be located in Bo to serve 160,000 hectares of arable rice-producing areas of Bo, Bonthe, Pujehun, Moyamba and Tonkolili District.
14. Each Farm Service Centre will hold machines, equipment and tools as well as a training facility, mechanical workshop, and a storage and administrative block. These will be aggregation centres for seeds, agrochemicals, and fertilisers. There will also be resident experts and extension workers.
15. So the idea is for farmers to interact with experts and acquire modern farming techniques, hire machines at least cost, and acquire managerial skills. But more critical is the skills transfer component that will be available on demand to farmers. I expect that it will cover land development and preparation, planting, fertiliser and chemical application, harvesting, processing, repair and maintenance.
16. We are therefore most grateful that a nation that has acquired rice self-sufficiency associates with our progressive vision by seeding the essential infrastructure of machines.
17. Let me close once more by thanking the Government and People of the People's Republic of China. You have been a great friend and we will continue to count on you for your fraternal support as we intensify agricultural production over the coming years.
18. It is now therefore my distinct pleasure to take delivery of and formally launch these equipment and tools so donated by the friendly people of the People's Republic of China.

I thank you for your kind attention