



**SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR
JULIUS MAADA BIO, PRESIDENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF SIERRA LEONE, AT
THE WORLD FOOD DAY AND THE
LAUNCH OF THE FEED SALONE
PROGRAMME
MONDAY, 16TH OCTOBER 2023
PUJEHUN TOWN, SIERRA LEONE**

Honourable Vice President,
Madam First Lady,
Our Revered Paramount Chiefs and Tribal Leaders,
Ministers of Government,
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Heads of Missions and Delegations,
Our Hardworking Farmers,
Private Sector Representatives,
Civil Society,
NGOs,
Distinguished Guest,
Good Afternoon.

1. **HAPPY WORLD FOOD DAY.** Today, as the world highlights the importance of food security and the need to end hunger worldwide, my Government **launches the FEED SALONE Programme, our blueprint for a food-secure Sierra Leone and our pledge to end hunger in our nation.**
2. This year's World Food Day theme of "**WATER IS LIFE, WATER IS FOOD, LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND**" reminds us of the role of water productivity in ensuring that water is used in ways that support food security and nutrition for the benefit of all.
3. Agriculture is the largest water consumer in most countries, including Sierra Leone. The strategic use and management of water in agriculture is key to water and food security, particularly in fulfilling the United Nations **SDG2, which seeks to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.**

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

4. Our beautiful country is endowed with sprawling arable land surrounded by the majestic Atlantic Ocean, rivers, estuaries, streams, and coastal belts of mangrove swamps.
5. In the next five years, we aim to **harness our nation's full agriculture potential to feed ourselves, sell the food we produce to others, and improve the quality of life of our people by engaging citizens, especially the youth, in agriculture.**
6. As I launch the **FEED SALONE** Programme in Pujehun, a district blessed with a rich ecosystem to support the production of many crops, including one of the largest rice bowls in our nation, **my Government pledges to build a nation that feeds itself, contributes to the world's breadbasket, creates jobs, and conserves the environment for current and future generations.**

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

7. **FEED SALONE** is more than just a development Programme. It is a **GENERATIONAL MOVEMENT** to propel Sierra Leone into an era of **agricultural self-reliance**, where **every man, woman, and child is a witness to and a participant in a flourishing economy marked by food security, job creation, and overall economic prosperity.**
8. Our primary goal in the **FEED SALONE** Programme is **to energise local agricultural production and productivity.** We are a nation endowed with fertile land, abundant water resources and ample sunshine and rainfall.

- 9. It is time we translate this natural wealth into tangible prosperity.** The over US\$500 million worth of food items imported each year in Sierra Leone could be used to develop and modernise the agriculture sector, improving the livelihood of our people.
- 10. By increasing agricultural productivity and seeking food security and sovereignty,** my Government aims to reduce hunger and malnutrition, not just as a statistic on paper but as a visible transformation in the well-being of our children, families, and communities.
- 11. Boosting export earnings from cash crops is another strategic objective.** We aim to **achieve food self-sufficiency and export our priced cash crops to international markets.** The vision is to **grow premium quality cocoa, coffee, oil palm, and cashew on our land, add value in Sierra Leone and export to premium markets abroad.**

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

- 12.** We all feel the looming effects of climate change. As a Government, we are mindful of our duty to preserve and protect our environment for current and future generations to feed themselves.
- 13.** The **FEED SALONE** Programme will help our farmers adapt to climate change and promote measures to protect the environment even as we transform the sector.
- 14.** We recognise that **WATER IS LIFE AND WATER IS FOOD** and must be preserved. The **FEED SALONE** Programme will promote sustainable and climate-smart agriculture

and agri-business operations that minimise water consumption through innovative irrigated agriculture methods.

15. As we embark on this **FEED SALONE** journey, **we cannot be intimidated by the challenges we will encounter in our quest to achieve food security and sovereignty.**
16. As a Government, we stand ready to address the gaps and challenges to achieve lasting transformation in the agriculture sector.
17. **Sustainable agriculture transformation can only be achieved through strategic investments and partnerships.** With our resolve to increase our annual budgetary allocation to agriculture, in partnership with key stakeholders, **Sierra Leone will witness a revitalised and thriving agriculture sector with God on our side.**

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

18. **When we sow seeds in our fields under the FEED SALONE Programme, we will sow seeds of hope. Every grain we consume will tell a story of our soil, toil, and unwavering spirit as a people.** Our commitment is firm to reduce our dependence on food importation.
19. We are determined to make agriculture attractive, especially for our increasing youth population, with the potential to be a productive labour force if equipped with relevant skills and abundant employment opportunities.

20. Our Government will proactively engage our youth throughout the agriculture value chain to give them a reliable and sustainable source of livelihood.
21. I am an avid farmer. My most peaceful place these days is being at one with nature on my farms. Agriculture is a serious business for me as I will hopefully retire to my farms after leading this agriculture movement in the next five years.
22. **It is time for us all to strap up our boots and roll our sleeves to convert our fertile lands into fields of economic opportunity.** Together, we will transition from being bystanders in the global food marketplace to being competitors and contributors.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

23. The **FEED SALONE Movement** is a collective effort. We need everyone onboard for us to succeed. Please allow me to use this opportunity to address key stakeholders in the agriculture sector.
24. To **our hardworking farmers and would-be farmers**, a new dawn is here for you all in our great country. Farmers will be central to everything we do in the **FEED SALONE** Programme. Every policy and initiative within the Programme will be deliberate to cater to your needs. Your resilience fuels our journey; your well-being defines our success.
25. We will create markets for your agricultural produce. As a Government, we have created markets for foreign farmers for far too long. It is time for us to support our local farmers fully.

26. **Farmers have a premium place in my heart.** I stand before you today as President of the Republic because of the back-breaking work of my mother (of blessed memory) and her tribe of women in the fields under the scorching heat from the Sun and sometimes torrential rains to put food on our table and for our livelihood.
27. Therefore, **supporting our women in agriculture and food production, especially in rural areas, is NON-NEGOTIABLE in our FEED SALONE Programme.** Special incentives will be given to women farmers and agripreneurs, and we will create opportunities for women to improve their agricultural knowledge and capacities.
28. To **our Revered Paramount Chiefs and Tribal Heads**, you are the custodians of the land. We can only succeed with your full support to galvanise the people to proactively engage in agriculture to improve their quality of life. We will work hand in hand with you to increase agricultural productivity across our country.
29. My Government **will enact a strategic policy to ensure a high percentage of the staple food we supply to various Government Institutions**, the Military, Correctional Service Centres, the Police, the Fire Force, Schools and Hospitals **are locally produced in the Northern, North-West, Southern, and Eastern Provinces and Western Area.**

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

30. **Private Sector involvement** is important to complement the Government and donor-funded agriculture agenda.

I call upon the Private Sector in Sierra Leone and overseas to support us in this agriculture odyssey.

- 31. The Private Sector is not just the engine of growth of our economy but the “midwife” of our agriculture vision.**
- 32.** As a Government, we commit to address challenges such as governance, adequate regulation and appropriate risk management in the agriculture sector.
- 33.** Together with the Private Sector, every investment will be a seed sown in the soil of Sierra Leone, germinating jobs, creating wealth, and promoting the well-being of our people.
- 34.** On this momentous occasion, I implore Private Sector players that import food to Sierra Leone, especially those in the rice, onions, chicken and eggs business, to gradually devise plans to replace these imports with local production. My Government stands ready to support you to do this. With your participation in local production, we will succeed.
- 35.** Through the Ministry of Finance, we will set up schemes to de-risk your investment and provide other incentives to make it even more profitable for you to produce locally and lay the foundation for transforming you into exporters from Sierra Leone.
- 36. To our committed Development Partners,** we need you on our journey to agriculture productivity and food security. **With your strong partnership and a clear vision and commitment to increase Government spending to**

support the **FEED SALONE** Programme, we will meet our collective aspirations.

37. We are counting on our **Scientists And Researchers** to leverage existing research and technology and discover fit-for-purpose cutting-edge research and technologies as we embark on this agriculture revolution in our land.

DISTINGUISHED LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

38. As we celebrate World Food Day, let us note that we are not just a nation blessed with natural resources but graced with our people's determined spirit and unyielding resilience.

39. The **FEED SALONE** movement is a collective journey where every step we take and every policy we make gets us closer to achieving increased Agriculture Productivity, Food Security and Sovereignty.

40. As President of the Republic, I am using this World Food Day to crown myself as the "**Chief Farmer**" from today (after all, I come from a Ruling House). As the "**Chief Farmer**", I see fertile lands and a nation ripe with agriculture potential and teeming with possibilities. I fervently desire that we use our agriculture potential to attain Food Security and Sovereignty in Sierra Leone in our lifetime.

41. As I officially launch my Government's **FEED SALONE Flagship Programme**, we're not just observers of World Food Day. We are architects of a future where no citizen is left behind in achieving food sufficiency. We must all

do our part to build a thriving and resilient economy through agriculture.

42. These are bold decisions. And nothing less than bold decisions is needed to transform Sierra Leone's agriculture sector and unlock its huge potential. TOGETHER, WE WILL FEED SALONE!

43. God bless you all, and God bless The Land That We Love, Sierra Leone.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION.