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**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & FOOD SECURITY
ON**

**OVERSIGHT VISIT TO BRANCHES OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY
& FOOD SECURITY IN MAGBOSI, BO, PUJEHUN, KENEMA AND AGRICULTURAL
PROJECTS IN SAHN MALEN AND DARU FROM 11TH -15TH NOVEMBER, 2013.**



PRESENTED BY:

HON. ALIMAMY G. KARGBO

CHAIRMAN

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Agricultural Business Centre
ASREP	Agriculture Sector Reform Rehabilitation Programme
CB	Community Bank
DAO	District Agriculture Officer
FBO	Farmer Based Organizations
FSA	Financial Service Association
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
GAPSP	Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme
IVS	Inland Valley Swamp
MAFFS	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security
MDAs	Ministries, Department and Agencies
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NaFFSL	National Federation of Farmers of Sierra Leone
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
RCPRP	Rehabilitation and Community- based Poverty Reduction Project
RPSDP	Rural and Private Sector Development Project
RSREP	Rural Sector Rehabilitation Project
SCP	Smallholder Commercialization Programme
SLARI	Sierra Leone Agriculture Research Institute
WAAPP	West Africa Agricultural Productivity Programme
WFP	World Food Programme

1. INTRODUCTION

Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, from the 11th -15th November, 2013, a delegation of Sixteen (16) Members of the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security, the body responsible for overseeing the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security, went on an oversight visit to key Agricultural Project sites to assess the activities of the District Agriculture Officers (DAOs) in Bo, Moyamba, Bonthe, Kenema, Pujehun and Daru with a view to obtain firsthand information on some pertinent issues and to report to Parliament.

The private investment Companies and projects under the purview of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security visited included the following:

- i. SLARI's Magbosi Land and Water Research Centre
- ii. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security- Bo District
- iii. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security- Moyamba District
- iv. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security- Bonthe District
- v. Management of Socfin Agricultural Oil palm Company in Sahn, Malen Chiefdom
- vi. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security-Pujehun District
- vii. Management of Gold Tree Oil palm Company in Daru
- viii. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security-Kenema District
- ix. UPWARDS- SL Ltd Cassava Processing Center at Gpomoron, near Lunsar

II. ESTABLISHMENT, FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Subsection 1(d) of Section 7 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone states that:

“The State shall within the context of the ideals and objectives for which provisions are made in this Constitution --

“Place proper and adequate emphasis on agriculture in all its aspects so as to ensure self-sufficiency in food production...”

Section 93 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone Act No.6 of 1991 Vests the following powers in Parliament:

93 (1) “ At the beginning of each session of Parliament, but in any case not later than twenty-one days thereafter, there shall be appointed from among its members the following Standing Committees, that is to say-

- a. The Legislative Committee
- b. The Finance Committee
- c. The Committee on Appointments and the Public Service;
- d.
- e.

93(2) “In addition to the Committee referred to in subsection (2), Parliament shall appoint other Committees which shall perform the functions specified in Subsection (3)

93 (3)- “It shall be the duty of any such Committee as is referred to Subsection (2) to investigate or inquire into the activities or administration of such Ministries or Department or Agencies (MDAs) as may assigned to it, and such investigation or inquiry may extend to proposals for legislations

93((4).....

93(5).....

Section 93 (6) For the purpose of effectively performing its functions, each of the Committees shall have all such powers, rights and privileges as are vested in the High court at a trial in respect of:

Enforcing the attendance of witnesses and examining them on oath, affirmation or

Otherwise;

(a) Compelling the production of documents; and

(b) The issue of a commission or request to examine witnesses abroad.”

The Committee on Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security is one of the Sessional Oversight Committees of Parliament established under Section 93 subsection (2) of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone.

III. MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

Membership of the Committee comprised:

1. Hon. Alimamy G. Kargbo – **Chairman**
2. Hon. Henneh Raddar – **Deputy Chairman**
3. Hon. Kemoko Conteh
4. Hon. Alhassan Jero Kamara
5. Hon. Daniel B. Koroma
6. Hon. Alpha B. Lewally
7. Hon. Mabinty Kadija Sillah
8. Hon. Sahr Tengbeh
9. Hon. Ibrahim Martin Bangura
10. Hon. Sahr Fatorma
11. Hon. Mohamed K. Tholley
12. Hon. Dauda Fawundu
13. Hon. Mima Yema Mimi Sobba-Stephens
14. Hon. Mustapha Braima
15. Hon. Abu Jajua
16. Hon. P.C. Alie Balansama Marrah III

IV. JUSTIFICATION FOR THE VISIT

The oversight activities undertaken by the Committee were borne against the following background:

1. During the Budget hearings on the Recurrent and Development expenditure Estimates, 2013 of MDA's by the Parliamentary Finance Committee, a number of issues emerged with regards to devolved functions, procurement system, non- performance of certain sectors etc to adequately increase the Ministry's output in agricultural production;
2. The Committee wanted to ascertain the performance status of the various components of the Ministry, Agencies and contractors particularly in the implementation of both Donor and Government funded projects as indicated in the Status Report;
3. The Committee wanted to have a firsthand information on the institutional challenges/constraints that the institutional stakeholders were facing particularly the various Departments of the Ministry, Agencies, FBOs and farmers;
4. The Committee wanted to ascertain the performance of the Private sector investments in promoting development and stability in the rural communities from their activities;
5. Lastly, to ascertain prudent management of Donor and public funds, accountability and transparency in the project implementation and to report accordingly to Parliament.

V. EXPECTED OUTCOME

Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, it is envisaged that the exercise would:

- i. Strengthen the working relationship between the Private sector investment, agencies, the local councils and other line Ministries in addressing the food security programmes in the country;
- ii. Enhance prudent management of Public Funds and the maximization of revenue collection;
- iii. Enhance public confidence on the part of Government and Parliament;
- iv. Provide the bases for legislation for an enhanced performance on the part of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security.

VI. METHODOLOGY/PROCEDURE

The Committee held public hearings with all stakeholders, including land owners, of the public and private institutions visited. All stakeholders or their representative were given an opportunity to air out their views without hindrance.

Each meeting was given live coverage by Community Radio Stations, SLBC radio and television and the print media. The meetings were immediately followed by conducted tours to project sites, experimental and demonstration plots, ABC centers etc, including oil palm plantations and oil mills under the purview of the Ministry and the Companies respectively.

VII. LIMITATIONS

The Committee had a very limited time frame of five (5) days including traveling time to cover Bo, Kenema, Pujehun, and Kailahun Districts. (**See Annex 1**) Time Constraints coupled with bad roads and unavailability of appropriate vehicle inhibited the Committee from visiting a desired random sampling of project sites in those localities. The Committee was unable to visit Bonthe and Moyamba Districts due to poor conditions of the roads and time constraint.

VIII. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr, Speaker, Hon. Members, on the basis of the assessment and verification of the Committee, below is a summary of the Committee's findings and recommendations:

The Committee was impressed with the experimental activities of SLARI at the Magbosi 'Land and Water Research Centre' in teaching farmers new skills for protecting seed beds, multiplying crops etc. The Committee recommends that SLARI and MAFFS provide adequate funding to set up an Agro-met station and to build a laboratory. SLARI should also conduct outreach programmes that would engage local farmers/communities;

- The Committee also noted with grave concern the untimely operations in the various sectors of the Ministry regarding the late disbursement of funds. This hamper production as agriculture is time bound. There were also no modalities in place to track the performance of extension workers. The Ministry in this vain must ensure that funds are adequately and timely allocated;
- The Committee also observed that the Livestock Division has carried out routine vaccinations and treatment of animals in several chiefdoms but lacked capacity building. The Ministry must take animal husbandry very seriously to increase animal production to improve the health of farmers;

- Most District Agriculture Officer reported that this 2013's heavy rains slowed down the progress of work in most districts and it was recommended that environmental protection measures be undertaken.
- The Committee noted with concern the complaints of frequent breakdown of vehicles, bikes and even machines due to poor road network and bad terrain for tractors. The Ministry and its development partners especially IFAD and RPSDP should improve on these challenges in order to increase production through linkage with farmers;
- The Committee was impressed with the establishment and expansion of seed multiplication sites on IVS and other food and tree-crops by the WAAPP Project in some districts but recommended collaboration with SLARI;
- The Committee further observed that a good number of the ABCs were not functional, poorly managed, and a few were incomplete. The Committee recommends the Ministry's immediate intervention;
- The Committee was disappointed with the performance of the DAOs who were ill-prepared to produce documents or do a good presentation during the hearings. The Committee learnt that there was poor communication between them and the office of the Permanent Secretary that the Ministry has to address so that future correspondences would be circulated earlier to all Divisional Heads;
- The Committee was also impressed with the infrastructural and agricultural development programmes undertaken by Socfin and Gold Tree Oil palm Companies though they were facing resentment from land owners. The Committees on Lands and the Committee on Agricultural should prevail on the relevant Ministries to sign the Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) For the legal operation of Socfin Company;
- The Committee further noted the complaints of the ADOs of land grabbing in forest reserves and the frivolous construction of houses in inland valley swamps under the protection of the Ministry;

- It was also observed that there was still evidence of technical man power shortage especially in the area of front-line extension and livestock workers in the Ministry;
- The Committee further observed that there was challenge for the movement of staff and inputs to areas of activities and the Committee recommends that additional bikes and vehicles be procured and frequently repaired for staff movement;
- There were little or no incentives for Ministry staff to motivate them to give of their best. The Committee strongly recommends that the Ministry endeavour to provide basic motivations to encourage staff to work hard.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Speaker, Hon. Members, the recommendations contained in this report were arrived at by consensus after exhaustive and constructive deliberations. Cognizant of the enthusiasm within the Ministry to implement the recommendations, the Committee is strongly advising that all recommendations should be addressed before its next visit.

The follow-up visit and interactive sessions were considered quite successful for achieving the general objective of service delivery. Emphasis was placed on media, civil society, agencies, local councils, community stakeholders and the public at large to make their voices heard by participating in joint meeting with agencies to address their food and sustainable livelihood patterns.

However, it is worth noting that the Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security has a lot to cover to assess the Ministry's activities nationwide. The Committee was therefore seeking additional funding to replicate similar oversight visits to agricultural projects in other regions of the country. The Committee therefore called on Parliament, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security and donor Agencies to join hands together in addressing the financial challenges highlighted in the Report.

I thank you.



Hon. Alimamy G. Kargbo
CHAIRMAN

PART II: - COMMITTEE SITTINGS AND SITE VISITS (FINDINGS IN RESPECT OF ISSUES)

1. SLARI'S (LAND AND WATER RESEARCH CENTRE) AT MAGBOSIE

The Committee held its first Session with Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI) Officials at the Magbosie Land and Water Research Centre on Monday 11th November, 2013 at 3:30 p.m. The meeting was well attended by Staff of the Station. In the opening session, the Chairman underscored the mandate of the Committee and clearly stated the purpose of the visit which, amongst other things, was to assess the level of achievement by SLARI in the area of sound research geared to the improvement and management of soil and water on agricultural product value chains.

Giving an overview of the administration and activities of the Research Centre in a power point presentation, the Officer-In- Charge, Mr. Patrick Sawyer, elaborated on their 2008-2017 strategic plans which are expected to be fully implemented:

- Improvement and contribution of integrated soil fertility management on agricultural product value chain
- Improvement and contribution of soil and water management on agricultural product value chain.
- Improvement and contribution to irrigation and drainage system and environmental management and climate change adaptation.

Responding to questions of slow progress in the Research centre during the previous visit, the Officer-in-Charge replied that the centre was facing financial constraint to undertake new research technologies, set up Agro met station, a computerized laboratory and to conduct community outreach programs.

The meeting was climax by visit to the experimental site. **(See Annex 2)**

Observations

The Committee observed that:

- The Research Station has performed well as compared to the previous years by setting up new technologies in crop modification and soil management. The Committee however observed that the Institution had enormous challenges of electricity and water supply, lack of agro met station and laboratory to update farmers on their activities;
- The institution was facing serious financial constraint to carry out most of their activities and in retaining staff.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

- MAFFS and SLARI should provide adequate funds for the full operation of the Centre; especially the agro met station and laboratory;
- That SLARI should conduct nation-wide outreach program to educate farmers/communities on their activities;
- That adequate financial and logistical support should be provided for the institution by other Agencies.

2. MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & FOOD SECURITY- BO DISTRICT

The session with the MAFFS in Bo District was conducted at the new Agriculture Office in Bo Town on Tuesday 12th November, 2013 at 10:00 a.m.

Opening the session, the Committee Chairman underscored the Committee's mandate and the purpose of the visit which, amongst other things, was to assess the level of performance in respect of the Ministry's Annual Report. The Committee, he went on, also wanted to exchange views with the aim of strengthening the capacity in terms of service delivery to achieve food self-sufficiency drive. **(See Annex 3a).**

Giving an overview of the administration and activities of MAFFS in Bo District, Mr. Edmond Saidu, the District Agricultural Officer (DAO), informed the Committee about the outstanding performance of the various components such as the crop, livestock, forestry, land and water Divisions etc and collaborative efforts of development partners. **(See Annex 3b)**

On the request of the Committee, various Divisional Heads made presentations and responded to questions. In their responses, they assured the Committee of the increase in rice production in spite of some challenges such as the late disbursement of funds, frequent breakdown of bikes and vehicles etc. The meeting was climaxed by site visit to the demonstration plot at China farm. **(See Annex 3c).**

Observations

The Committee observed that:

- no cost analysis was stated in the report;
- No mention was made of specific project site except Chiefdoms;
- the livestock Division lacked staff capacity;
- there were no transport facilities for staff to do proper supervision and monitoring

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

- the Ministry should improve on capacity building;
- transport facilities be provided for movement of staff and input;
- funds are made available and on time.

3. MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & FOOD SECURITY-BONTHE DISTRICT

The Session for the Bonthe District was held at the new Agriculture Office in Bo town on Tuesday 12th November, 2013, at 1:45 p.m. due to lack of accessibility to the District by road.

During the opening Session, Mr. Francis A. Turay, the District Agriculture Officer, pleaded with the Committee for their ill preparedness for the visit due to circumstances beyond their control. His Senior staff, he said, were unavoidably absent because of the death of a procurement Officer and the lack of communication with the Permanent Secretary.

By leave of the Committee, the District Agriculture Officer (DAO) made a brief presentation outlining the performance of the various components. He reiterated that most of his Divisions had made significant improvement though he was faced with the problem of spare parts; the stagnation of most ABC centers, and untimely disbursement of funds.

Observations

The Committee observed that:

- The Committee noted with dismay that late disbursement of funds made it difficult to track the performance of extension service;
- It was observed that out of eleven ABC centers only two were operational;
- The Committee learnt that due to lack of spares parts, tractors were used for other purposes.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

- Funds for agricultural activities should be made available on time as agriculture is a seasonal activity;
- MAFFS should provide spare parts for the operations of the tractors;

- MAFFS and Councils should monitor the operations of the ABC cent

4. MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & FOOD SECURITY- MOYAMBA DISTRICT

The Session for the Moyamba District was held in Bo town on Tuesday 12th November, 2013 at 3:50p.m.

During the Opening Session, the District Agriculture Officer pleaded with the Committee for not been quite prepared to make any presentation because he was not officially informed by the Permanent Secretary. A motion was moved to stand the Moyamba District Agriculture Officer (DAO) down and to ask him to forward his document to the Committee in Parliament not later than two weeks.

5 SOCFIN AGRICULTURAL COMPANY (OIL PALM PLANTATION) IN SAHN, MALEN CHIEFDOM, PUJEHUN DISTRICT

On Wednesday 13th November, 2013 the Committee visited the operational site of Socfin, Agriculture Company to ascertain the level of performance and issues relating to the Company's operation in the District.

Giving an overview of the project, the General Manager of Socfin Agriculture Company, Philip Tonks, expressed his gratitude for the Committee's visit to look at some of their challenges and also assess their activities in terms of development in both the local community and at national level. (See Annex 4a).

He informed the Committee that his Company was operating on 7,100 hectares of land for a fifty year lease agreement with land owners of the Sahn Malen Chiefdom.

Responding to questions on his operational capacity and corporate social responsibility, the General Manager replied that since the commencement of operations, the Company has employed close to 4000 workers many of whom were natives of the Chiefdom. The company, he said, has also contracted an Indonesia Company to construct an ultra-modern milling

machinery, regarded as the largest mill in Africa, which will also provide electricity to some part of the country.

As part of their food security drive in the chiefdom and to minimize complains from land owners, he further revealed that the Company has cultivated over 330 acres of boli land for rice production for various communities. The company has also constructed schools, installed solar street lights in Sahn village and rehabilitated feeder roads within the Chiefdom.

In response to the question of the impasse between the Company and the community, the General Manager affirmed that he was facing resentment from few local people whom he referred to as having different perceptions of their development strive. He further stressed that his greatest challenge is the delay on the part of the Government to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The Chiefdom Speaker, Sengbay Robert Moigua, in his welcome address reiterated that since the commencement of Socfin's operation in the Chiefdom, there has been evidence of massive improvement in the socio-economic life of the people particularly women, who are the beneficiaries of the company's employment scheme.

The Youth Leader, Eddie Aruna and Women's Leader Aminata Sowa both maintained that the Company's operation has benefitted them immensely and pleaded with the Committee to take the necessary steps in legalizing its operation which, they said is a very laudable investment in the country.

The meeting was climaxed by site visit to the various operational sites:

- quarters for local staff and hospital quarter
- green belt (reserved community farm)
- nursery site

- construction site of the mill
- management quarters and mechanical rice cultivation (boli land) project site for 9 communities
- site for payment of workers by Ecobank
- hydro form brick factory site
- mechanical workshop for engineering and maintenance of equipment.(See Annex 4 b,c and d)

Observations

The Committee made the following observations:

- The Committee was impressed with the operations of the Company especially the mill and the overall activities in the Malen Chiefdom;
- The Committee noted with concern the operation of the company without MOU;
- It was also observed that the company was frequently facing resentment from some landowners and pressure groups;
- It was also revealed that the company would start producing approximately 3000 tons of oil per month when the mill is completed before 2015;
- The Committee observed with grave concern that little or no land is left for community use in all the villages where the company is operating.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

- Committees related with Land, Environment, Agriculture and Labour should engage the relevant Ministries to address the MOU;
- The Committee should organize stakeholders meeting with the Company, land owners, community leaders and the Ministry of Agriculture to review the said lease Agreement for better clarification;

- That the Company should adopt a proper Environmental Management plan and land survey be done professionally in terms of Geographical reference and with public awareness.

6. MINISTRY AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & FOOD SECURITY- PUJEHUN DISTRICT

The Committee proceeded to Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS) in Pujehun to its oversight functions town with the on Wednesday 13th November, 2013 at 2:40 p.m.

In his opening remarks, the Committee Chairman educated the Ministry about parliamentary oversight functions which, he said, should not be interpreted as any witch-hunt but to ensure that the Ministry meets its objective in the food self-sufficiency drive.

The District Agriculture Officer, in his welcome address, applauded the Committee's visit to oversee the activities of the Ministry and agricultural projects. In his presentation, he outlined six (6) components of the Small Holders Commercialization Programme (SCP) which were implemented:

- Commercialization of Agriculture Value Chain with the establishment of Farmer Field Schools for farmers and FBOs by Ministry, Council, ASREP, RPSDP etc.
- Small scale irrigation development of which 41 IVS sites had been identified and selected for rehabilitation by World Vision and GAPSP through service providers.
- Market access and feeder road rehabilitation of which 94.6km feeder roads had been identified and selected by various projects with about 10.4 km under rehabilitation by Socfin Agricultural Company in the Malen Chiefdom.
- Agricultural Business financing of which 2 Financial Service Associations (FSA) were established and supported by SCP/IFAD to encourage farmers buy shares and take loans from the Bank.

- Productive and social safety nets for livelihood enhancement through the effort of WFP and World Vision. Food for work is provided for rehabilitation of hectares of IVS, tree crops, and feeder roads.
- Agriculture sector planning, coordinating, management and M & E. This is achieved through the establishment of agriculture Committees within the Council as well as agriculture sector forum which includes Governmental and Non-Governmental Stakeholders.

Responding to questions on the achievements in the various Divisions, he informed the Committee about the following activities:

- About 5,345 small ruminants vaccinated
- Distribution of seeds and other planting materials to farmers
- Treatment of crops for pest and diseases infestation
- Training and supervision of farmers of crop products (value added)
- Establishment of forest tree nurseries to produce seedlings for distribution
- 2 areas identified and declared for national parks
- Training in rehabilitation and development of IVS

Observations

The Committee observed that:

- some of the ABC Centres were not fully equipped and operational;
- there was inadequate sensitization of farmers about the roles of the Financial Service Associations (FSA) and Community Banks (CB) causing small size and low capital base of the FSA which did not enhance their ability to generate substantial revenue;
- The poor road network was hindering the access of farmers to FSA and CBs;
- There were insufficient office equipment for effective administrative work;
- There were inadequate field staff and labour for effective field work.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

- MAFFS and Projects should complete the remaining ABCs ;
- MAFFS should recruit more field staff and make provision for the engagement of casual labour;
- Councils and Projects should direct more funds to feeder road rehabilitation;
- MAFFS and all implementing Partners should recognize the farming calendar for timely financial and input supply.

6. VISITS TO THE GOLD TREE OILPALM (SL) LTD COMPANY IN DARU

On Thursday 14th November, 2013 the Committee visited the operational site of the Gold Tree Company in Daru town. The purpose of the visit was to have a stakeholders meeting with the land owners and management of the Company to discuss and resolving certain contentious issues existing between the Company, the land owners and the Community.

The Committee had a brief meeting with community elders and land owners to get first hand information about the existing relationship between them and the company. The land owners and local authorities complained of delays in rent payment, non-adherence to agreed employment procedures, lack of company's consultation in decision making on issues that affect their Chiefdoms. **(See annex 5a)**

During the meeting, the General Manager, Mr. Kevin Tibble, gave an overview of his company's operations, challenges, successes and future plans. Responding to questions about the cause of the impasse between the company and the community, he stated the following reasons:

- That out of the 100% farmers who registered with the company and promised to sell their fruits to the company, only about 10% of these are actually cooperating
- The Company's refusal to hand over the elements in the sludge to community as an environmental protection measures

- The rampant theft of fruit by the communities.

The General Manager also denied the claims that his company was not meeting its social corporate responsibilities but admitted that there was need to improve on community relationship through an effective Public Relation Officer. He assured Members that a team was busy working on the mediation process in the four chiefdoms. He ended by inviting the Committee to revisit the operational area of his company and note changes of improvement.

The meeting was climaxed by site visits to various areas and facilities of the company including the Mill (**See annex 5 b and c**).

Observations

The Committee observed that:

- there was poor community coordination and collaboration between the company and the community stakeholders;
- though the mill had been completed, the company was still facing a serious problem of inadequate supply of fruits for the effective and continuous operation;
- the company had undertaken community development projects in various sectors and created employment for the local community;
- the delay in land lease payment was caused by the bureaucratic nature of the MAFFS;
- Getting the Company's consignments from the Sierra Leone Port was a major problem;
- over 500 employees were drawn from the local communities and they were given some basic training.

Recommendations

The Committee rated the operation of the Company as very impressive and urged the management to improve on its coordination and collaboration with the community to enhance sustainable development.

The Committee recommends that:

- timely payment of surface rent is done directly by the Company instead of MAFFS.
- the Company should frequently organized stakeholders meeting to collectively address socio-economic issues.
- MAFFS and Ministries of Finance and Trade should speed up the paper work for the release of the Company's consignment.

8. MINISTRY AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & FOOD SECURITY- KENEMA DISTRICT

The Committee had its last session with the Kenema Division of the MAFFS on Thursday 14th November 2013 at the Lambaiama Training Centre, Kenema Town at 2:35 p.m.

The meeting was attended by core staff of the Ministry, Project Officers and representatives from the Local Government Councils and other stake holders. The Chairman in his opening remarks disclosed the purpose of the visit which among other things was to ascertain the level of performance by both the Ministry and development partners in promoting the agriculture sector. **(See annex 6 a)**

Giving an overview of the administration and overall activities of the Ministry in collaboration with Council and various projects, the District Agriculture Officer (DAO) assured the Committee of their remarkable performance from all the Divisions and Projects.

In his brief presentation, the DAO made a summary of the activities undertaken by the various divisions and with support from projects:

- **Crop Division-**
 - Establishment of 75 acres of swamp rice at **demo** sites;
 - Procured assorted seed rice and agro chemicals from devolved funds;
 - Training of farmers in blocks;
 - IVS rehabilitation and fully irrigated for sustainable rice production;
 - Provision of 5000 oil palm seedlings

- **Forestry Division-**

Establishment of 25000 assorted tree seedlings and plantation to offset the problem of fuel wood;

Beautification of city activities and support to national tree planting day including monitoring and supervising forest activities;

- **Livestock Division-**

Routine treatment and vaccination of small ruminant and local poultry;

With support from council about 5000 goats and sheep and 3500 local poultry have been vaccinated with 153 small ruminant stocked as well

- **Land and Water Division-**

Rehabilitation of 30 hectares of land with support from IFAD, ASREP, RPSDP, SLARI etc;

Training of farmers

- **Ministry/Project activities-**

Under the supervision of MAFFS, rice and cassava projects are being carried out by ASREP and WAPPP with 28 FBOs in 28 different communities. Rehabilitation of thousands of tree crops (cocoa, coffee and oil palm) with support from IFAD PRSDP, ASREP, A4D and SLARI; in ensuring access to rural finance, Financial Service Association (FSA) and Community Banks (CBs) have been established and operational in various Chieftdoms; In support to the Decentralization Programme; IFAD had rehabilitated many feeder roads and also provided equipment for maintenance, constructed 29 ward office buildings and vehicles, provided basic office equipment for MAFFS office and rehabilitated about 600 hectares for cocoa farmers. **(see annex 6b).**

The DAO further stated that many FBOs have been supported to enhance their socio-economic welfare through improved processing and marketing of cocoa beans which has placed the country as the best in the world market. In responding to the question of their performance, he assured that there has been an increase in production in all the sectors. The meeting was climaxed by site visit to the Lambaiama Training Centre **(See annex 6c).**

Observations

The Committee was impressed with the cocoa production through the collaborative efforts of the Ministry and development partners.

The Committee observed that:

- farmers were facing serious competition from a Lebanese businessman;
- the MAFFS was facing serious challenges in land encroachment, especially in the forest reserves and massive construction in the swamps which belong to the Ministry;
- tree crops targeted were far below farmers the actual farm size;
- late disbursement of devolve fund for implementation served as a big challenge for the Ministry;
- little or no attention was given to the health hazard encountered in the IVS ecology by farmers.

Recommendations

The Committee resolved:

- That the Ministry should work in collaboration with the Ministry of Lands and the Environment and Community stakeholders to protect demarcated forest areas and swamps for agricultural purposes;
- That the Ministry of Trade and Industry and other relevant bodies should regulate and set up a standardized market price for the sale of cocoa that would benefit both local producers and the investors
- That MAFFS and other development partners should provide additional tree crops to meet farmer's target;
- That proper attention be given to health related issues encountered in IVS ecology by farmers;
- That additional motor bikes and vehicles be procured and frequently repaired for staff movement.

9. MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY & FOOD SECURITY-KAILAHUN DISTRICT

The Session for the Kailahun District was held in Kenema at the Lambaiama Training Centre-Kenema on Thursday 14th November, 2013.

During the opening session the DAO pleaded with the Committee for not been quite prepared to make his presentation because of logistical constraint and the poor road condition to bring along his core staff.

A motion was moved to stand the Director down and to ask him to forward his status report to the Committee in Parliament not later than two weeks.

10. VISIT TO UPWARDS – SL Ltd CASSAVA PROCESSING CENTER AT GPOMORON, NEAR LUNSAR

The Committee, on its returning journey to Freetown, was invited to visit the UPWARDS- SL Ltd Cassava Processing Center at Gpomoron Village on Friday 15th November, 2014. In a brief meeting with the Manager, Mrs. Doris Kargbo to know the status of the project, she highlighted the following challenges:

- That her Checques were not honored by the bank;
- That over drafts is charged at high rates;
- Lack of funding from government and donor partners;
- Lack of adequate electricity supply to facilitate production.

The Committee therefore recommends that:

- The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry & Food Security and other development partners should step in to assist the Center with inputs and resources;
- That Financial Service Associations should assist the center in loan recovery

ANNEX I: ITINERARY OF THE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE FOR OVERSIGHT VISITATION TO BRANCHES OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE IN BO, KENEMA, MOYAMBA, BONTHE, PUJEHUN, KAILAHUN DISTRICTS AND SOCFIN AGRICULTURAL AND THE GOLD TREE (SL) OIL PALM COMPANIES IN SAHN MALIN AND DARU FROM 11TH -15TH NOVEMBER, 2013.

DATE	TIME	LOCATION/VENUE	ACTIVITY/OBJECTIVE
Monday 11 th November	12:30- 6:30 p.m.	Magbosie-SLARI's Land and Water Research Centre	-To assess the status of the Centre and performance of the Researchers in seed multiplication and soil and water management on agricultural product value chains
Tuesday 12 th November	10:00a.m.- 5:35 p.m.	Bo Town	-Meeting with Officials of the Ministry from Bo, Moyamba and Bonthe on their general activities at district level
Wednesday 13 th November	10:30 a.m.- 6:45 p.m.	Sahn-Malen and Pujehun Town	-Meeting with Officials of MAFFS in Pujehun town - Meeting with Local authorities and Management of Socfin Company at Sahn village - Site visit to facilities and operational areas of the Company
Thursday 14 th November	10:30a.m. – 6:00 p.m.	Daru and Kenema	-Meeting with land owners at Daru in relation to their relationship with the Gold Tree Company - Meeting and site visit to the operational areas of Gold Tree -Meeting with Officials of MAFFS to assess their performance in the district and including project activities
Friday 15 th November	10:30 a.m.	Return to Freetown	



ANNEX 2 : Committee on site visit at SLARI's experimental site –Magbosie.



ANNEX 3(a): DAO of Bo District making his presentation.



ANNEX 3 (b): Meeting with Officials of MAFFS in Bo Town.



ANNEX 3 (c): Demonstration plots at China farm in Bo town.



ANNEX 4 (a): Meeting with Local authorities and Management of Socfin Agricultural Company in Sahn Malen.



ANNEX 4 (b): Socfin's oil palm nursery site.



ANNEX 4 (c): Socfin's Mill construction site.



ANNEX 4 (d): Community farm in the Boli lands undertaken by the Company.



ANNEX 5 (a): Former Committee Member, Hon. Moinina Conteh and Land owners presenting a traditional table Cloth to the Committee in Daru town.



ANNEX 5 (b): Gold Tree's Oil Mill ready for processing in Daru town.



ANNEX 5 (c): General Manager of Gold Tree presenting sample of their product to the Committee.



ANNEX 6 (a): Meeting with MAFFS's Officials in Kenema.



ANNEX 6 (b): DAO of Kenema making his presentation.



ANNEX 6 (c): One of the demonstration plots with Soya beans in the Lambaiama Training Centre- Kenema.



ANNEX 7 (A): Cassava processing machine at Gpomoron, Lunsar- Makeni highway.



ANNEX 7(B): Mrs. Doris Kargbo, CEO of UPWARDS-SL Ltd making her presentation to the Committee