

Agriculture: What Can Sierra Leone Offer You?

- Ideal growing conditions and large amounts of available land
- Proven export potential
- High local demand
- Opportunities for production of biofuels, biolands, and organic foods
- Favorable trade arrangements
- Opportunities in agricultural goods and services
- Growing sector with scope for improving local links

1. Ideal growing conditions and large amounts of available land: Sierra Leone is ideal for agriculture. It has over 4.3 million hectares of cultivable land available, plentiful aquatic resources, a tropical climate, rich soil, and lowland and highlands areas. A current base of production in staple foods (rice cassava, vegetables), cash crops (sugar, cocoa, coffee, ginger and cashew), and tree crops (oil palm, coconut), has potential for significant expansion. A communal/chiefdom land tenure system and strong government facilitation makes land easy to obtain in most agricultural areas through secure, long-term leases.



2. Proven export potential: Population growth and recovery of incomes across West Africa is causing a rapid increase in demand for food crops. There is high

regional demand for products such as ginger, palm oil, cocoa, coffee, and rice. Sierra Leone's historical commercial and export success points to investment potential in palm kernel processing, kola nuts, mangos, peanuts, cassava, piassava, and livestock. In particular, opportunities exist to bring production back to pre-war levels by investing in the rehabilitation of government-owned and private plantations.



3. High local demand: Domestic production of a number of food items short of local demand, and this trend is increasing. In 2007 and 2008, the country imported \$68 and \$116 million, respectively. The products that comprised the largest share of these imports were rice -US\$24 million or 36 percent of food imports in 2007 and US\$59 million or 51 percent of food imports in 2008. Imports of beverages and tobacco doubled from 2007 to 2008 from \$US12 million to \$US22 million, respectively. (Source: Bank of Sierra Leone Annual Report 2007) Although vegetable and fruit production have started to recover, local demand for

plantains, citrus fruit, coconuts, pineapples, spinach, and mangos outstrips supply -creating opportunities for investment in these crops.

4. Opportunities for production of biofuels, biolands, and organic foods:

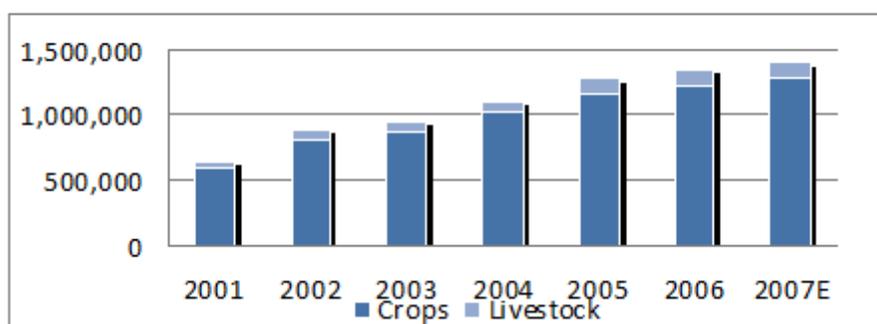
The expanding global markets for organic foods and biofuels make these attractive avenues to explore. Sierra Leone is a five-hour flight away from Europe, where it enjoys favorable trade agreements. Opportunities exist for integrated production and refining of ethanol (sugar) and bio diesel (oil palm). For organic foods, the country's current reliance on traditional methods of agriculture may be an asset to producers.

5. Favorable trade arrangements: Investors in Sierra Leone can take advantage of several trade agreements, including the African Growth and Opportunity Act with the United States, the Cotonou Agreement with the European Union, and the Economic Community for West African States within the region.

6. Opportunities in agricultural goods and services: The markets are wide open for agricultural inputs, including fertilizer, seeds and other planting materials, tools, animal feed, agro-chemicals, cold storage, packaging materials and services, and road and maritime transport. Most packaging materials currently are imported and must pay duties, making local production of quality materials potentially viable.

7. Growing sector with scope for more growth: The agriculture sector in Sierra Leone is growing, and there is scope for still more growth by improving local links. Several potentially large-scale consumers of agricultural goods, including Freetown hoteliers and manufacturers, have expressed a desire to source more agricultural products domestically.

Agricultural GDP (mil. of '01 Leones)



Source: Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency -
<http://www.investsierraleone.biz/index.php?l=english&p=31&pn=Agriculture>