

SURVEY BRIEF

Agricultural Year 2024

SIERRA LEONE



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



THE WORLD BANK

Under the umbrella of the 50x2030 Initiative to Close the Agricultural Data Gap, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) provided technical support for the Sierra Leone 2024 Annual Agricultural Survey (SLAAS) implemented by Statistics Sierra Leone. Through the Initiative, the country strengthened its national statistics system, improved the quality and use of survey data in policymaking and enhanced the capacity of key data users to optimize evidence-based decisions.

Key features

This note provides key insights on agricultural holdings in the household sector of Sierra Leone during the agricultural year 2024. It presents indicators on agricultural land and holding size, crop output and yields, livestock rearing, input and labour use. More detailed indicators are available in the SLAAS 2024 survey report (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2025). A technical annex at the end of this document provides further details on the indicators presented, definitions, sources and assumptions used.

Key characteristics of agricultural holdings

Sierra Leone has approximately 1.3 million agricultural households, with 87.5 percent engaged in crop production, 61.2 percent in livestock rearing, 36.8 percent in forestry, and 30.3 percent in fishing. Most cultivated land is used for staple crops, accounting for 75.7 percent of all planted area. The average holding size stands at 1.7 hectares (ha) and the vast majority of the agricultural holdings are individual farms (97.4 percent), defined as holdings under sole proprietorship or management.



1.3
million

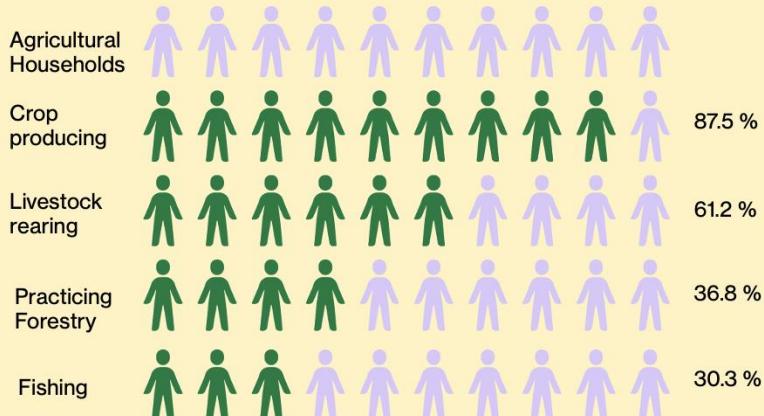
agricultural
households

Agricultural area

1.7 ha
per holding

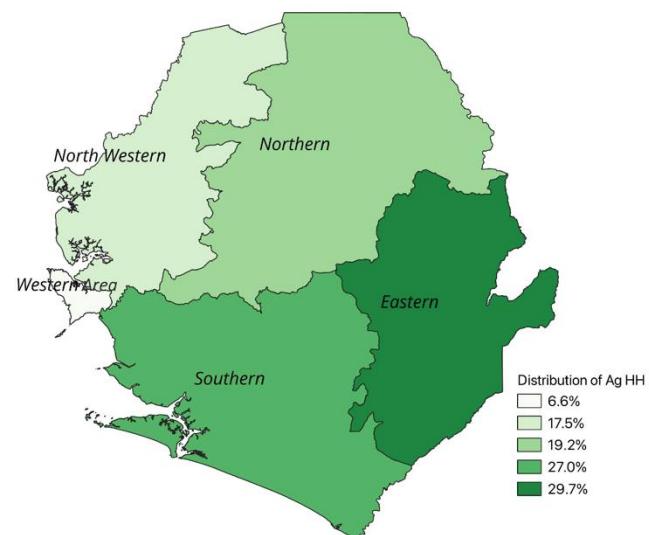
75.7%

of the planted area is used for **staple crops**



Distribution of agricultural holdings

The Eastern region of Sierra Leone is where most of the country's agricultural holdings are located (29.7 percent), while the more urbanized Western Area region, that includes Freetown, has the smallest share (6.6 percent). Within the Eastern region, the district of Kanema has the highest number of agricultural households, with 152 000, while Falaba, in the Northern region, records only 35 000, the lowest number across the country.



Source: Author's own elaboration, 2025. Based on Statistics

Sierra Leone. 2025. Sierra Leone Annual Agricultural Survey

Report 2024. Freetown, Sierra Leone.

https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/2024-SLAAS-Report_V4.pdf

Note: Refer to the disclaimer on page 9 for the names and boundaries used in this map.

Average holding size and planted area by district

On average across Sierra Leone, each household cultivated 1.2 ha of land during the 2024 agricultural season, out of an average agricultural area of 1.7 ha per household. This means that more than 70 percent of the agricultural land was used for crop cultivation. The average agricultural area per holding varies significantly across regions and districts, ranging from 0.4 ha in Western Rural district to 3.2 ha in Kailahun district.

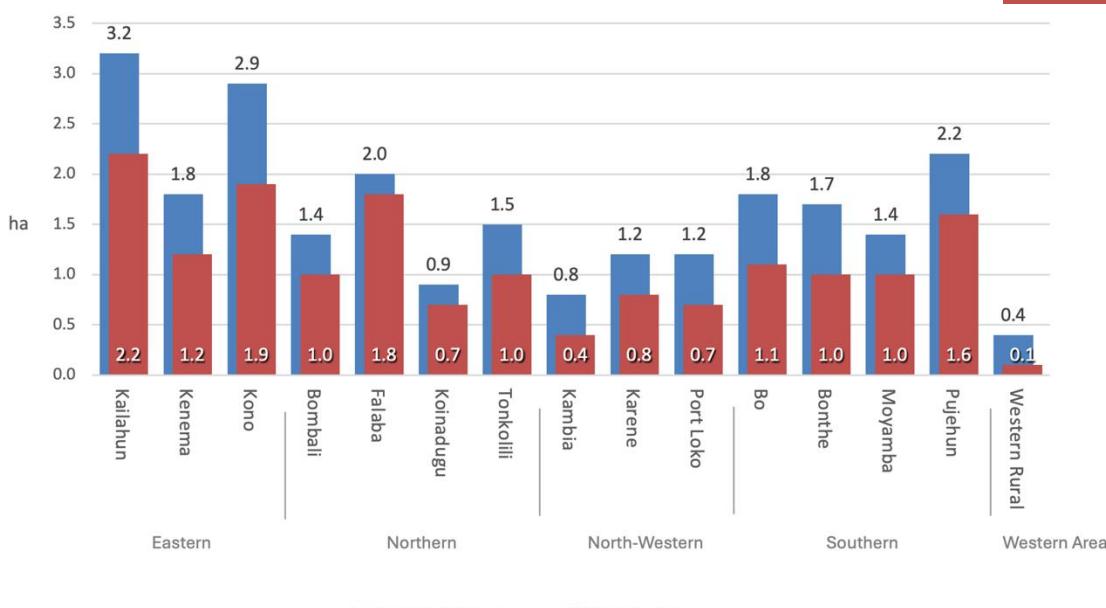
Average agricultural area per holding

1.7 ha



Average planted area

1.2 ha



Crop output, harvested area and yields

The country's main staple crops in terms of harvested area are rice and cassava. Sierra Leone also produces several cash crops such as oil palm, cocoa and coffee, accounting for a significant share of the total harvest. Crop yields for major cereals range from 1.8 tonnes per hectare for maize to 2.0 tonnes per hectare for rice.

Crops	Harvested area		Output Tonnes	Yield Tonnes per hectare
	Hectares			
Rice	533 463		1 066 013	2.0
Cassava	242 380		2 855 436	11.8
Oil palm fruit	175 768		1 508 081	8.6
Cocoa	191 283		93 750	0.5
Groundnut	81 917		101 389	1.2
Maize	62 726		110 443	1.8
Cucumber	42 859		184 939	4.3
Coffee	40 430		80 575	2.0

Note: Crops are sorted in descending order by harvested area.



Main uses of crop production

A significant share of the crop production is used for household self-consumption (17.7 percent), while 13 percent is sold. Other use – accounting for nearly 20 percent – includes recycling for seeds for the next season, gifts, and in-kind payments. Losses are substantial, amounting to 26.7 percent, though this figure should be interpreted with caution.

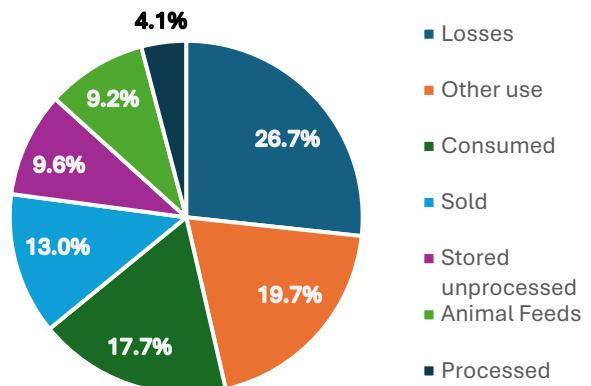
Note: Losses are often estimated with high uncertainty by farmers or measured as a residual (after all uses have been quantified).

Livestock rearing

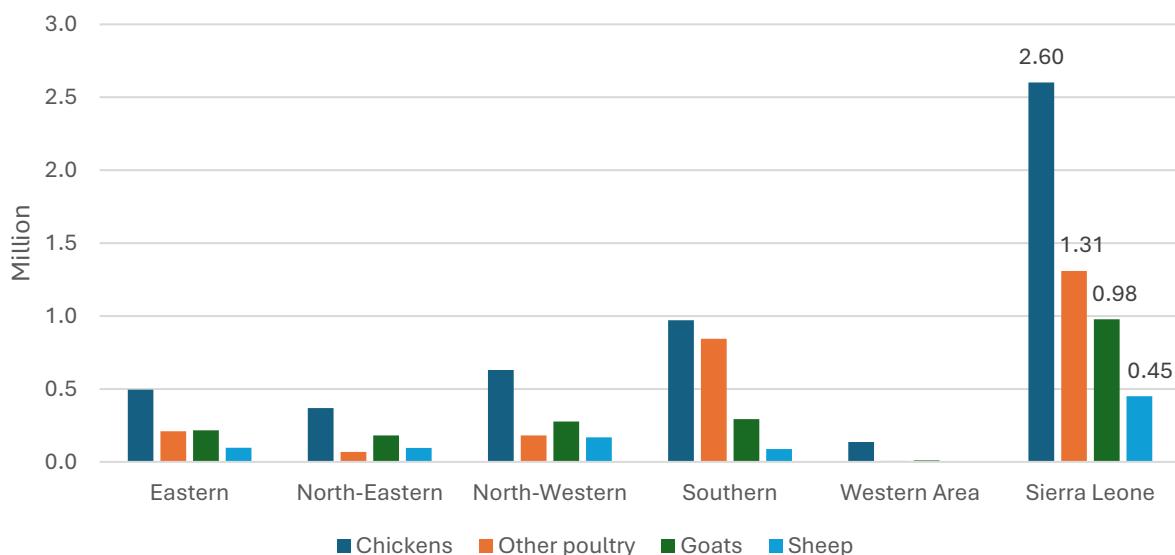
Livestock rearing is practiced by 61.2 percent of all agricultural households in Sierra Leone, with the Eastern region alone representing around one-third of livestock farms (32 percent).

Among the livestock types reared in the twelve months preceding the survey, chickens are the most numerous, with over 2.6 million heads, followed by other poultry, for a total of almost 4 million heads of poultry in total, the largest share of which is raised in the Southern region. Goats and sheep are also widespread, with almost one million and nearly half a million head, respectively. The rearing of cattle and pigs is much less common.

Percentage distribution of crop production by destination

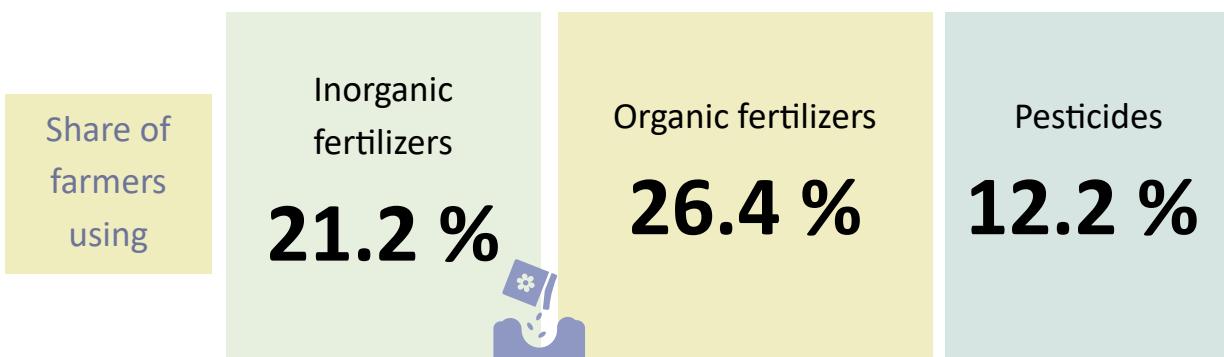


Number of head of livestock by region and national total



Crop inputs

The use of fertilizers in Sierra Leone remains limited. Among agricultural households engaged in crop production, 26.4 percent use organic fertilizers (primarily manure), while 21.2 percent rely on inorganic fertilizers such as urea or NPK compounds. The use of pest protection products is even less common, with only 12.2 percent of crop-producing agricultural households applying pesticides.



Labour input

Most agricultural holdings rely primarily on the labour of household members. Specifically, 88 percent of households depend on female members' work, and 86 percent on male members' work. Additionally, unpaid or exchange labour remains a common practice, reported by nearly one quarter of households.

11 % of households hired permanent workers

In contrast, only a minority of households employ permanent hired labour – about 11 percent of households. While temporary and casual workers are hired by 37 percent and 46 percent, respectively.

Technical annex

Sources and scope

Data source:

- Statistics Sierra Leone. 2025. Sierra Leone Annual Agricultural Survey Report 2024. Freetown, Sierra Leone.
https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/2024-SLAAS-Report_V4.pdf
- Government of Sierra Leone. 2017. Inclusive Comprehensive Agriculture Development Programme (ICADeP) 2018-2022. Freetown, Sierra Leone.
SIERRALEONE_ICADeP_Dec_7_2017_wXeYebF_kdPTqdg.pdf
- Geographical scope: Nationally representative survey.
- Product scope: crops and livestock.
- Cash and staple crops classification is based on the Inclusive Comprehensive Agriculture Development Programme (ICADeP) 2018-2022 (Government of Sierra Leone, 2017).

Indicators

All the indicators produced in this brief can be considered as statistically representative at the geographical scale at which they are presented. Definitions below are provided by Statistics Sierra Leone. For full details, please refer to the [SLAAS 2024 survey report](#) (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2025).

- Yields: the ratio (in tonnes per ha) between harvested quantities and harvested area, by crop.
- Agricultural area includes area already used for farming, or that could be brought back into cultivation using the resources normally available on an agricultural holding; arable land; permanent grassland; permanent crops; kitchen gardens; unutilized agricultural area; and special holding areas.
- Agricultural holding: economic unit of agricultural production under single management comprising all livestock kept, and all land used wholly or partly for agricultural production purposes, without regard to title, legal form or size.
- Agricultural household (farming household): population unit referring to a household with members practicing own account agricultural activities.
- Organic fertilizers include solid manure, liquid manure/slurry, vegetable material and compost, stabilized sewage sludge, bio stimulants, and other organic fertilizers.
- Inorganic (chemical) fertilizers include urea, other nitrogenous fertilizers, superphosphates (above 35 percent of P_2O_5), other phosphatic fertilizers, potassium chloride (MOP), other potassic fertilizers, NPK, diammonium phosphate (DAP), and other inorganic fertilizers

- Pesticides include insecticides, herbicides (solid), herbicides (liquid), fungicides, and rodenticides.

The data presented in this brief are sourced from countries' surveys and may differ from data published on other FAO platforms.



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