Sierra Leone

DIEM – Data in Emergencies Monitoring brief, round 10

Results and recommendations
November 2023

Data collection 29 August to 25 September 2023
Key highlights

> Forty-six percent of surveyed households have faced some sort of shock over the three months preceding the survey. The most frequently reported shock was sickness, accident or death of a household member.

> Nearly one-third of households reported a reduction in their main source of income in the three months preceding the survey.

> Three-quarters of the surveyed crop producers reported difficulties with their production, such as pests and disease, uncontrolled animal grazing, labour availability and access to inputs.

> Almost 70 percent of livestock producers reported production difficulties. The most commonly cited difficulty was animal disease and death, likely due to the rainy season causing increased incidence.

> Despite continuing challenges, both crop and livestock producers reported an overall decrease in many of the most common difficulties. This improvement can be attributed in part to supportive interventions implemented by the Government and development partners.

> According to the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES), about 63 percent of the households experienced moderate or severe recent food insecurity (RFI). More than half of the respondent households are employing crisis or emergency level coping strategies to meet their food needs, indicating that many households are maintaining food consumption through unsustainable means.

> Nearly all households reported a need for assistance, of which cash, food and agricultural inputs were the most common needs cited.

> Key recommendations to support agricultural livelihoods include strengthening livestock disease surveillance, improving access to quality inputs and rehabilitating agricultural infrastructure.
Methodology

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) launched a household survey utilizing the Data in Emergencies Monitoring (DIEM-Monitoring) System between 29 August and 25 September 2023 to monitor agricultural livelihoods and food security in Sierra Leone. The data were collected during the lean period through computer-assisted telephone interviews across five provinces and the following sixteen districts: Bo, Bombali, Bonthe, Falaba, Kailahun, Kambia, Kenema, Koinadugu, Kono, Moyamba, Port Loko, Pujehun, Tonkolili, Western Area Rural and Western Area Urban. A total of 2,803 households were surveyed. Weights were applied to correct disproportionate sampling at the regional level.

Survey rounds six through nine have been drawn from to make comparisons throughout this brief. The ninth round was conducted from 10 February to 2 March 2023; the eighth round was conducted from 25 October to 15 December 2022; the seventh round was conducted from 12 June to 25 July 2022; and the sixth round was conducted from 1 to 25 February 2022.

Figure 1. Countries with an established DIEM-Monitoring System


The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined. The dotted line represents, approximately, the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

About DIEM-Monitoring

FAO established the DIEM-Monitoring System to collect, analyse and disseminate data on shocks and livelihoods in countries prone to multiple shocks. DIEM-Monitoring aims to inform decision making by providing regularly updated information on how different shocks are affecting the livelihoods and food security of agricultural populations.

At the core of the DIEM-Monitoring System are country-level dashboards. Readers are encouraged to explore these dashboards to gain more insight into the context of Sierra Leone and other countries.

> Learn more at https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org/pages/monitoring
Income and shocks

About 46 percent of the surveyed households have faced some sort of shock over the last three months. The most frequently reported shock was sickness, accident or death of a household member, in Pujehun (40 percent) and Moyamba (37 percent) in particular, followed by much higher than usual food prices (9 percent) and unusually high fuel prices (8 percent) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Main shocks reported (percentage of households)

When comparing the main shocks reported across recent rounds, there are sequential variations demonstrated in Figure 2. The percentage of households reporting sickness or death of a household member, now at 28 percent, has been trending upwards in recent rounds of data collection. This trend may be explained by seasonality, as incidence of disease tends to increase during the lean period. Households affected by death or illness may face additional challenges in accessing food and earning an income.
Households reporting unusually high fuel prices dropped from 23 percent in the sixth round to 8 percent in the current round. The households reporting unusually high food prices also dropped from 32 percent to 9 percent. Given that food and fuel prices continue to increase, this may demonstrate that persistent increases in these items may no longer present as a shock to some respondent households (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2023).

Households have reported a higher incidence of pest outbreak, and plant and animal diseases when compared to previous rounds. Fall armyworm and grasshoppers were among the plant pests reported.

Thirty-two percent of the respondents experienced a reduction in their main source of income during the three months preceding the survey compared to the same period in a typical year in Moyamba (40 percent) and Port Loko (36 percent), in particular. This represents an increase of almost ten percentage points as compared to the previous round and may reflect a slowing of economic activity during the lean season.

**Crops**

*Figure 3. Sierra Leone agricultural calendar*

![Sierra Leone agricultural calendar](https://www.fao.org/giews/countrybrief/country.jsp?lang=en&code=SLE)


About 80 percent of the surveyed households are involved in crop production. Among them, 77 percent reported crop production difficulties. Several crop production difficulties were
reported. The crop production difficulty most frequently reported was pest outbreak (35 percent), in particular in Tonkolili (43 percent), Bontha (42 percent), Kerene (42 percent) and Koinadugu (41 percent), followed by uncontrolled animal grazing (30 percent), lack of access to extra labour (28 percent), plant disease (22 percent), access to quality seeds (18 percent) and access to credit (16 percent) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Main crop production difficulties (percentage of crop producers)

Compared to the ninth round, the number of households reporting pest outbreak reduced from 48 percent to 35 percent in the current round. Uncontrolled grazing reduced from 33 percent to 30 percent, access to extra labour from 43 percent to 28 percent, plant diseases from 47 percent to 22 percent, low quality seeds from 30 percent to 18 percent, access to credit from 18 percent to 16 percent, and access to fertilizer from 49 percent to 14 percent. The reduction in crop production difficulties from the ninth round to the current round may be
related to the interventions put in place by the Government and development partners to improve food security.

Crop sales difficulties were reported by 44 percent of households. This was due to high transportation or other marketing costs (60 percent), low selling prices (34 percent), traders or local customers buying less than usual (22 percent), and payment delays from traders or buyers (20 percent).

**Livestock**

About 32 percent of the respondents are involved in livestock production. Over the three months preceding the survey, 69 percent of the respondent livestock producers reported production difficulties. Livestock diseases or injuries was the main livestock production difficulty reported (55 percent) (Figure 5). The data were collected during a period when livestock are especially prone to diseases because of the rainy season. Additional production difficulties reported were livestock theft (39 percent), difficulties purchasing feed (29 percent), difficulties accessing pasture (18 percent), and difficulties accessing veterinary inputs (15 percent) and services (13 percent).

**Figure 5. Main livestock production difficulties (percentage of livestock producers)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulties</th>
<th>Round 6 February 2022</th>
<th>Round 7 July 2022</th>
<th>Round 8 December 2022</th>
<th>Round 9 February 2023</th>
<th>Round 10 September 2023</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Livestock diseases</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock theft/insecurity</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchasing feed</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to pasture</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access veterinary inputs</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access veterinary services</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to water</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor access to livestock market to buy young animals</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive labour</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to credit</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the increase in the number of households reporting livestock diseases from the ninth round to the current round, there were also some significant improvements in the number of households reporting livestock theft, purchasing feed, access to pasture, and access to veterinary inputs and services. The improvement may be due to an increase in support from the Government and development partners in the livestock sector.

A decrease in the number of livestock was experienced by 40 percent of respondent livestock producers. Sales difficulties were experienced by about 29 percent and were mainly due to high transportation or marketing costs (60 percent), low selling prices (29 percent), and payment delays from traders or buyers (18 percent).

### Food security

About 63 percent of the households experienced moderate or severe RFI as measured with the FIES.¹ About 5 percent of the households experienced prevalence of severe recent food insecurity. According to the household dietary diversity score (HDDS), a third of the surveyed households have a high level of dietary diversity (33 percent), 25 percent have a medium level and 42 percent have a low level (Figure 6).

Seventy-one percent of the households experienced little to no hunger according to the household hunger scale (HHS), 25 percent experienced moderate hunger and 4 percent experienced severe hunger.

Eighty-three percent of households reporting employing coping strategies, as measured with the livelihood coping strategy index (LCSI), due to a lack of food or money. Nearly one-third (31 percent) of the respondent households relied on stress-level strategies, mainly spending savings (64 percent), borrowing money (53 percent), or purchasing food on credit or borrowing food (56 percent). Crisis strategies were also employed by 27 percent of households, including having to consume seed stock (39 percent), decreasing expenditures on agricultural inputs (33 percent) and having to harvest immature crops to eat (31 percent). Emergency coping strategies were used by 26 percent of the respondents, in particular, in the form of begging (22 percent). Seventeen percent of the respondents did not employ any coping strategy.

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¹ FIES results are subject to change, until the country scale is established for more consistent comparability across rounds.
Figure 6. Food security measures

Needs

The vast majority of the surveyed households declared the need for assistance (98 percent), however, only 2.5 percent reported receiving assistance which was mostly provided in the form of food and cash vouchers. Households declared the need for cash (79 percent), followed by the need for food (61 percent), and inputs for crop or vegetable production (52 percent) (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Main needs (percentage of households)

Recommendations

➢ Explore the causes of seed insecurity and seed security options (seed aid, seed networks, seed banks, etc.) to boost access to quality seeds.

➢ Rehabilitate major market roads to contribute to reduced transport and transaction costs, which in turn can facilitate access to markets and lead to a reduction in food prices.

➢ Scale up livestock feed production along with trainings on feed preparation.

➢ Promote livestock protection through livestock housing systems.

➢ Advocate for the surveillance of livestock diseases by, for example, increasing livestock officer visits, increasing the ratio of livestock community animal health workers to producers, and by strengthening the capacity of community animal health workers through refresher trainings.

➢ Social protection programmes should be implemented with conditional and unconditional cash transfers to meet the reported need for cash.

➢ Promote the development of a Food Security Crisis Preparedness and Response Plan that could allow for triggered ad hoc responses to needs.
Notes


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