



Government of Sierra Leone

# Cashew Value Chain Policy

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Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)

June 2019



Ministry of Agriculture  
and Forestry (MAF)



Funded by the  
European Union

## Acknowledgement

The Cashew Value Chain Policy was prepared for the Ministry of Agriculture (MAF), with support of the National Consultant Aisie-nana Victoria Williams.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry (MAF) expresses its thanks and appreciation to the European Union (EU) for funding and implementing the Boosting Agriculture for Food Security Project (BAFS), especially to the BAFS Team Leader Steven Hind and the Technical Assistant Team (TAT) and the Project Coordinating Unit (PCU).

Special thanks and appreciation to the Competitive Cashew Initiative (ComCashew), a regional GIZ Project supporting the Cashew Value Chain in Africa, particularly to Maria Schmidt, Advisor Sector Organization, who contributed to the work as Co-Author and Technical Advisor and Agyarko Mintah, M&E Officer, for the technical field support.

Thanks, and appreciation goes to all the industry stakeholders that we met in the field, – smallholder cashew farmers and representatives of Farmer Based Organizations; representatives of MAF, especially Ambrose Bindi Kamara, Assistant Director Tree Crops, who was part of the technical team and contributed considerably to the present; Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), especially the Trades Director; public agencies and institutes, such as the Sierra Leone Agriculture Research Institute (SLARI), the Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SLIEPA) and the Produce Monitoring Board (PMB); private sector representatives, such as Balmed Holdings, Sierra Leone Chamber of Agricultural Development (SLCAD), NADECO, Vin Cent Kanu Farm and

Women Buying Agents; and all other public and private cashew stakeholders for their contributions and willingness to cooperate.

Credit is given to the authors of the “End of Monitoring for a comprehensive Assessment and Profiling of established cashew farms”- Report (March 2016) by the EU/GIZ Agriculture for Development project, and of the “Baseline survey to assess the potential of cashew development Sierra Leone” by the Competitive Cashew Initiative:

We hope that the information in this report and the optimistic projections into the policy and guidelines will be useful to cashew industry stakeholders and all who are willing to enter this non-traditional cash crop.

## Executive Summary

The present document represents cashew policy for the Republic of Sierra Leone. Cashew is an existing cash crop in Sierra Leone, with a big potential for the social and economic development of the country. Unfortunately, this potential is currently under-exploited and this policy will provide a strategic framework for the sustainable development of this non-traditional tree crop.

The document is composed of an analysis of the cashew sector and presents the opportunities that the value chain offers to the population of Sierra Leone. Stakeholder concertation's, focus group discussions, field visits and observations have shown a growing interest of private and public actors for the cashew value chain. Nevertheless, numerous challenges are faced by the actors involved, such as weak organization and capacities of actors, insufficient access to finance, unavailability of improved planting material and inputs, risks related to land rights and climate change, absence of cashew related research and an overall unstructured value chain.

In order to address those challenges and to provide a framework for the promotion of the cashew sector in Sierra Leone, the second part of this document presents a set of policy guidelines, focusing on the following aspects of the value chain:

- Production
- Research
- Value addition through processing and by-products
- Trade and export promotion
- Access to finance
- Organization of the sector
- Cross-cutting issues

## Acronyms and abbreviations

Abbreviations	Definitions
ABC	Agricultural Business Center
A4D	Agriculture for Development
BAFS	Boosting Agriculture and Food Security
BH Ltd	Balmed Holdings
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program
CCC	Coffee Cocoa Cashew
CICC	Consultative International Cashew Council
ComCashew	Competitive Cashew Initiative
COOPI	Cooperazione Internazionale
EPA	Environment Protection Agency
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FBO	Farmer Based Organization
FFS	Farmer Field School
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
KamCashew	Kambia Cashew
MA	Marketing Association
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MT	Metric Tons
MTI	Ministry of Trades and Industry
NADECO	National Agricultural Development Company of Sierra Leone
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSADP	National Sustainable Agriculture Development Plan
PMB	Produce Monitoring Board
RCN	Raw Cashew Nut
SLARI	Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institution
SLeCAD	Sierra Leone Chamber of Agricultural Development
SLIEPA	Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency
SOP	Standard Operations Procedure
SLSB	Sierra Leone Standards Bureau
UN	United Nations
WARC	West African Rice Company

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## Chapter 1: Background and methodology of a cashew strategy in Sierra Leone

### 1.1. Introduction

With a rural population representing more than two thirds of the overall population<sup>1</sup> and depending mainly on agriculture as principal source of income and food, the agricultural sector is of primordial importance for the social and economic development of Sierra Leone. Agriculture is contributing to more than half of the gross domestic product. It is estimated that agriculture is providing employment for about 75% of the population, with women as predominant labor force. These employments are mainly concentrated on smallholder farms, most of them limiting their activities to simple subsistence farming. The potential for expansion of agricultural activities and increase of agricultural productivity is considerable, given the fact that about 74% of Sierra Leone's land is considered suitable for cultivation, although almost 80% of all farmers cultivate less than 10% of that land<sup>2</sup>.

In Sierra Leone, the agricultural sector includes food crops, tree crops, fisheries, livestock and forestry and this sector has been and continues to be an engine for development, income generation and employment creation. Investing in agriculture is a way of creating perspectives for sustainable development and preparing the country's population to the challenges of the future.

The high potential that agriculture offers for the socio-economic development of the country is today only poorly exploited. Low productivity of agricultural value chains, poor infrastructures, insufficient linkage to international markets, unavailability of improved planting material and knowledge on good agricultural practices, as well as the effects of socio-political shocks, such as the civil war, the Ebola virus epidemic or the effects of natural catastrophes, have and continue to weaken the agricultural sector in Sierra Leone.

The "Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis" of the UN FAO World Food Program reported that, in 2016 more than half of the country's population lives in food insecurity. Food insecurity is particularly high in rural areas (60% of the population there concerned) and in some districts, such as Bombali, Bonthe, Kailahun and Kenema, the levels of food insecurity have doubled since 2010<sup>3</sup>. These figures are alarming, as the highest numbers of food insecure people were engaged in farming and the majority of households in rural areas (77.3percent) cited agriculture as their main livelihood.

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<sup>1</sup> According to FAO Country Statistics 2013, rural population represents 65% of the total population in Sierra Leone

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.fao.org/sierra-leone/fao-in-sierra-leone/sierra-leone-glance/en/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/new-report-highlights-fragile-state-food-security-sierra-leone-after-ebola-outbreak>  
<http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ena/wfp288316.pdf>

In addition to this, the country is highly dependent on agricultural imports and the export of agricultural products, mainly of cash crops, is not contributing to the country's trade balance sufficiently. In other words, the net agricultural deficit represents up to five times the value generated by agricultural exports<sup>4</sup>.

In order to benefit of the potential that agriculture offers and to tackle the above-mentioned challenges, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, has developed a vision "***Make agriculture the 'engine' for socio-economic growth and development through commercial agriculture***", which has been translated into the "National Sustainable Agriculture Development Plan 2010-2030"<sup>5</sup>, in line with the countries adaptation of the Malabo Declaration and the "Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program" (CAADP) Objectives. The National Plan aims to realize the following objectives until 2030:

- Fostering increased agricultural productivity (intensification)
- Promoting commercial agriculture through Private Sector (extensification)
- Improving Research & Extension Service Delivery
- Promoting effective and efficient Resource (financial, physical and human) Management
- Mainstreaming cross-cutting themes: gender and youth promotion, farmer health care issues and natural sustainability

In this regard, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) is charged with the specific mandate to formulate agricultural development policies and promote selected crops and value chains.

Besides the traditional tree crops, such as coffee and cocoa, cashew has been identified recently as a potential crop to boost the agricultural sector of the country.

Cashew, botanically known as *Anacardium occidentale*, is a perennial plant that is mainly grown in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Its life cycle varies between 25 and 30 years and is grown as a reforestation tree and gives the following main products:

- Cashew nuts: raw nuts exported or processed locally, whose almond is consumed and used for processed products (pastry, chocolate, cooking, etc.)
- Cashew apple: consumed fresh or processed to juice, jam or alcohol.

Africa, accounting for more than half of the world's cashew production, is a source of quality and quantity for this highly demanded product on the global market. The cashew production of African countries is constantly increasing, a trend that has made Ivory Coast, with more than 700,000 tons of raw nuts in 2017, and the world's largest producer of cashew nuts. The potential of the cashew

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<sup>4</sup> <http://sierraleone.opendataforafrica.org/nbkzqg/sierra-leone-agriculture-sheet>

<sup>5</sup> National Plan available on: [http://maf.gov.sl/images/Uploads/Policies/NSADP\\_CAADP.pdf](http://maf.gov.sl/images/Uploads/Policies/NSADP_CAADP.pdf)

value chain is unfortunately under-exploited in all cashew producing countries, especially in terms of local processing of raw nuts and apples.

The product offers significant opportunities for income generation, rural employment creation (especially for women heavily involved in harvesting, post-harvesting, local processing and product marketing), as well as adaptation and mitigation of the effects of climate change, through agricultural diversification and the restoration of degraded landscapes.

In Sierra Leone, cashew is an existing crop that is today mainly cultivated in the northern, southern and eastern provinces of the country. With more than 14,500 farmers involved in the cashew sector, approximately 4300 MT were produced in 2017<sup>6</sup>. The country offers extensive arable land, the greater proportion of which is either underutilized or not utilized at all. Given this fact, the government has recognized cashew as an alternative cash crop to diversify agriculture and export with the aim of boosting the economy.

Against this background, the Government of Sierra Leone, and thereby especially MAF has identified cashew as one of the non-traditional tree crop priorities for the country and wishes to promote this value chain.

## **1.2. Objectives of the national policy strategy**

In order to promote the cashew sector in Sierra Leone, there is a need for a strategic framework and the sector has to be analyzed and understood by all actors. The objective of this policy document is to provide an analysis of the existing cashew value chain in Sierra Leone and to identify the potential of this value chain for the social and economic development of the country. This analysis will be the basis of a set of policy guidelines recommended to frame the future cashew related actions and support offered by MAF. The overall objective is to provide a strategic framework for the sustainable and inclusive growth and development of the cashew sector in Sierra Leone.

Furthermore, the specific objectives of the cashew policy are:

- To set up a framework that will give guidance and direction to the sector
- To define and inform institutional roles and responsibilities in the cashew sector
- To ensure the incorporation of bylaws into the National policy to address issues affecting farmers
- To promote and guide the production of Raw Cashew Nut (RCN) nationwide

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<sup>6</sup> ComCashew Sierra Leone Factsheet 2017

- To promote the entire cashew value chain
- To encourage private sector engagement in order to sustain employment creation in the sector
- To promote climate smart agriculture in order to protect the environment

### 1.3. Methodology

To provide a broader framework and guiding principles for the development of the cashew sector, a lead consultant, supported by a technical committee composed of representatives of MAF and cashew experts of the German technical cooperation GIZ, has been mandated to develop a national policy strategy for the cashew sector in Sierra Leone.

This strategy is composed of two parts, first an analysis of the cashew value chain in Sierra Leone, highlighting the current state of the sector, its potential and challenges for a sustainable development. Based on this analytical part, the document comprises a set of policy guidelines, in order to provide a strategic framework for the cashew sector in Sierra Leone. This work has been elaborated from January to May 2018 for the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Sierra Leone and was undertaken in three phases:

1. Review and analysis
2. Stakeholder concertation
3. Policy validation

The first phase of this work consisted in the review of pertinent cashew and other cash crop related policies in the sub region (Ghana, Ivory Coast, Benin and Nigeria). In addition to that, an analysis of available documentation, data and information on the cashew sector in Sierra Leone, as well as research on the potential and challenges for the agricultural sector in Sierra Leone, has been conducted.

The desk review was followed by a phase of stakeholder concertation, in the form of individual interviews of relevant cashew sector stakeholders and focus group discussions. That concertation took place in Freetown, especially with relevant public actors involved in the cashew sector and in three cashew producing chiefdoms, namely Kambia, Bombali and Kailahun Districts. In this regard, relevant public, private and non-governmental actors, who are directly and indirectly involved in the cashew sector were consulted, such as:

- Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)
- Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI)

- Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SLIEPA)
- Produce Monitoring Board (PMB)
- Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI)
- Blamed Holdings (private buyer and exporter)
- Vincent Kanu Farm
- Women Buying Agents
- National Agriculture Development Company
- Sierra Leone Chamber of Agriculture (SLeCAD)
- Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce Industry and Agriculture
- Chiefdom Authorities
- Smallholder farmers in Kambia, Bombali ,and Kailahun Districts
- Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI)
- Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GIZ / Competitive Cashew Initiative ComCashew

During this consultation phase, focus group discussion workshops were organized with three cashew producing chiefdoms, Kambia, Bombali and Kailahun. These focus group discussions brought together in total more than 90 smallholder cashew farmers (30 per session). A guiding questionnaire<sup>7</sup> was developed to structure the focus group discussions, covering all relevant aspects of the value chain. The objectives were to identify:

- The reasons why farmers in the respective districts have decided to cultivate cashew
- The importance of cashew to their lives and how the crop is or will influence their social and economic situation
- The challenges and needs expressed by the farmers engaged in cashew farming
- The need for support from government and other actors, in order to successfully develop the cashew sector to a benefit of all persons involved

The information collected through these focus group discussions and the various interviews with central public and private actors, have been analyzed and evaluated in the present document and serve as basis for the elaboration of policy recommendations. This is a non-exhaustive representation of stakeholders, nevertheless, the key information gathered has enabled the technical team to draw a picture of the emerging cashew sector in Sierra Leone and to point out the needs for a strategic framework.

The third phase of this work consisted in the a strategic framework, in form of the elaboration of a policy document, The document is structured in two main components, an analysis of the

findings of phase one and two and a component covering policy recommendations for the cashew value chain.

The present document is the result of those three phases and has the purpose of being submitted to the lead Ministry for cashew in Sierra Leone, MAF, serving as guiding principle for further policy and strategy development by the Ministry.

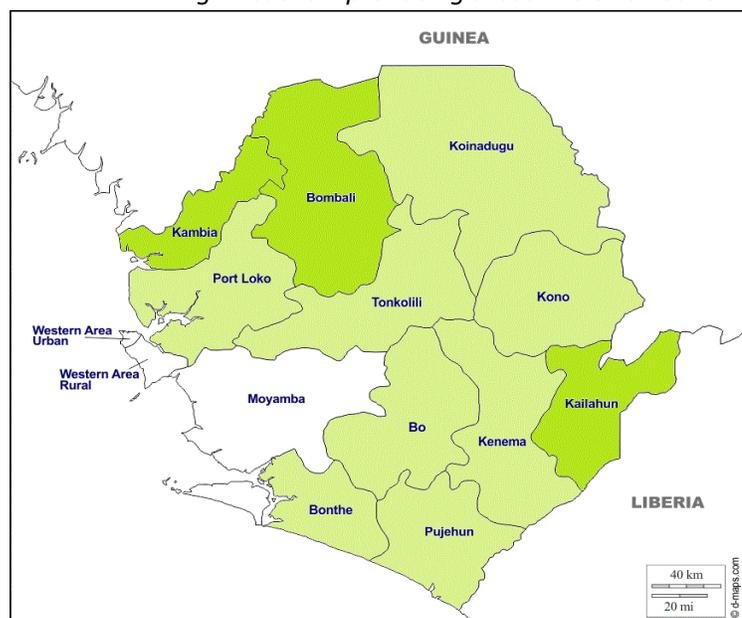
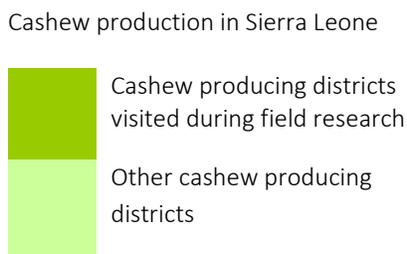
## Chapter 2: Analysis of the cashew value chain in Sierra Leone

This chapter gives an overview of the cashew value chain in Sierra Leone and the analysis reflects the findings of the field work, stakeholder concertation, interviews and desk research.

### 2.1. Cashew production in Sierra Leone

The introduction of cashew can be dated back to the colonial era, however, the crop was then not exploited commercially and there was no clear knowledge of cashew, its uses and its potential. In Sierra Leone, cashew began to gain some prominence in the late 1980s, when Magbema cashew Farmers Association first cultivated 1, 500 Acre/ 600ha of cashew in Kambia District. A Private sector enterprise Kamcashew set up a large cashew plantation and the first processing plant in Kambia District in 2003. This initiative ignited a huge interest among cashew farmers and triggered the promotion of cashew cultivation in other districts of the country. In the following years, the government of Sierra Leone intensified the promotion of cashew with the ambition to make cashew a cash crop for export. As the interest of the non-traditional cash crop grew nationwide, the Agriculture for Development (A4D) project, funded by the European Union and implemented by *Corporazione Internazionale* (COOPI) and the National Federation of Farmers Sierra Leone, with support from MAF has widely supported the emerging cashew sector and its interventions contributed significantly to an increase of cashew production in the country.

Fig.1: Cashew producing areas in Sierra Leone

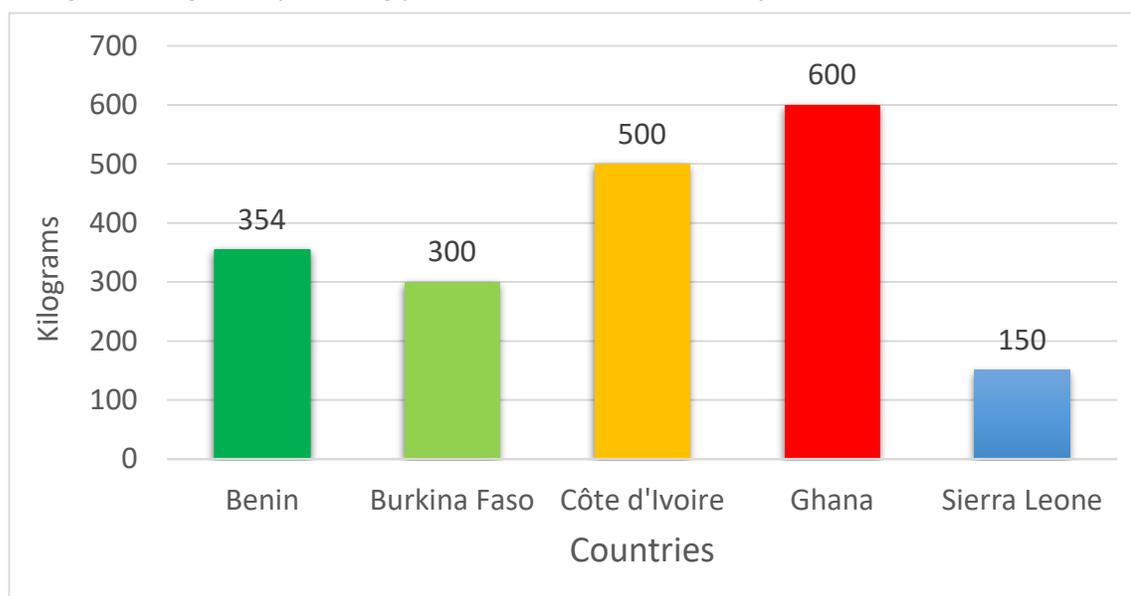


Today, the cashew production is concentrated in the districts of Port Loko, Kambia, Bombali (including Karene), Kenema, Pujehun, Bo, Kailahun, Kono, Koinadugu, and Tonkoilili<sup>8</sup>, with a total surface plantations estimated of about 7,000 hectare.

The majority of cashew producers in the country are smallholder farmer, cultivating small surfaces and facing a multitude of challenges.

The productivity of the plantations is extremely low, in 2017 it has been estimated at only 150kg per hectare. In comparison, the global average is estimated at 785kg/ha and in the sub region, other producing countries such as Ghana (600 kg/ha average) and Côte d'Ivoire (500kg/ha average) are more 3 to 4 times more productive. In this regard, the national capacity to produce for export is extremely low compared to other countries in Africa.

*Fig.2: Average RCN yield in kg per hectare in selected West African countries, 2017*



*Source: ComCashew 2018*

In rural areas, farmers are increasingly interested in the crop and understand its high potential. This is the main finding from the focus group discussions held in 3 different cashew producing areas and was also reflected in all other stakeholder interviews conducted. All respondents stated the fact that cashew had positive effects on their incomes and has contributed to create jobs in rural areas. This has been particularly underlined by women, who noted that cashew cultivation provides economic empowerment and security.

<sup>8</sup> See Figure 1

Nearly all respondents indicated that the income generated has been partly re-invested in their farms, in order to make this activity sustainable. The additional income gained through cashew cultivation has enabled them to improve their nutritional status, to finance education, to invest in their houses and farms and to diversify their source of income, especially during the hungry season. At the height of the focus group discussion, a woman gladly states that “*cashew nar moni moni nar cashew*” emphasizing the importance of cashew cultivation. Farmers explained how they were attracted by the uniqueness of the fruit and the fact that it can be cultivated easily, without much struggle like cocoa or other cash crops. Majority of the interviewed farmers explained that they fully understand the potential of investing in cashew.

In terms of support in form of trainings, inputs and planting material, farmers in the producing areas of Kambia and Bombali stated that they have mostly received farm input and seedlings from COOPI. Some famers in Bombali stated that they have gained some training from MAF, while some in Kailahun said MAF distributed seedlings in 2013 but no follow up was made.

Notwithstanding this high potential, a multitude of challenges were described by the farmers involved in cashew production in Sierra Leone:

- Poor quality of planting material leading to low yields and weak productivity, the average yields in Sierra Leone are estimated 150kg /ha, this is particularly below sub regional average and caused by the use of old, non-performing varieties.
- Unavailability of labor or too cost intensive services, for farm maintenance and harvest season
- No access to farm inputs and equipment
- Insufficient practice of intercropping, due to lack of knowledge
- External threats such as bush fire in the dry season, destroying young plantations. Those are due to anthropogenic reasons (cattle owners burn territories to get fresh grass for their animals) and to climate change effects, leading to more intense dry periods making the young plantations more vulnerable
- Absence of cashew specific knowledge on good agricultural practices, harvest and post-harvest techniques and climate smart agriculture
- Weak capacities in agric-business management: in all cashew producing districts, most of the respondent said that they have limited or no training in business development, record keeping, financial management and farm management
- Absence of quality control measures and appropriated infrastructures to ensure a competitive quality of the product
- Insufficient access to finance, especially to loans adapted to farm economics, weak financial framework and stringent collateral requirement

- Difficult access to land and insecure formal land rights  
Concerns were raised by farmers, mostly by women, who entered into land lease agreement without proper documentation, what makes the future of their cashew farms particularly vulnerable. Cashew being a long-term plantation, land rights and inheritance are of particular importance.
- Insufficient inclusion of women and youth in all segments of the cashew production

## 2.2. Cashew related agricultural research

Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI) was established in 2007 through an Act of Parliament as the sole government agricultural research and agricultural technology generating body, for the benefit of the farming, fishing and forestry sectors in Sierra Leone. Its vision is to increase food security and wealth by contributing to sustainable agricultural growth and effective agricultural research system<sup>9</sup>. This will be achieved by supporting agricultural growth through increasing productivity by the generation and promotion of innovative technology and the empowerment of stakeholders.

The tree crop division of SLARI has so far not undertaken any research activities related to cashew, as cashew is a new crop and has not yet been part of the agricultural research priorities. Experts are yet to be linked to research networks in the sub region and build knowledge on improved cashew varieties, reproduction and distribution of improved planting material and development.

With the new European Union project, Boosting Agriculture for Food Security (BAFS), SLARI, is one of the beneficiaries and will be working with both the BAFS project and MAF in order to develop national cashew related capacities.

## 2.3. Value addition through cashew nut processing and by-products

The cashew processing industry in Sierra Leone does not yet exist. The large majority of cashew nuts are exported as raw cashew nuts and therefor farmers sell them directly to buyers and traders who are linked to the international market. In the field work undertaken, farmers stated that some of them practice artisanal processing for local markets or self-consumption, but no form of commercialized processing has been identified so far. The processing unit set up by the private company Kamcashew in 2003 in Kambia District is not fully operational. The equipment installed,

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<sup>9</sup> [www.slari.gov.sl](http://www.slari.gov.sl)

for steaming, sorting, shelling and peeling, is old and serves for small-scale artisanal processing of kernels. The product is sold on the domestic market and data on the number of kernels processed and the economic impact of this activity was not available. Besides this, processing units were set up in Kambia, Port Loko and Bombali, to operate a first pre-shelling close to the production area. Those units are today not functional and not used.

The current production volumes in the country make it difficult to develop profitable modern processing industry, as there will be not enough qualitative supply of raw material. However, stakeholders interviewed indicated that there is a need for MAF to promote cashew processing of the kernel, cashew apples and the cashew nut shell oil.

The byproducts of cashew are namely cashew apples and raw cashew nut shell oil. Concerning the apples, there is currently no commercialization of the fruit and no further processing. The fruits are not sold on the local markets, nor are they processed into value adding products such as for example dried fruits, juice or jam. Over 95% of the cashew apples are wasted and only very little quantities are used for auto-consumption and small scale processing into juice and alcohol, mainly in Kambia District by one private sector entrepreneur, namely Alimamy Kingdom Kamara. Cashew apples are often eaten by children in the communities. Farmers and rural population are not aware of the nutritional benefit of the fruit. Given the alarming food insecurity situation, especially in rural areas, the consumption of cashew apples could contribute to an important improvement of living conditions.

Processing cashew nuts and its by-products is a quasi-non-existing activity in the country. Stakeholders lack knowledge, processing skills and equipment to build up a sustainable value addition sector and generate income of it.

## **2.4. Cashew trade and export**

Cashew trade in Sierra Leone is characterized by a weak organization and regulation of the actors involved, absence of adequate market information and a difficult access to markets.

Farmers interviewed in the cashew producing regions complained about poor infrastructures, absence of warehouses and possibilities to stock raw cashew nuts and a lack of access to the market. This led to the fact that in some districts, such as in Kailahun, farmers lost interest in the cashew sector and stopped the cultivation, not seeing how to sell the product and for what market they can produce the crop.

Buyers and traders are mostly not registered or licensed, this leads to a very open and unregulated market, where farm gate buying happens often to the disadvantage of the farmer or in very savage

competition. This is reinforced by the issue of the porous borders, especially to Guinea. A major challenge reported in the cashew producing regions is smuggling of cashew to neighboring Guinea and wild concurrence.

Market information and pricing mechanisms are mostly unknown in the sector. There is a clear lack of access to reliable market information. Thus, prices are not transparent and communicated in the production areas. Farmers interviewed in the field work phase of this research have clearly explained they are not aware of the prices in the country and that judge the paid prices as unfair. Most of the farmers interviewed have no established supply linkages; they sell to any buyer who comes to their farm. A lot mentioned foreign buyers, mainly from the neighboring Guinea. Exchanges with the Customs officers and Boarder police officers in Koindu and Yenga have underlined that the area was prone to smuggling, mainly because of porous borders. The officers stated that it has been challenging for them to control the border area in order to stop cashew smuggling and there has not been any coordination between them and MAF.

Sierra Leone has recorded its first legal export of 63.2 MT of Raw Cashew Nut by Balmed holdings a Private sector company in 2017. Besides this, no cashew trade has been recorded officially and in general records are barely kept, what made it particularly difficult to analyze the volumes traded and the actors involved.

The Produce Monitoring Board (PMB) and Sierra Leone Investment and Export Promotion Agency (SLIEPA) are not yet involved in the value chain but expressed a strong interest. PMB wishes to play a central role in price fixation and communication, as well as in establishing quality control measures. SLIEPA, among other things, highlighted the need for an enabling environment, increased Incentive for investment in the sector and easily understandable price regulations. Both public agencies are working under the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) and in order to be actively involved in the sector, it is primordial for MAF to join forces with MTI.

## **2.5. Organization of the cashew sector**

From a general perspective during the discussions, it clearly came out that the governance structures in the cashew sector are weak. There are no existing governance or administrative structures of the cashew sector with clear roles and responsibilities, starting at the Ministry level down to the farmers. Furthermore, it became clear that the actors do not have clear mandate of their intervention on the value chain and lack adequate and sufficient knowledge on cashew and in managing and providing services for the sector.

At the level of MAF, cashew has been selected as one of the non-traditional tree crops supposed to be promoted nationwide. The present policy is one of the results this setting of priority. Up to now, there is no dedicated cashew desk at MAF, making it difficult to coordinate and manage the activities in the sector. In an exchange with the former Honorable Minister of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security, Professor Monty Jones emphasized on how laudable this venture is and pledged the government of Sierra Leone's commitment to the Cashew Policy. He further stated that his Ministry is willing and prepared to learn from other cashew producing countries and expressed the government's interest in joining the Consultative International Cashew Council (CICC).

Other Ministries and public agencies linked to the cashew value chain, such as Ministry of Trade (MTI), PMB and SLIEPA are not yet fully aware of their role in the value chain and expressed a need for capacity building and awareness creation.

From the stakeholder engagements, it was obvious that there had been some existing structure of Farmer Based Organizations. Cashew Commodity Associations had been established in all cashew producing district, especially Kambia, Kailahun and Bombali. It was deduced that these associations were small holder farmers with enthusiasm and much awareness of cashew, and its economic value. Six Cashew Commodity Association have been formed in Port Loko, Kambia and Bombali by the former A4D project funded by the European Union. Unfortunately, they are almost dysfunctional due to lack of capacity, insufficient funds and inability to manage the association. Farmers operate mostly on an individual basis and are de facto not organized.

Actors in the buying and trading segment are mostly informal and unorganized. Only one official exporter has been formally identified so far, Balmed Holdings, and the market is composed of a lot of foreign buyers, smugglers and informal retailers.

Among technical and financial partners, the newly established project 'Boosting Agriculture and Food Security' - BAFS (2017-2021) funded by the European Union and implemented through MAF is targeting the cashew sector as well. GIZ International Services in partnership with the West African Rice Company (WARC) is giving Technical Assistance to the project.

The overall objective of the BAFS project is "reduction of poverty and food insecurity in Sierra Leone through better governance and household improved living conditions and higher incomes", while there are three specific objectives:

- Institutional capacity-building and formulation of food security strategies and sector policies;
- Support to cashew, cocoa and coffee (CCC) for export;
- Support to environmentally sustainable agricultural diversification.

In this regard, Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), a non-governmental organization is complementing the effort of BAFS and MAF by giving input materials to farmers, monitoring farms in their operational areas, facilitate access to markets and provide trainings in the Northern Region.

Furthermore, the German cooperation is also supporting activities in the sector through its regional cashew value chain project Competitive Cashew Initiative that has added Sierra Leone as new, 6<sup>th</sup> intervention country in the sub-region.

In spite of the many and varied opportunities from cashew, Sierra Leone cashew sector is faced with numerous challenges which included weak governance structure, weak actors, lack of knowledge and experience in managing cashew. The previous analysis has given a wide picture of those challenges and enables us to develop a National Cashew policy framework which will govern, regulate and give direction to the cashew sector in Sierra Leone.

## Chapter 3: Policy set up

The Mandate MAF is aligned to the National Sustainable Agricultural Development Plan (NSADP) 2010-2030. This plan identifies four program areas which include a commodity commercialization program, an agriculture infrastructure program, a private sector initiative in order to provide an enabling environment and sector coordination to ensure and foster a collaborative approach in the management and implementation of agricultural activities.

Cashew has been identified as a non-traditional tree crop and the present policy is in line with the NSADP and reflects the will of MAF to promote and support the emerging cashew sector in Sierra Leone. The following policy guidelines shall serve as framework for the Ministry, its affiliated public agencies and other Ministries concerned by the value chain to design policy action plan and implement favorable activities for the sector.

The overall vision of this policy is to develop a sustainable and competitive cashew sector in Sierra Leone by 2030, covering all suitable production areas and exploiting the full potential of this tree crop, by providing income and employment in rural areas, addressing food security issues and contributing to a climate-smart diversification of the agricultural sector.

In this regard, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will include cashew as one of its priority crops and will therefore:

- Adopt a value chain approach and ensure inter-ministerial exchange
- Encourage nationwide a sustainable and competitive cashew production
- Support cashew related agricultural research
- Encourage local processing and value addition
- Provide market information
- Promote cashew trade and export
- Contribute to a strong and sustainable sector organization
- Exchange and learn with other cashew producing countries
- Promote local consumption of cashew nuts and apples
- Collaborate with technical and financial partners
- Advocate for a gender-sensitive cashew sector

### 3.1. Cashew production

All cashew production related policy guidelines will be addressed by the Crops Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

<b>Policy Context</b>	Cashew production in Sierra Leone is still at an emerging state and the volumes produced have not yet attained a competitive level. The country disposes of available arable land and perfect climatic conditions for cashew production. The interest is nationwide growing, nevertheless smallholder farmers are facing several challenges, resulting in low yields and an under-exploited potential of the cashew sector in Sierra Leone.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	A sustainable and competitive cashew production is nationwide practiced.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and encourage nationwide production of cashew, by including cashew to the priority tree crops in its national strategies and plans</li> <li>• Provide a dedicated budget to facilitate the provision of agricultural inputs, extension services and trainings</li> <li>• Provide a framework for all actors involved in the cashew sector and contribute to an increase in quantity and quality of cashew production.</li> <li>• Encourage youth groups and women associations to get into cashew production.</li> </ul>

#### 3.1.1. Improved cashew planting material

<b>Policy Context</b>	Cashew production in Sierra Leone is characterized by very low yield levels and the use of poor quality inputs. Seedling production and supply to farmers is weakly organized.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Quality inputs and improved planting material are used and available in all cashew producing areas.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build capacities and reinforce existing public and private nurseries, to enable them to provide quality seedlings for cashew production</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In collaboration with research institutes identify mother trees and high yielding local varieties and evaluate the potential of multiplication</li> <li>• Disseminate knowledge on improved planting material and facilitate access through the Extension Division of MAF</li> <li>• Introduce improved planting varieties and production techniques from other advanced cashew producing countries</li> <li>• Provide phyto-sanitary certificates for all imported seed and seedlings of cashew</li> </ul>
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### 3.1.2. Farm Management Practice

<b>Policy Context</b>	Private owned cashew farms are generally poorly managed and not competitive. This is due to lack of knowledge in good agricultural practices and efficient farm maintenance. Farmers have difficulties in mobilizing resources to maintain their farms and have little knowledge of cashew specific agricultural practices.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Farmers adopt good management systems and agriculture practices and increase thereby the productivity of their cashew plantations.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the adoption of best agronomical practices, and the development of yield, quality and productivity benchmarks for cashew cultivation</li> <li>• Encourage the development and dissemination of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and Good Farm Management manuals for the cashew sector</li> <li>• In collaboration with the private sector intensify its effort to support and encourage the strengthening of existing Farmer Field Schools (FFS), Farmer Based Organisations (FBOs), Functional Agricultural Business Centers (ABC's), Cooperatives, Marketing Associations (MA) as well as creation of new farmer groups, to disseminate knowledge and best practices.</li> <li>• Establish specific Farmer Field Schools for cashew production</li> </ul> <p>Provision of resources for trained extension officers who will be working with cashew farmers</p>

### 3.1.3. Agricultural diversification

<b>Policy Context</b>	Cashew can be intercropped and diversified with food crops, such as maize, yam, pineapple, ginger or groundnut, especially in the early stages of the plantation, before the canopies close. The practice of intercropping provides additional food and income, especially in the hungry season and contributes to fight the high food insecurity in the cashew producing areas. Nevertheless, intercropping is not sufficiently practiced in cashew plantations.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Intercropping of cashew farms with food crops is practiced nationwide and contributes to food security, as well as income and employment generation.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage smallholder farmers to intercrop their cashew plantations with food crops</li> <li>• Provide knowledge on intercropping practices and GAP, include into training manuals</li> <li>• Promote beekeeping in cashew farms</li> <li>• Collaborate with non-governmental organizations and private sector to promote intercropping with food crops.</li> </ul>

#### 3.1.4. Pest and disease management

<b>Policy Context</b>	Specific cashew pests and diseases have been one of the major challenge of cashew cultivation in Sierra Leone. Farmers mostly lack of knowledge in identifying those threats and treating them sustainably.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Pest and diseases that affect the cashew production in Sierra Leone are successfully prevented or controlled.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include cashew into the Crop Protection Unit of MAF</li> <li>• Provide technical assistance and adapted solutions for farmers by ensuring proper application of pesticides, environmental friendly solutions and good farm management.</li> <li>• Encourage research on cashew pest and diseases and ensure to vulgarize the results of this research through its own extension services in the rural areas.</li> <li>• Include cashew in the national pest control plan</li> </ul>

### 3.1.5. Infrastructure for cashew production

<b>Policy Context</b>	Functional infrastructures are necessary for the development of the cashew sector. This is especially important for farmers whose cashew farms are very far from main roads and urban sites. Most of the producers do not have proper storage capacities and thus encounter difficulties during the harvest period. With improper storage facilities, farmers run the risk of having their produce been infected by pest and diseases and might be forced to sell their raw cashew nuts at low prices.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Functional infrastructures are available to ensure quality production of cashew nuts.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize existing, but currently not sufficiently exploited, Agricultural Business Centers (ABC) in cashew production areas</li> <li>• Work with the private sector to establish warehousing facilities and market outlets in key cashew producing district.</li> <li>• Facilitate post-harvest services and facilitate transport facilities to market locations.</li> <li>• Encourage infrastructure in cashew producing districts.</li> </ul>

### 3.1.6. Climate Smart Agriculture

<b>Policy Context</b>	Land degradation and other climate change effects have adversely affected agricultural production in Sierra Leone. Cashew plantation could be used to reclaim the degraded lands and to mitigate the effect of deforestation and desertification. In addition to that, cashew adaptable to the ongoing climatic change and offers a potential for agricultural adaptation.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Climate smart agriculture is practiced and promoted in all cashew producing districts.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote climate smart agriculture in their programs and target specifically cashew cultivation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency, streamline climate sensitive agricultural practices</li> <li>• Conduct research activities on land rehabilitation, reclamation and the use of cashew.</li> </ul>
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### 3.2. Research

All cashew research related policy guidelines will be addressed by MAF in collaboration with the Sierra Leone Agriculture Research Institute (SLARI) and agriculture related universities.

<b>Policy Context</b>	Unlike other cash crops such as cocoa and coffee, no cashew related research activities have been undertaken in the country so far.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Cashew his part of the agricultural research activities undertaken in Sierra Leone and the results of these research activities are successfully disseminated in all cashew producing districts.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide oversight to SLARI to ensure that appropriate research on high yielding and improved cashew planting material is conducted.</li> <li>• Support and encourage Science, Technology and Innovation in the cashew sector.</li> <li>• Increase the resources of SLARI specifically devoted to cashew and build cashew related capacity of all other research institutions.</li> <li>• In collaboration with SLARI establish cashew clonal seed garden</li> <li>• Involve university research centers, such as Njala University and University of Makeni, and upcoming research centers in cashew related research, increase their capacities and encourage the inclusion of cashew in their curriculum</li> <li>• Collaborate with private companies and NGOs to carry out Research &amp; Development activities on cashew</li> <li>• Build capacity of MAF extension staff, in order to disseminate research results and provide advisory services to cashew farmers.</li> <li>• Link SLARI and other research institutes to international cashew research networks, such as the Cashew Research Development Network (REDAA)</li> </ul>

### 3.3. Value addition and processing

All processing related policy guidelines will be addressed in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry and its agencies.

<b>Policy Context</b>	Processing has been the missing link in the cashew value chain in Sierra Leone. Even though few actors are doing artisanal processing of the kernel for domestic consumption, this remains on a small and insignificant level.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Cashew products are increasingly locally processed, in order to exploit the whole value chain and create employment and income.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will seek a close exchange and collaboration with MTI and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to the promotion of local processing in future</li> <li>• Ensure high quality product through the above stated policy guidelines for production as supply for local processing units</li> <li>• Encourage value addition in form of by-product use and processing</li> <li>• Build capacities of all actors involved in processing</li> <li>• Stand in close exchange with MTI on cashew related activities</li> </ul>

### 3.4. Cashew trade and commercialization

All trade related policy guidelines will be addressed in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and Industry and its agencies.

#### 3.4.1. Quality control and certification

<b>Policy context</b>	<p>Quality control issues along the cashew value chain have become a grave concern nationwide and have seriously impede the quality of cashew products. This has affected the price of the product and reduced the chances of being competitive in the international market.</p> <p>Quality control mechanisms and certification schemes are almost nonexistent, in the cashew sector.</p>
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Cashew products are of high quality, traceable and respect international standards.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote Standards code, certification and quality control nationwide in collaboration with the Standards Bureau.</li> <li>• Partner with relevant line ministries and private sector companies to promote certification schemes of raw cashew nut and cashew kernels</li> <li>• Collaborate with Produce Monitoring Board to build capacities of their field staff in ensuring quality standards and controls for cashew products</li> </ul>

#### 3.4.2. Price and market information

<b>Policy Context</b>	There are no standard pricing systems in Sierra Leone in the cashew sector. Traders sell as the situation deemed fit and there are no market information systems.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Market and price information on cashew products are available and accessible to all actors of the value chain.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) with its Planning, Evaluation and Monitoring Statistics Division will seek a close exchange and collaboration with MTI and:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster and collaborate with the Produce Monitoring Board, in ensuring price regulations to guide the cashew sales</li> <li>• Provide production related market information (yields, area under cultivation, new plantations, farmer involved etc.)</li> </ul>
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### 3.4.3. Trade regulations

<b>Policy Context</b>	Cashew trade is not yet regulated in Sierra Leone. Private actors involved in trade and export are mostly not formally registered or licensed. This leads to a very open and unregulated market, where farm gate buying happens often to the disadvantage of the farmer or in very savage competition.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	A formalized and well-structured cashew market, which enables all actors involved to sell and buy cashew products profitably is developed and functional.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In collaboration with Ministry of Trade and Industry facilitate easy access to business registration and acquisition of permits for key actors such as cashew farmer, buying agents, processors, traders/exporters and investors</li> </ul>

### 3.5. Cashew sector organization

#### 3.5.1. Farmer based organizations

<b>Policy Context</b>	The sector is characterized by a low degree of organization of the cashew farming community. Cooperatives and farmer groups are existing, but these bodies are inactive and semi functional. Members do not have overall understanding of the purpose of their organizations and lack clear roles and responsibilities.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Existing Farmer groups are empowered and dispose of the necessary capacities to play an active role in representing the interests of cashew farmers.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support existing farmer organizations and encourage farmer to organize themselves in the cashew producing regions</li> <li>• Build capacities of FBOs through the Extension Division of MAF, and use those organizations as multipliers for knowledge, best practices and learning</li> <li>• Collaborate with non-governmental organizations and join forces in strengthening farmer-based organizations</li> <li>• Encourage and establish new farmer base organization to go in to cashew production.</li> </ul>

### 3.5.2. Cashew Commodity Association(s)

<b>Policy context</b>	Cashew Commodity associations have been created to represent all actors involved in the cashew sector (farmers, traders, processors, exporters and NGOs) on district level. Those associations are existing in some cashew producing districts, but not functional. In order to address the weak organisations of the sector, to improve its governance and to ensure that the private actor's needs are articulated to government, these associations should play a central role.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Cashew Commodity Associations are strengthened, are able to represent and articulate private sector interests and contribute actively to the governance of the sector.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize the advocacy role of the Cashew Commodity Association and promote public-private dialogue</li> <li>• Include Cashew Commodity Association to the existing Cocoa Coffee Working Group of MAF and MTI</li> </ul>

### 3.5.3. Integration of international platforms

<b>Policy Context</b>	Cashew being an emerging crop in Sierra Leone, the country has not yet integrated sufficiently the international cashew sector. Exchange and learning from other cashew producing countries, especially in the sub region will be beneficial for the country and specifically the cashew sector.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Sierra Leonean cashew actors are integrated in international cashew networks and benefit of exchange and learning opportunities.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuously align its program to international platforms</li> <li>• Seek to join the Consultative International Cashew Council CICC</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with other cashew producing countries in the field of research, production and processing</li> <li>• Participate in international Conferences and Seminars to build capacities, network and position the Sierra Leonean cashew sector</li> </ul>
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### 3.6. Access to finance

<b>Policy Context</b>	The cashew sector, especially production related activities, suffers from insufficient access to finance. Commercial banks and financial institutes do not offer adapted financial products and are often unaware of the potential of the cashew sector. Especially farmers do not have access to loans and other financial support, because of stringent collateral requirements, high interest rates and inflexible loan repayment schemes (not adapted to seasonal realities). This hinders the maintenance of existing plantations and often discourages them to pursue or expand their activities.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Adapted and flexible financial frameworks, that enable cashew actors to develop their business sustainably, are available.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create awareness on the potential of cashew and provide information on the potential of the sector and the seasonality of the cashew production to financial institutions</li> <li>• Encourage and train farmers to develop bankable business plans, to enable them to access loans and prove the reliability and security of their business</li> <li>• Develop grant financing schemes together with technical and financial partner</li> <li>• Link cashew commodity associations and farmer based organisations to Financial Service Institutions.</li> <li>• Lobby with Financial service institutions to restructure their financial schemes to meet the needs of cashew farmers</li> </ul>

### 3.7. Cashew data and statistics

<b>Policy Context</b>	Currently only limited data on the cashew sector is available. Only few individual initiatives (yield studies, mapping of farms, household surveys etc.), mainly driven by development partners, on data collection and statistical analysis have been realized in the past years. On ministerial level, the Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Statistical Division has not yet included cashew in their database or circulated official information on the sector. This makes planning and monitoring of activities particularly difficult.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Updated and verified data, statistics and information on the cashew sector is available and accessible.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, particularly the Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Statistical Division will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include cashew to their database and conduct regular data collection in the field</li> <li>• Collaborate with Statistic Sierra Leone, agricultural related Universities, SLARI and PMB to collect information on the entire value chain</li> <li>• Build cashew specific capacities of field enumerators and data analysts</li> <li>• Join forces with development partners in the collection and analysis of cashew data</li> <li>• Publish and share information on cashew on a regular basis</li> </ul>

### 3.8. Cross-cutting issues

#### 3.8.1. Gender

<b>Policy Context</b>	Women are active in all segments of the cashew value chain, particularly in production (harvest and post-harvest activities and intercropping), artisanal processing for local consumption, as well as buying and cashew trade. This active role does not reflect in their representation and engagement in the governance of the value chain. They are often poorly represented in Farmer Based Organisations and Commodity Associations. Decision making in this respect is not guaranteed to be representative
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	and calls for a stronger involvement of female cashew actors, in order to include gender specific needs.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Women play an active and visible role along the value chain.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote and encourage the inclusion of women in all activities stated in the policy guidelines</li> <li>• Ensure training and capacity building of female collaborators</li> <li>• Develop gender sensitive solutions, programmes and training material for cashew related activities</li> <li>• Pay particular attention to gender specific needs in the sector</li> </ul>

### 3.8.2 Security

<b>Policy Context</b>	Smuggling of cashew, due to insufficient security and border protection, has impacted the cashew sector negatively. It has led to leakage of revenues, loss in sales and has impacted the volume generated for exports. This has a negative effect on overall security in the cashew production areas.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Security in cashew producing districts is ensured and smuggling prevented.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop close collaboration with the relevant security apparatus in order to address the issues of smuggling</li> <li>• Foster and promote right to justice by working with Chiefdom Authorities to develop all-inclusive bylaws for perpetrators in the cashew sector</li> <li>• Provide information on cashew sector structures, formal actors and authorities involved to discourage smuggling</li> </ul>

### 3.8.3 Land access

<b>Policy Context</b>	Farmers still have challenges in accessing land for cashew cultivation nationwide and in formalizing documentation for land lease. Cashew being a long-term investment, it is particularly important to secure land rights in order to protect the plantations. Those challenges affect particularly female farmers in some districts, as they are often underrepresented and facing the cultural believe that women should not own land, even though this is against the backdrop of the land policy of November 2015.
<b>Policy Goal</b>	Land for cashew cultivation is accessible, formalized and secured.
<b>Policy Guidelines</b>	<p>The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct continuous sensitization on land rights and land use in the cashew producing districts, targeting female cashew farmer particularly</li> <li>• Facilitate and collaborate with Paramount Chiefs, and community elders in gaining access to land for cashew production nation wide</li> </ul>

### Recommendation for next steps

The present policy serves as a guideline for further activities a support from MAF in order to fulfill the stated vision and build a sustainable and competitive cashew sector in Sierra Leone.

After validation of this, MAF will integrate the policy guidelines to their agricultural policy and design and implement recommended activities. This will be done in respect of the national policy procedures and involve a strong commitment of MAF.

In this regard, it is necessary to develop and implement an action plan covering all policy areas and proposing precise activities to achieve the stated goals. This action plan needs to be composed of:

- Set of activities according to policy guidelines
- Calendar of implementation
- Budget
- Communication Plan, incl. all-inclusive and comprehensive communication strategy
- Capacity development structure
- Monitoring and Evaluation Framework