



**EMERGENCY FOOD SECURITY MONITORING SYSTEM**  
*MEASURING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON FOOD SECURITY AND  
VULNERABILITY IN SIERRA LEONE*

JUNE 2020

## Preface

*The COVID-19 outbreak is posing an unprecedented context that has greatly tested the resolve and resilience of the global population. Whilst Sierra Leone may not have recorded a high COVID-19 caseload, the impact on economic and social activities has evidently been profound, triggering the not too distant memories of the 2014-15 Ebola Virus Disease outbreak.*

*The Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) forms a critical component of the national Early Warning System (EWS), and has been routinely implemented on a bi-annual basis since 2018 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, with technical assistance lead by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) unit. The FSMS has provided quality and essential food security and vulnerability data to guide the design and geographical targeting of agriculture and livelihood initiatives to safeguard the wellbeing of those most in need to advance Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2: Zero Hunger.*

*Despite a challenging context, the June 2020 Emergency Food Security Monitoring System (E-FSMS) again provides critical and timely data to enhance our understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerability and food security. Concerningly, the E-FSMS again shows an increase in the proportion of food insecure Sierra Leoneans, from 47 percent in January 2020 to 63 percent in June 2020, demonstrating the considerable impact of COVID-19 on households that rely on fragile livelihoods. COVID-19 and containment measures including a series of lockdowns have particularly impacted on urban dwellers, many of who are petty traders living a hand to mouth existence. Smallholder farmers have also been seriously affected, shown by increasing food insecurity and vulnerability in rural districts. We hope that the findings and recommendations will support the design of responsive programmes to protect the lives and livelihoods of the most vulnerable and facilitate early recovery.*

*We would like to convey our appreciation and recognition to the time provided by the 3,124 household respondents who made this E-FSMS possible, in addition to the MAF and Statistics Sierra Leone enumerators who collected the data. The E-FSMS would also not have been possible without the generous support of the Government and people of Japan. Gratitude is also given to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation and International Food for Agricultural Development who also contributed toward the E-FSMS.*



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## Contents

Preface.....	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	4
Who is food insecure and where do they live? .....	4
Food insecure people in the population.....	4
Underlying causes of their food insecurity and vulnerability.....	5
Recommended interventions.....	5
INTRODUCTION.....	6
SCOPE.....	6
OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY.....	7
FOOD SECURITY SITUATION.....	8
Figure 1: Food security by district, June 2020 E-FSMS.....	8
Figure 2. Food insecurity by district and population, June 2020 .....	8
Food security trends.....	9
SHOCKS AND COPING STRATEGIES.....	9
LIVELIHOOD COPING STRATEGIES.....	10
HOUSEHOLD HUNGER SCALE.....	12
MARKETS ACCESS AND EXPENDITURES.....	13
Main reasons households could not access the market.....	13
Food expenditure shares .....	14
FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORE.....	15
CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS.....	16

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

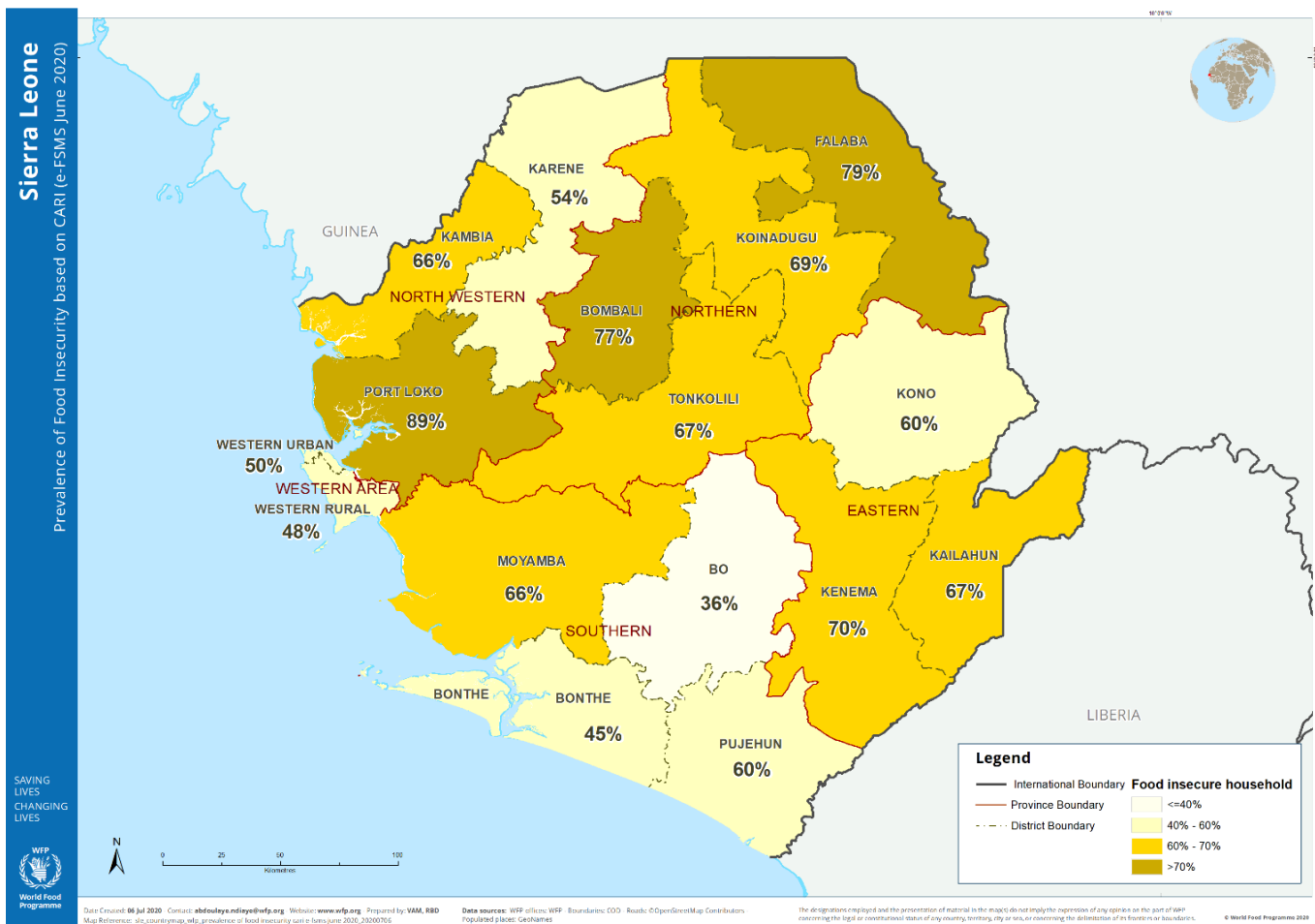
The Emergency Food Security Monitoring System (E-FSMS) assessment was undertaken to analyse the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the food security and vulnerability of households in Sierra Leone at the national and district levels since the last FSMS in January 2020, to provide empirical information for planning, decision making and programming to protect the most vulnerable. The E-FSMS will also inform the upcoming Cadre Harmonise, a tool that classifies the severity of food and nutrition insecurity and allow comparisons between Sierra Leone and other countries in the West and Central African region, due to take place between September and October 2020.

### Who is food insecure and where do they live?

The food insecure are households who have lost purchasing power due to livelihood related impacts of the COVID-19 shock, which has compromised their ability to cope. They are adopting extreme, livelihood-based coping strategies, while spending more than 65 percent share of their total expenditure on food, as well as having poor and borderline food consumption patterns or poor dietary diversity. The highest proportion of households with these characteristics are in Port Loko, Falaba, Bombali, Kenema, Koinadugu, Tonkolili, Moyamba, Kono and Western Urban districts. In absolute terms, the highest number of food insecure people are found in Western Area Urban.

### Food insecure people in the population

Approximately 5.1 million people (63 percent) in Sierra Leone are food insecure. This represents a 15.3 percent increase compared to January 2020 when approximately 3.9 million people (47.7 percent) were found to be food insecure. This represents a significant increase even when compared to the last FSMS conducted during the lean season in August 2019, when 53 percent of the population was found to be food insecure.



## Underlying causes of their food insecurity and vulnerability

Several underlying factors are reported to be causing high food insecurity levels in Sierra Leone. Households were asked about the main difficulties experienced 30 days prior to the day of data collection for this assessment, and according to 44 percent, the COVID-19 pandemic is the primary driver of their food insecurity, due to measures including lockdown restrictions and inter-district movement restrictions. The second most common justification reported are price fluctuations, followed by temporary and chronic illness of a breadwinner.

Respondents cited a combination of issues as constraining agricultural production, including lack of inputs, high cost of inputs, irregular rains and crop damage caused by pest are of major concern for farming.

## Recommended interventions

Pre-existing household food insecurity and vulnerability have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 outbreak, particularly lockdown and movement restrictions. The June E-FSMS found that an alarming 71 percent of households have poor and borderline food consumption patterns, with poor households simply lacking the money to buy sufficient food to live a healthy life, whilst inflation and fluctuation in food prices are adversely impacting on food security, nutrition and the general wellbeing of vulnerable people.

To enhance access to food it is recommended that in-kind food assistance be provided during the lean season (July – September) targeting severely food insecure households in rural areas, whilst food assistance in the form of cash transfers be provided to the most vulnerable in urban locations to maintain food consumption and boost local economies.

Lockdown restrictions and fear of contracting COVID-19 have undoubtedly reduced health seeking behaviour including routine immunizations and growth monitoring check-ups, whilst the economic downturn has reduced the ability of households, particularly women and children, to consume nutritious foods, as reflected by a deterioration in household Food Consumption Scores (FCS). Consequently, it is recommended that malnourished Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLWs) and children 6-59 months receive specialized nutritious foods to prevent a further deterioration in their status.

Farming households and petty traders reported that their livelihoods have been seriously affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, with many lacking enough inputs for farming and capital for petty trading. Considering this, it is recommended that financial institutions, especially rural banks and development partners, support smallholder farmers and petty traders with agricultural and business loans and grants.

To ensure that widespread food insecurity does not pose a barrier to children from poor households from advancing their education, school feeding activities should be scaled up to provide an effective social safety net.

## INTRODUCTION

Household food security exists when all members always have physical and economic access to enough safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and health life<sup>i</sup>. In contrast, food insecurity is a situation of uncertainty or limited availability and access to nutritionally adequate, safe and socially acceptable diets, often underscored by poverty, population growth and environmental and climate related issues that affect food production and distribution.

In Sierra Leone, domestic production by smallholder farmers, most of whom practice below subsistence agriculture, is insufficient to feed the country's population of 8 million people. Consequently, Sierra Leone imports about 80 percent of food consumed. Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, it was projected that 425,000 tonnes of cereal would likely be imported during the 2019/2020 marketing year<sup>ii</sup>, with these needs likely to have further increased given the negative impact of COVID-19 and land border closures on food supply chains.

Given this situation, in Sierra Leone most households, including those engaged in farming, rely on market purchases to meet their food needs. In recent years, food prices have continued to rise and fluctuate as the value of the local currency (Leones) declines. Fears of COVID-19 have negatively impacted on agriculture and livelihood activities, exacerbating an already challenging economic situation. Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and WFP price monitoring show how the prices of the staples rice and cassava prices rose by 8 percent and 17 percent respectively during the first quarter of 2020<sup>iii</sup>. COVID-19 impacts followed climate shocks in 2019, specifically heavy and erratic rainfall patterns that reduced agricultural production due to seed failure and crop damage, reducing food availability and access and causing upward pressure on food prices.

On 24 March 2020, His Excellency President Julius Maada Bio declared a 12-month national state of public health emergency for a period of 12 months. On 27 March 2020, Sierra Leone closed its land borders with neighbouring Guinea and Liberia, decreasing regional trade and the inflow of agricultural goods. On 31 March 2020, Sierra Leone registered its index case of COVID-19. On 10 April 2020, the Government instituted an inter-district ban which impeded the flow of agricultural trade. Measures to contain the spread of COVID-19 have had negative indirect impacts. Economic and farming activities have been reduced by a series of 3-day lockdowns and reduced business hours. As of 19 August, Sierra Leone has confirmed 1,959 cases of COVID-19.

It is against this background that MAF with support from the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and the Food Security Working Group (FSWG) decided to implement the E-FSMS assessment to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on food security and vulnerability. It is hoped that the E-FSMS will also provide key empirical data that decision makers can use to design, plan and target emergency and recovery initiatives to safeguard the food security of the most vulnerable at this unprecedented time.

## SCOPE

The E-FSMS targeted a planned 3,456 household interviews nationwide, achieving 3,124 households. For comparability purposes, the E-FSMS used the same Enumeration Areas (EAs)/villages covered during the January 2020 FSMS and three earlier rounds of the FSMS. The sample frame was provided by Statistics Sierra Leone, with each district having 18 EAs/villages with 12 households targeted per EA. On average, the E-FSMS targeted 216 household interviews per district.

The districts of Karene and Falaba, created during the de-amalgamation of districts in 2017, were combined with Port Loko, Bombali and Koinadugu, districts; as the de-amalgamation occurred after the sample frame was constructed. The data for these two districts was extracted from the overall dataset and analysed separately.

## OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of the E-FSMS was to analyse the impacts that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on food security and vulnerability in households at the national and district levels. To measure impact, data was compared to the results of the January 2020 FSMS. E-FSMS data was also utilized to inform the upcoming Cadre Harmonise (CH), a tool that classifies the severity of food and nutrition insecurity and allow comparisons between Sierra Leone and other countries in the West and Central African region, due to take place between September and October 2020.

The formula below was used to calculate required sample size at district level.

$$n = z^2 \times \frac{p(1-p)}{d^2} \times k$$

Where:

- N = Required minimum sample size
- Z = Z-score corresponding to the degree of confidence
- P = Estimated prevalence of the outcome being measured (food insecurity and/or malnutrition)
- K = Design effect (required for two-stage cluster sampling)
- d = Minimum desired precision or maximum tolerance error

### Assuming that:

- ✓ Z=1.96 (95 percent degree of confidence)
- ✓ Prevalence of food insecurity per Jan. 2020 FSMS =48 percent
- ✓ A design effect of 2 has been applied based on various studies
- ✓ The level of precision is 10 percent per common practice
- ✓ 10 percent added for refusal or absence.

For accuracy and time saving purposes, data was collected digitally by 65 enumerators using smart phones, subsequently uploaded onto the Open Data Kit (ODK) platform/server in real time; with geospatial data technologies incorporated to allow for advanced analyses and graphic visualization of results in charts and maps.

Enumerators applied a combination of remote and face-to-face interviews while strictly observing COVID-19 Infection Prevention Control (IPC) measures, including the use of facemasks and social distancing. Mobile phone interviews were used to engage with respondents in urban areas (including Freetown, Kenema, Makeni and district administrative headquarter towns) where community transmission of COVID-19 is more prevalent. To ensure that the data collection methodology did not exclude the most vulnerable in rural areas, many of whom lack mobile phones or access to power infrastructure, data was collected using face to face interviews with strict adherence to COVID-19 IPC measures.

The data collection took place between 1 - 12 June 2020 after a 2-day training session for enumerators on interview techniques, guidelines, the questionnaire and food security indicators, all of which had been used for previous food security studies for comparability purposes to enable the tracking of food security and vulnerability at the district-levels over time, including:

- i) Food consumption;
- ii) Household expenditure on food;
- iii) Coping strategies;

The enumeration team was comprised of district-level statisticians from MAF and staff from Statistics Sierra Leone. Data processing, cleaning and analysis took place between 15 - 25 June 2020. Data processing and analysis was jointly undertaken by MAF Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation and Statistics Department (PEMSD) and WFP Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) sub-unit using the Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel, with food security indicators analysed at district and national levels, with the overall food security analysis conducted using the Consolidated Approach in Reporting Indicators to food security (CARI) technique.

Data analysis was followed by a technical validation of the preliminary findings by stakeholders (MAF, WFP, FAO, IFAD, FSWG technical team), post-valuation of the data at community level and report writing.

## FOOD SECURITY SITUATION

At national level, the June 2020 E-FSMS found that approximately 5.1 million Sierra Leoneans (63 percent) are moderately and severely food insecure. This represents an increase of 1.2 million people since the January 2020 FSMS (approximately 3.9 million, 47.7 percent)<sup>iv</sup>.

At district level, the highest proportion of food insecure households are in Port Loko (89 percent), Falaba (79 percent), Bombali (77 percent), Kenema (70 percent), Koinadugu (69 percent), Tonkolili (67 percent), Moyamba (66 percent) and Kono (60 percent) districts. In absolute terms, the highest number of food insecure households are found in Western Area Urban.

Figure 1: Food security by district, June 2020 E-FSMS

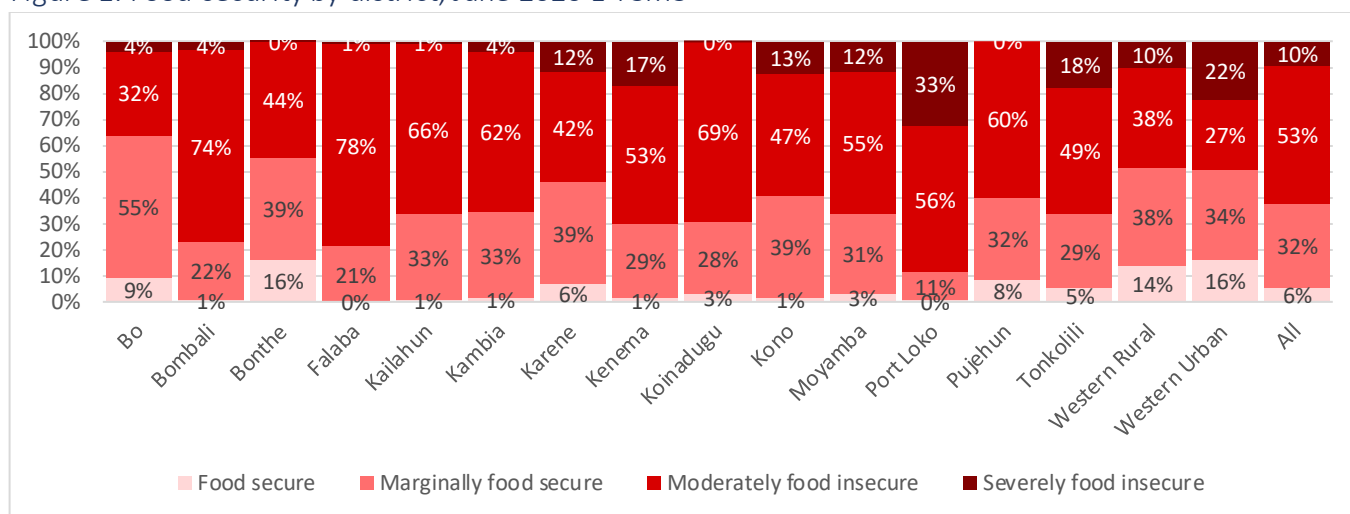


Figure 2. Food insecurity by district and population, June 2020

District	Severely food insecure population	Moderately food insecure population	Total food Insecure population
Bo	25,944	214,966	240,910
Bombali	17,692	361,426	379,118
Bonthe	1,141	102,688	103,829
Falaba	2,868	184,999	187,867
Kailahun	6,780	400,031	406,812
Kambia	15,629	248,114	263,743
Karene	39,846	139,460	179,306
Kenema	122,778	372,567	495,345
Koinadugu	1,095	163,151	164,246
Kono	75,145	274,568	349,713
Moyamba	43,051	201,659	244,710
Port Loko	201,460	344,965	546,425
Pujehun	-	240,986	240,986
Tonkolili	107,253	288,986	396,239
Western Rural	52,759	195,963	248,722
Western Urban	274,943	333,860	608,803
<b>Total</b>	<b>789,536</b>	<b>4,360,871</b>	<b>5,150,407</b>

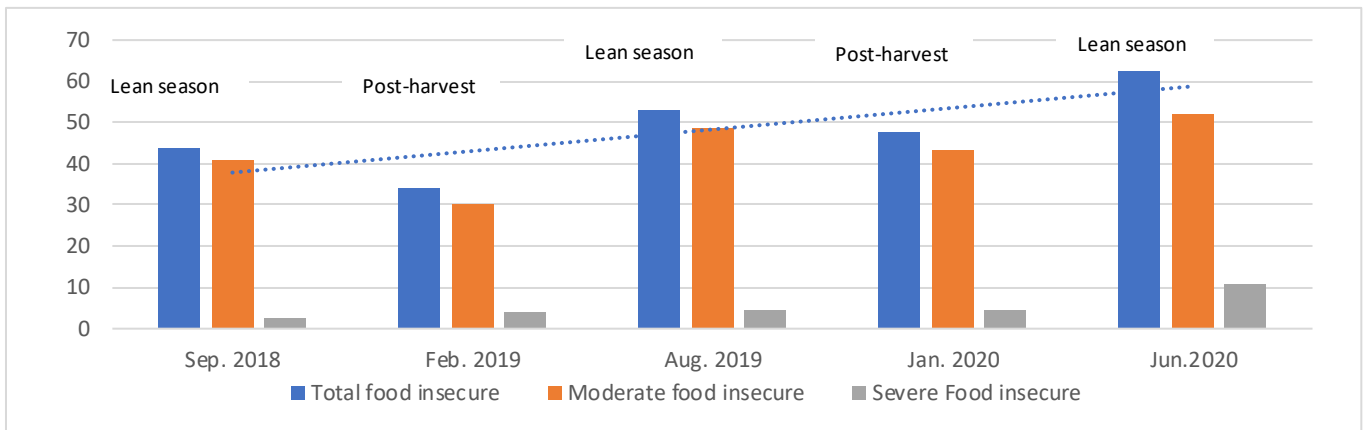


## Food security trends

As shown in figure 3, food insecurity in Sierra Leone has been deteriorating for each round of the FSMS since its activation in September 2018. Current levels of food insecurity have also markedly increased since the 2015 *Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis (CFSVA)*, implemented in the aftermath of the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak, which found that half of the population (49.8 percent) were food insecure.

In Sierra Leone, food insecurity levels increase during the “lean season” (July – September), coinciding with the heavy rains and characterized by lower accessibility to food due to increased food prices and low household stocks levels at this is the time of growing of new crops. At this time in 2019, heavier than average rainfall caused flooding resulting in crops and property loss, reducing food availability and exacerbating food insecurity.

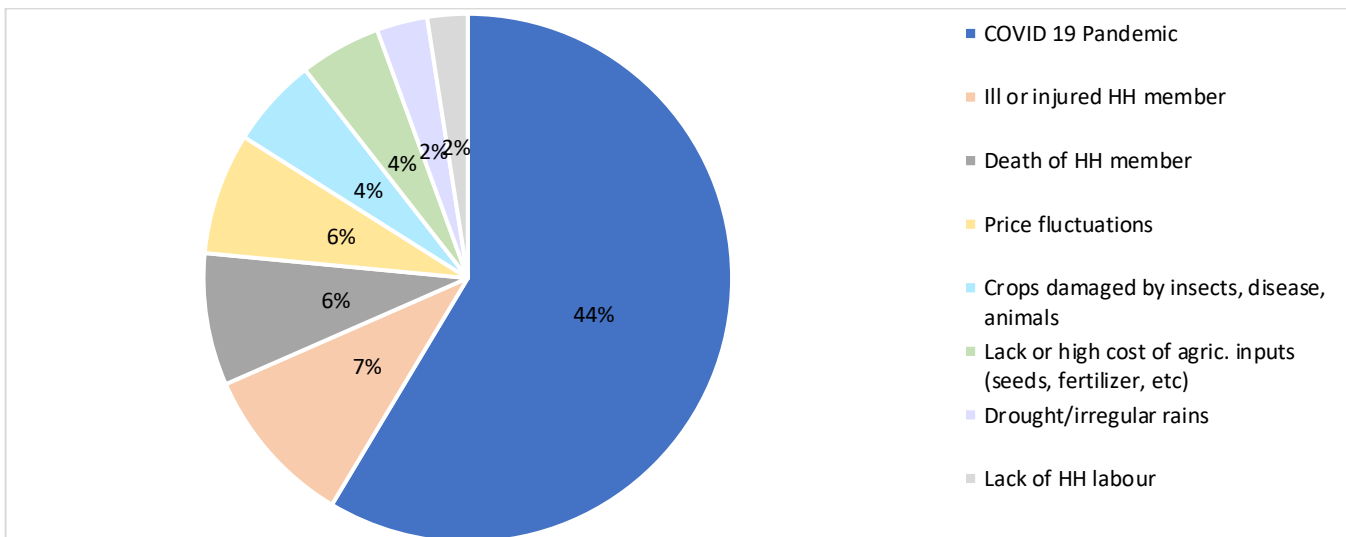
Figure 3. Food insecurity trends, Sept 2018- June 2020



## SHOCKS AND COPING STRATEGIES

Households were asked to indicate the main shocks that they had experienced in the past 30 days. Overall, four-fifths (79.6 percent) of households reported experiencing a shock, with 44.1 percent of these citing the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. lockdown and movement restrictions) as the main shock encountered. A combination of agricultural related issues including lack of inputs, high cost of inputs, irregular rains, pest infestation and crop damage (10.4 percent) was the second most reported shock, followed by price fluctuations (5.6 percent).

Figure 4. Main shocks reported by households, June 2020 E-FSMS



## LIVELIHOOD COPING STRATEGIES

During times of stress, households adopt coping strategies to maintain their food consumption. Coping strategies can either be food-based, when a household adjusts the types of food it consumes and the frequency of consumption, or livelihood based. The different types of livelihood-based coping strategy are categorised as follows:

Type of Strategy	Definition	Example
Stress strategies	Reduce ability to deal with future shocks due to a current reduction in resources or increase in debt	Borrowing money or spending savings
Crisis strategies	Directly reduce future productivity, including human capital formation	Selling productive assets.
Emergency strategies	More difficult to reverse and affect future productivity	Selling one's land or house.

At national level, the June 2020 E-FSMS found that the adoption of livelihood-based coping strategies is extremely high, with an alarming 87 percent of households reporting that they adopted one or more of these strategies in order to meet their food needs within the 30 days prior to the assessment. This represents an increase from 74 percent reported by the January 2020 FSMS. The highest proportion of households that reported adopting any livelihood-based coping strategies were in Port Loko (100 percent), Kenema and Kono (99 percent), Falaba (98 percent), Kambia (96 percent), Koinadugu (95 percent) and Pujehun (94 percent). As shown in figure 6, the June E-FSMS shows how households are adopting more extreme crisis and emergency coping strategies compared to January 2020, reflecting the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on livelihoods.

Demonstrating the impact of recurrent shocks affecting Sierra Leone in recent years is the fact that one-fifth (20 percent) of households nationwide reported adopting the most extreme – “emergency” coping strategies - with the highest proportions found in Port Loko (56 percent), Kenema (44 percent), Falaba (44 percent) and Western Urban (30 percent) districts.

Figure 5. Livelihood Coping Strategies by District, E-FSMS June 2020

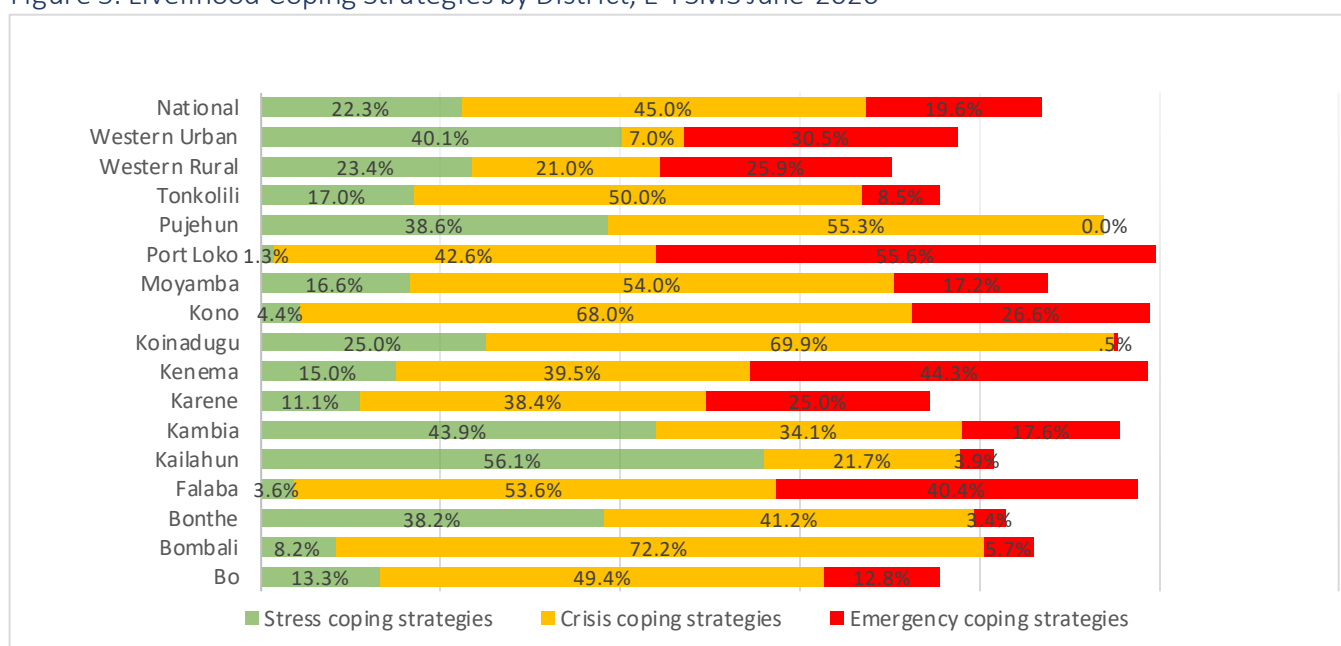
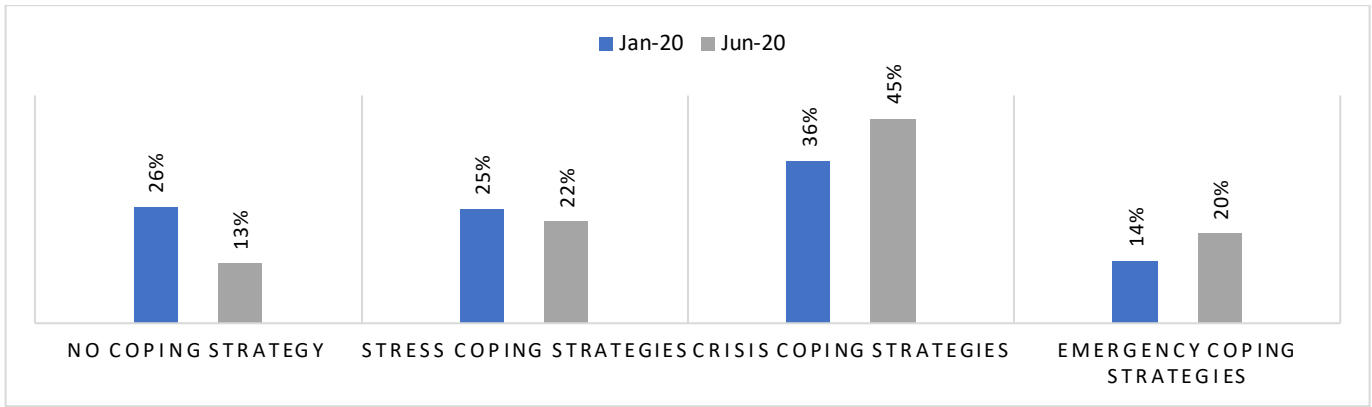


Figure 6. Adoption of livelihood-based coping strategies at national level, January 2020 vs. June 2020

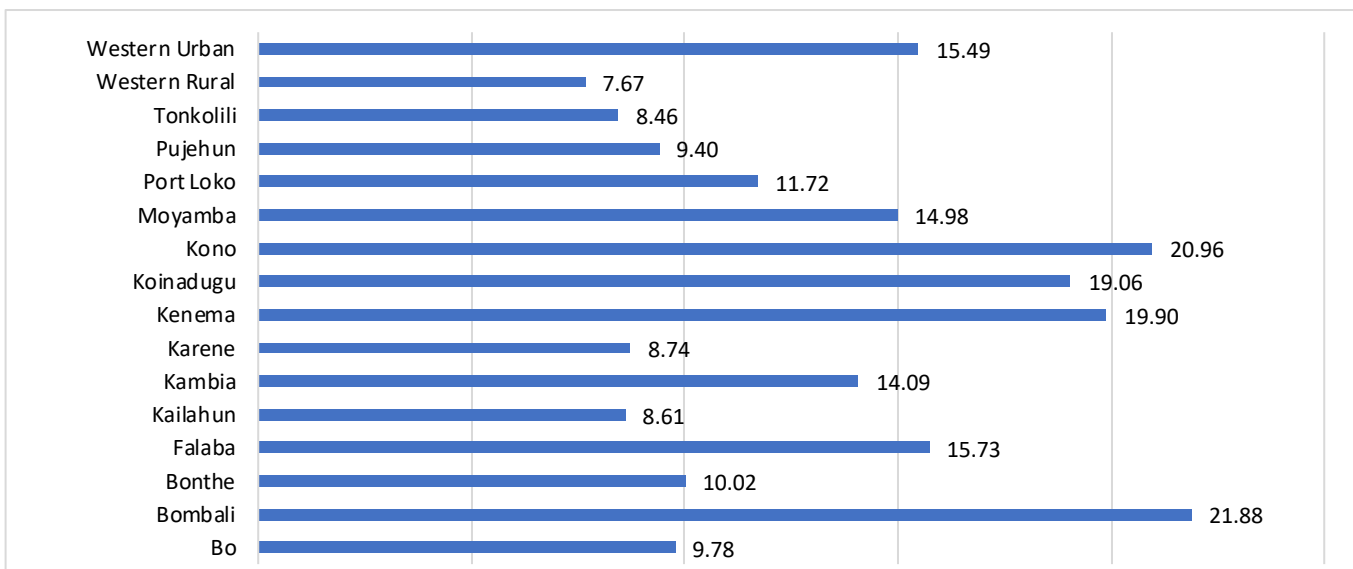


Households that have faced a shock are often forced to reduce their family’s consumption of food or consume less preferred and nutritious foods as coping strategies – defined as food-based coping strategies. Consequently, they are more likely to have poor food consumption than households that have not experienced a shock. To measure the extent to which households employ these consumptions-related behaviours to offset shocks for comparative purposes, the Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) is an indicator that examines five negative behaviours households adopted during the seven days prior to the survey, comprised of:

- 1) Consumption of less preferred and less expensive food;
- 2) Borrowing of food;
- 3) Reduction of portion size
- 4) Restriction of adults’ consumption in favour of children; and
- 5) Reduction in the number of meals per day. There is no standard cut-off point for the rCSI, but the higher the score; the more frequent and severe these strategies are, therefore, the higher the vulnerability of the household.

The June E-FSMS shows that the highest proportion of households with high r-CSI – i.e. practicing food-based coping strategies - are in Bombali (21.88), Kono (20.96), Kenema (19.9) and Koinadugu (19.06) districts.

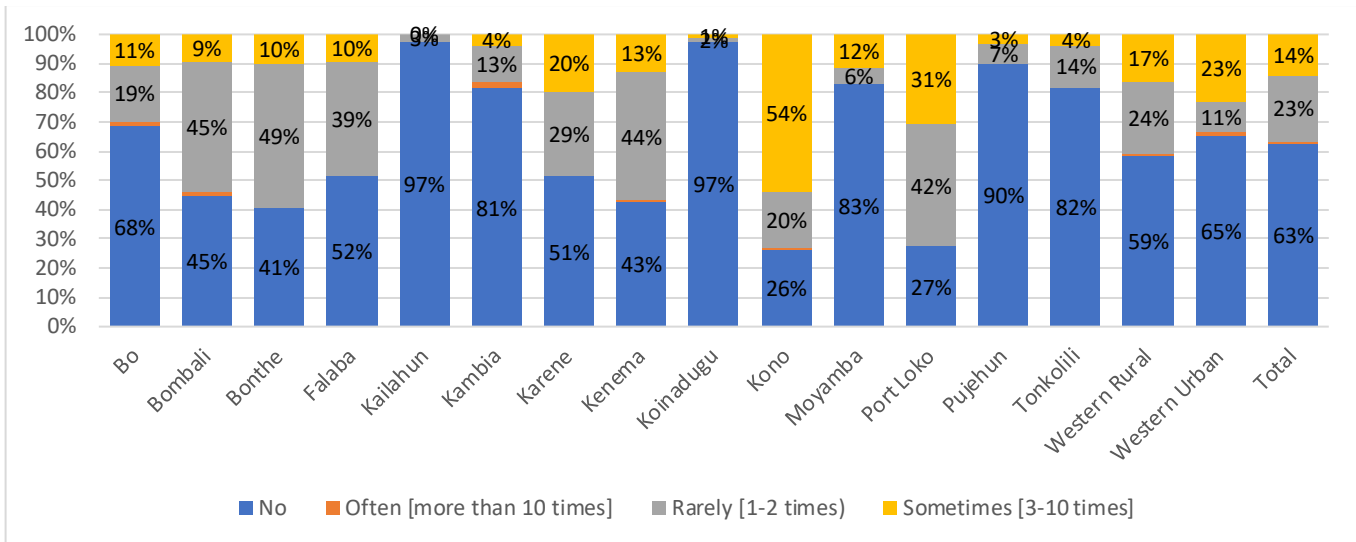
Figure 7. Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)



## HOUSEHOLD HUNGER SCALE

As the August 2019 and January 2020 FSMS assessments had identified alarming levels of food insecurity in Sierra Leone, the June 2020 Emergency FSMS also included four additional questions to better understand the severity of hunger experienced by vulnerable households. The findings of these questions make up the Household Hunger Scale (HHS).

Figure 8: During the last 30 days, were there days that your household lacked enough food to eat?



Interviewed households were asked whether in the past 30 days were there days when their household did not have food to eat, and if yes, to indicate the frequency that this happened, ranging from rarely, sometimes or often. Nationwide (37 percent) of households confirmed there were times that they lacked food, with 14 percent indicating “sometimes” and 23 percent responding “rarely”. The highest proportion of households indicating that they lacked food are in Kono (74 percent), Port Loko (73 percent), Bonthe (59 percent) and Kenema (57 percent) districts.

Households were also asked to confirm whether during the past 30 days any member of their household had to go to sleep without eating enough or without eating any food. If yes, households were asked to confirm how frequently, ranging from rarely, sometimes and often. Nationwide, half of respondents (49 percent) reported how members of their household had gone to sleep hungry, with 2 percent stating that this happened often, 27 percent indicating sometimes and 19 percent that this happened rarely.

Figure 9: During the last 30 days, were there times that your household lacked enough food to eat?

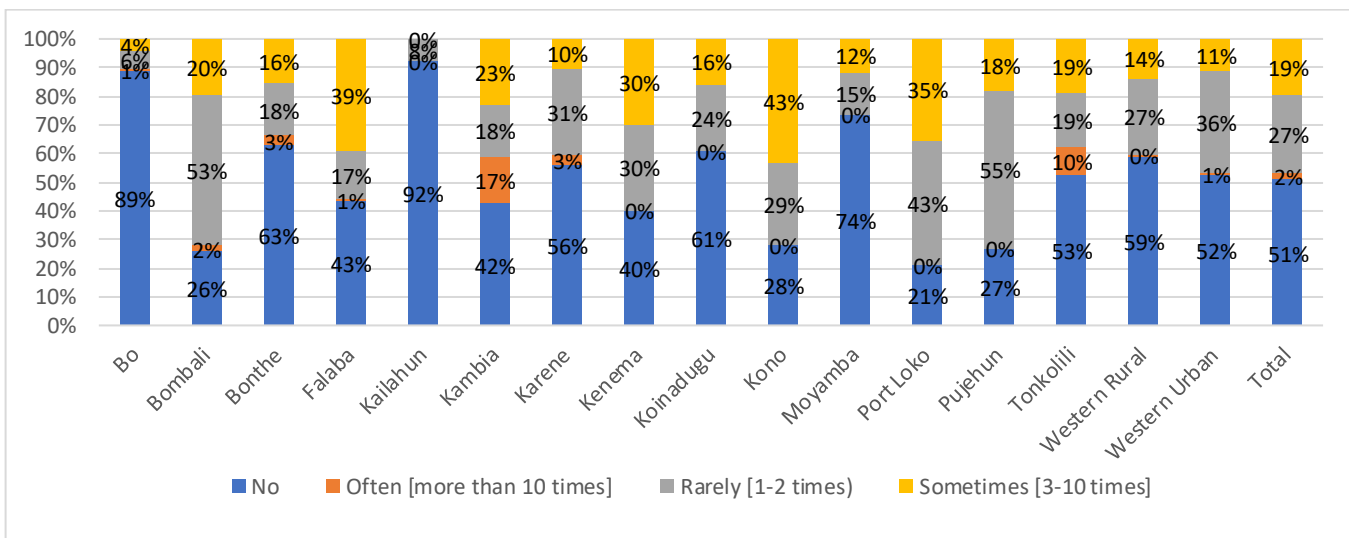
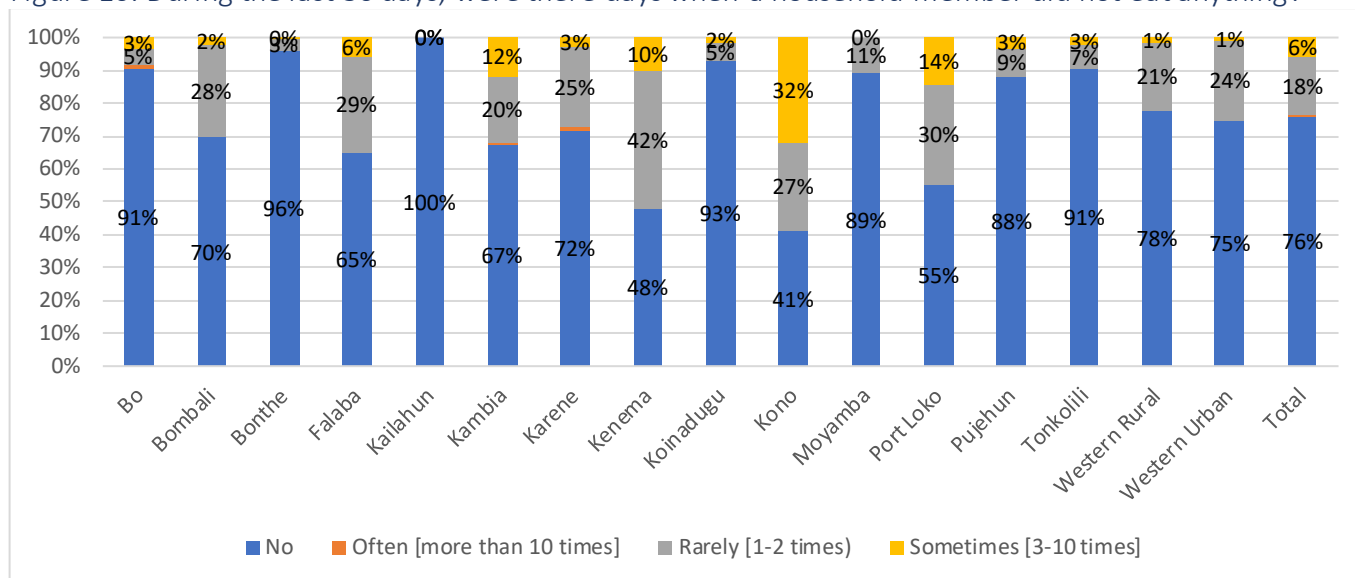


Figure 10: During the last 30 days, were there days when a household member did not eat anything?



Households were also asked whether any household member had gone a whole day without eating anything at all because there was not enough food or money to buy food over the last 30 days, and if so, whether this had happened often, sometimes or rarely. One-quarter (24 percent) of households reported this situation, with 18 percent indicating sometimes and 6 percent reporting that this happened rarely. At district level, the highest proportion of households reporting that somebody went an entire day without eating were found in Kono (59 percent), Kenema (52 percent), Port Loko (45 percent), Falaba (35 percent) and Kambia (33 percent) districts.

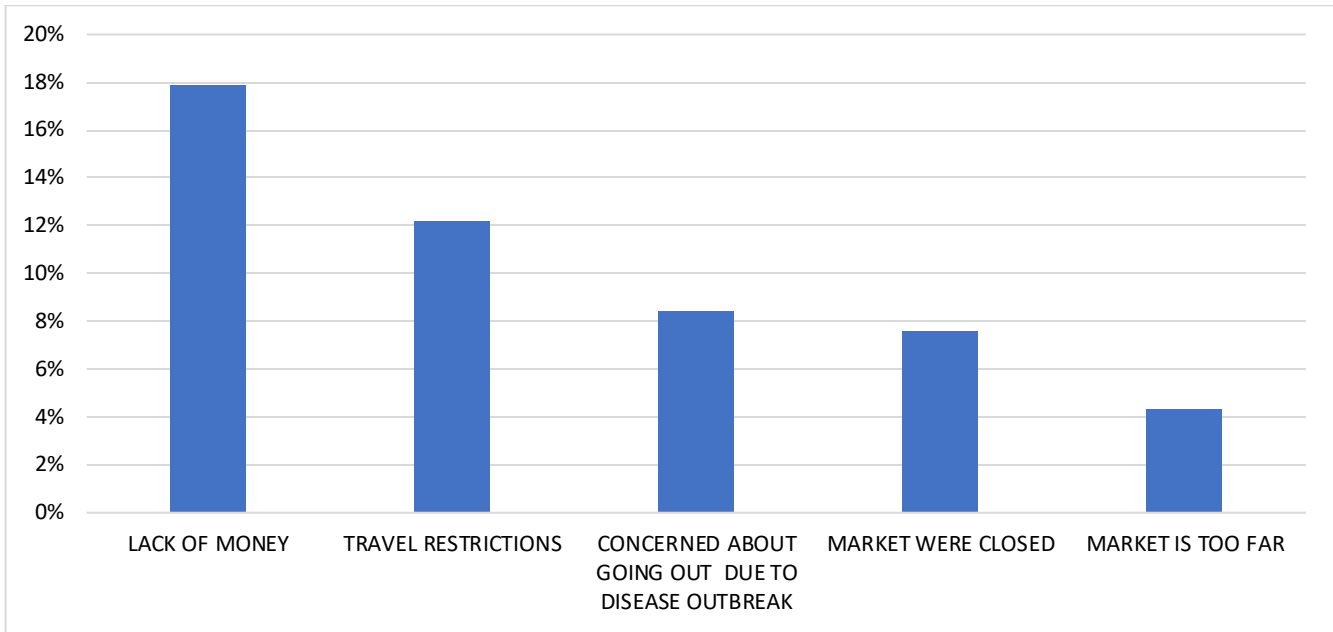
## MARKETS ACCESS AND EXPENDITURES

### Main reasons households could not access the market

Most households in Sierra Leone produce below subsistence levels and are thus reliant on market purchases to meet their food needs. Furthermore, given the COVID-19 context, characterised by lockdowns and movement restrictions, understanding why households are unable to access markets is a key factor to addressing barriers that contribute to food insecurity.

To this end, households were asked if there were any times during the 14 days prior to the assessment that they were unable to access markets, and if so, what was the main reason that they could not. Nationally, around half (52 percent) of households indicated that they were unable to access the market, with one-fifth (18 percent) explaining that they lacked money to purchase food. Almost one third (29 percent) reported COVID-19 related barriers to market access, including i) travel restrictions preventing access (12 percent); concern about the disease outbreak (9 percent) and because nearby markets were closed (8 percent).

Figure 11: If you could not access markets in the last 14 days, what was the main reason?

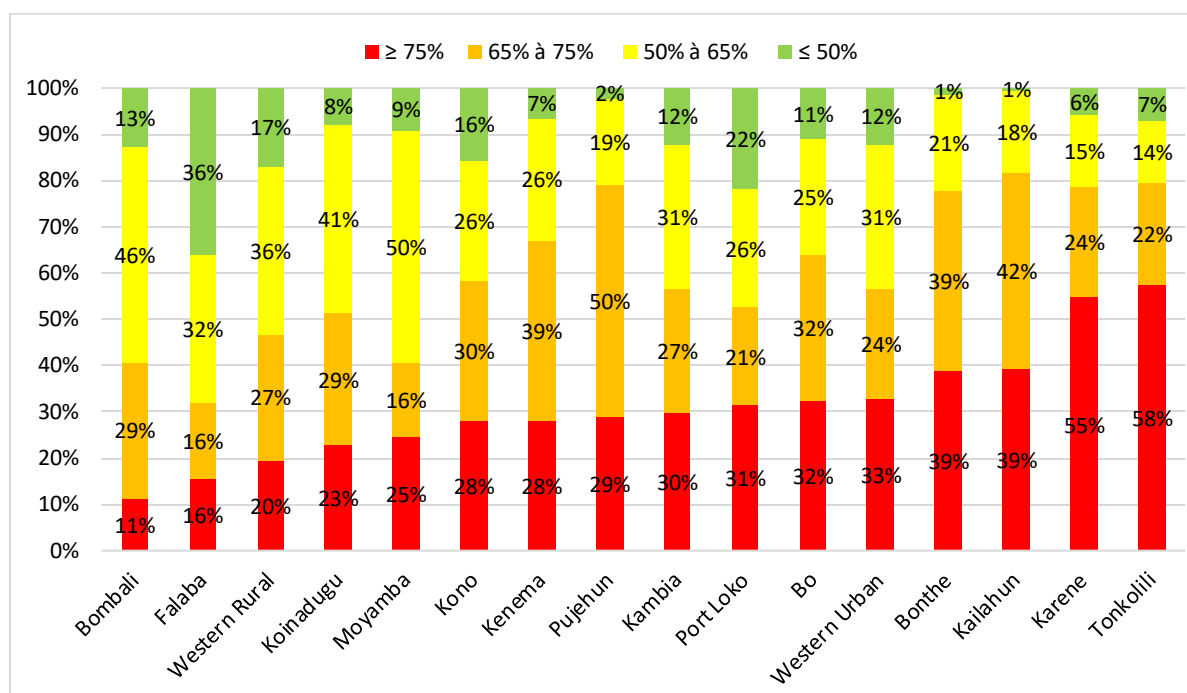


### Food expenditure shares

Food expenditure is another significant indicator of household food security. Due to low income, the share of food expenditure as a proportion of total expenditure is higher for poor households that are forced to choose between spending on food or on other essential non-food costs. In Sierra Leone, households spend most of their income on food at the expense of competing social and non-food expenditures, including health and education costs. Generally, the lower the household’s income, the higher the percentage of expenditure on food. Depending on the share of expenditures devoted to food, households are categorized into one of the following four groups:

As shown in figure 7, nationally one-third (31 percent) of households are spending over 75 percent (“very poor”) of their total expenditure on food; 29 percent are spending 65-75 percent (“poor”); and 28 percent are spending 50-65 percent (“borderline”). Only 11 percent reported that they spend less than 50 percent on their income on food which is considered as “acceptable). At district-level, the highest proportion of households spending more than 75 percent of their income on food are in Tonkolili (58 percent), Karene (55 percent), Kailahun, Bonthe (39 percent) and Western Area Urban (33 percent) districts.

Figure 12. Food expenditure by district



## FOOD CONSUMPTION SCORE

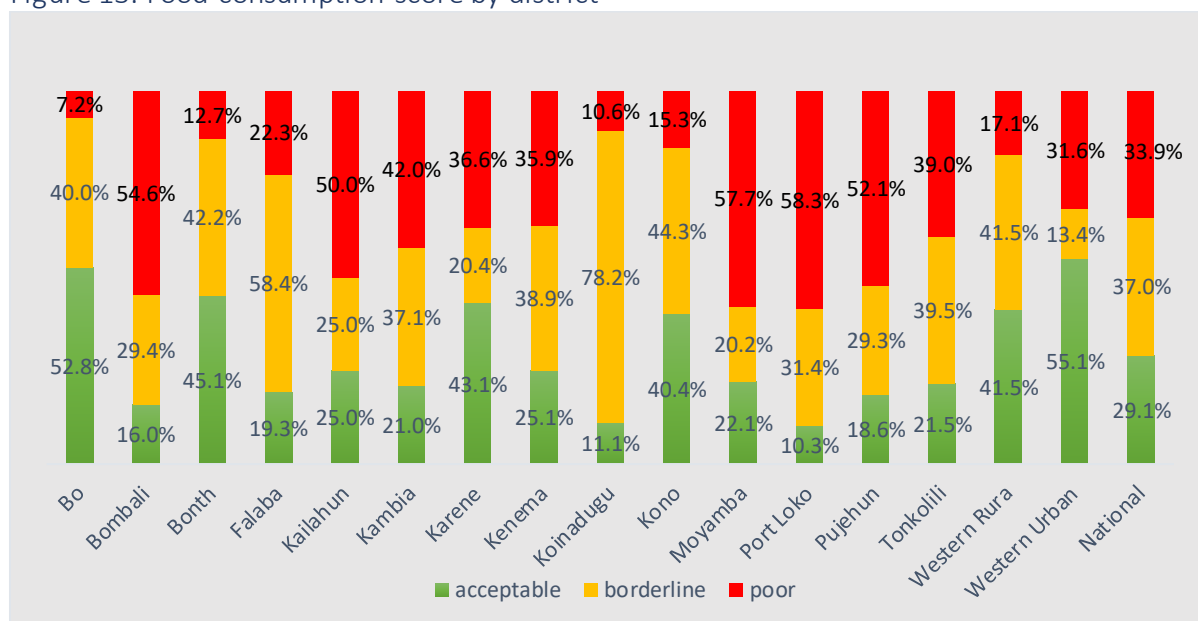
The Food Consumption Score (FCS) is a composite score based on dietary diversity, food frequency, and relative nutritional importance of different food groups. Information is collected from a country specific list of food items and food groups., with surveyed households asked a series of questions to find out information about the frequency and composition of consumption (in days) over a recall period of the past 7 days. Based on their responses, households are then categorised as below:

FCS Category	Definition
Poor	Household regularly <b>does not</b> consume a diet with requisite kilocalorie content and/or dietary diversity to live a healthy life
Borderline	Household occasionally supplements consumption of carbohydrates with other more nutritious food sources, however, below optimum
Acceptable	Household regularly consumes a diet with appropriate kilocalorie content and/or dietary diversity to live a health life

Nationally, the June 2020 E-FSMS found that less than one-third (29 percent) have “acceptable” food consumption, almost two-fifths (37 percent) have “borderline” food consumption, whilst one-third (34 percent) have “poor” food consumption. This means that an alarming 71 percent of households have “unacceptable” (i.e. “poor” or “borderline”) food consumption. At district level,

the highest proportion of households with poor food consumption are in Port Loko (58 percent), Moyamba (58 percent), Bombali (55 percent) and Pujehun (52 percent) districts.

Figure 13. Food consumption score by district



## CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

- The impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak, particularly on the fragile livelihoods of Sierra Leone's mostly poor population who have suffered a series of compounding economic, environmental and epidemiological shocks that has compromised their resilience and exacerbated vulnerability and poverty, has further deteriorated already high food insecurity. With many households constrained in terms of limited household income to purchase food to lead a healthy life, there is a need to scale-up cash transfer programmes. Considering widespread needs, cash transfers should prioritize target the most vulnerable groups, including the chronically ill, disabled and elderly.
- The June FSMS shows a continued upward trend in terms of urban food insecurity, with almost half (49 percent) of the population in Freetown found to be food insecure, an increase from 41 percent in January 2020. This likely reflects the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak in urban areas, particularly lockdowns that prevented vulnerable petty traders, many of whom live a hand-to-mouth existence, from selling, pushing them into food insecurity. Cash transfer programming should thus also target urban residents to support their recovery.
- With food insecurity already extremely high before the onset of the lean season (July – September), there is a need to provide safety nets to the most vulnerable, severely food insecure households. It is recommended that in-kind food assistance be provided in rural areas, whilst food assistance in the form of cash transfers be provided to the most vulnerable in urban locations to maintain food consumption and boost local economies.
- Lockdown restrictions and fear of contracting COVID-19 have undoubtedly reduced health seeking behaviour including routine immunizations and growth monitoring check-ups, whilst the economic downturn has reduced the ability of households, particularly women and children, to consume nutritious foods, as reflected by a deterioration in FCS, vis-à-vis dietary diversity. Consequently, it



is recommended that malnourished Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLWs) and children 6-59 months receive specialized nutritious foods to prevent a further deterioration in their status.

- Whilst COVID-19 containment measures may have been effective to reduce the spread of the Virus, the June 2020 FSMS shows how lockdown and movement restrictions and fear of contracting the disease posed a barrier to accessing markets. Future containment measures should carefully consider these effects and undertake robust cost vs. benefit analyses prior to enforcement.
- To ensure that widespread food insecurity does not pose a barrier to children from poor households from advancing their education, school feeding activities should be scaled up to provide an effective social safety net.
- Farming households and petty traders reported that their livelihoods have been seriously affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, with many lacking enough inputs for farming and capital for petty trading. Considering this, it is recommended that financial institutions, especially rural banks and development partners, support smallholder farmers and petty traders with agricultural and business loans and grants.

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