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Food Security Monitoring System Report, July 2025

WFP Sierra Leone Country Office

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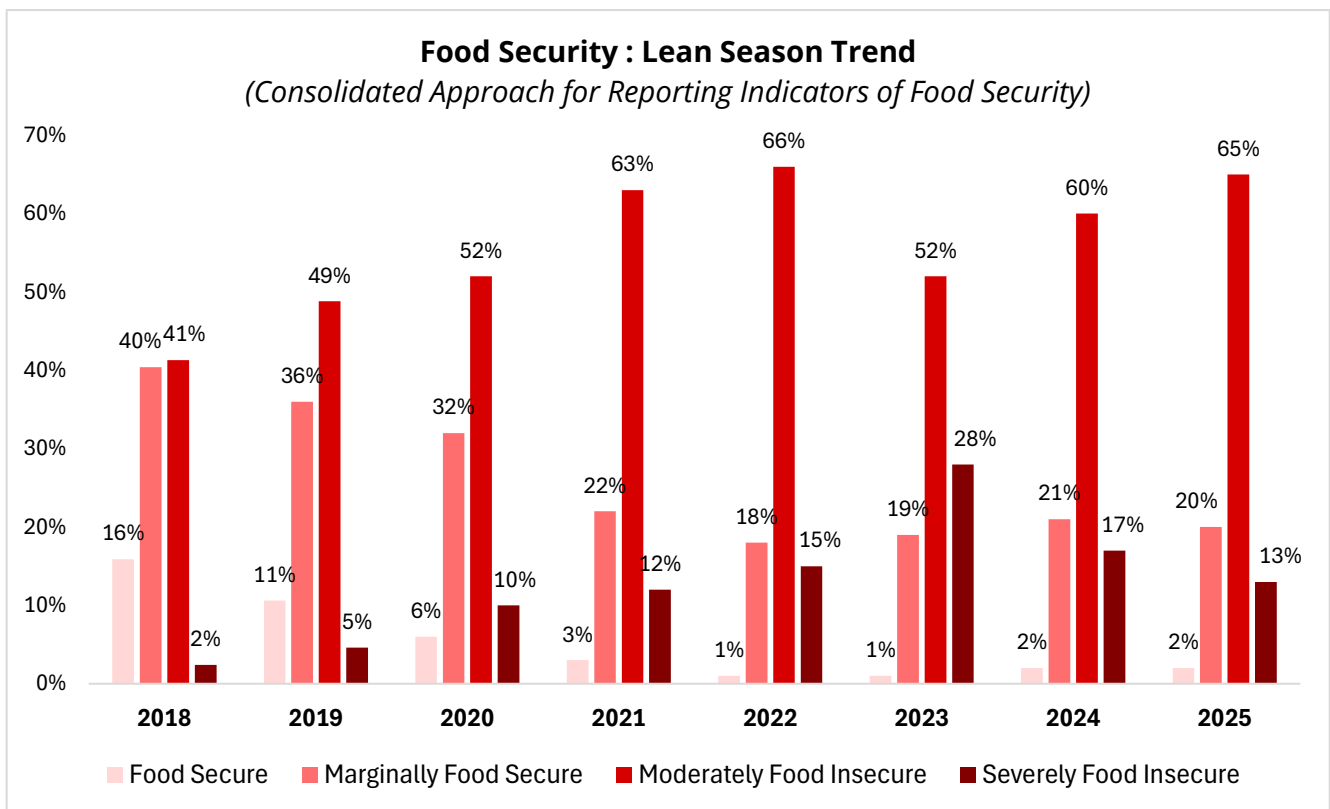
List of Acronyms

CARI	Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security
CFSVA	Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis
CSI	Coping Strategy Index
ECMEN	Economic Capacity to Meet Essential Needs
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FSMS	Food Security Monitoring System
GAM	Global Acute Malnutrition
HDDS	Household Dietary Diversity Score
LCSI	Livelihood Coping Strategy Index
MAFS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
NGO	Non-Governmental organization
ODK	Open Data Kit
PEMSD	Planning Evaluation Monitoring and Statistics Division
rCSI	Reduced Coping Strategy Index
RAM	Research, Assessment and Monitoring
StatsSL	Statistics Sierra Leone
VAM	Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping

Key Findings

- According to the July 2025 FSMS survey, **13 percent of households** are classified as severely food insecure and **65 percent as moderately food insecure (Figure 1)**. The proportion of severely food insecure households has declined by more than half- from 28 percent in 2023 to 13 percent in July 2025 – representing a 15 percentage point reduction.
- **71 percent of surveyed households** allocate more than **75 percent of their total expenditure to food**, highlighting significant economic vulnerability.
- The use of emergency livelihood coping strategies declined from **20 percent in September 2024** to **14 percent in July 2025**, reflecting modest improvements in household resilience.
- **Rural households dependent on agriculture as their primary income source**, who make up majority of the target population, **demonstrate persistently high levels of food insecurity**.
- Districts with the highest vulnerability levels across key indicators include **Falaba, Karene, Moyamba, and Koinadugu**.

Figure 1: Food Security Trends Based on FSMS Assessments



Recommendations

The findings clearly show that tackling food insecurity in Sierra Leone requires a broad and coordinated approach. To help strengthen resilience and improve food security, this FSMS recommend the following actions, based on the evidence and proven best practices:

1. **Target Social Protection Programs:** Focus on the most severe food-insecure districts and vulnerable populations by implementing shock-responsive social protection programs. Adjust transfer values to reflect the current costs of meeting Minimum Essential Needs, in order to prevent the applying of severe coping strategies.
2. **Finalize Emergency Preparedness Plans:** Develop and operationalize national emergency preparedness plans to deliver timely and adequate assistance to vulnerable families during crises.
3. **Promote Climate-Smart Agriculture:** Facilitate the transition of farmers to sound agro-ecological practices by introducing soil and water conservation techniques, utilizing soil testing, and developing market linkages to enhance smallholder farmers' access to high-quality seeds and organic fertilizers. Support smallholder farmers in adopting perennial cropping systems, to enhance resilience, boost productivity and potentially enhance dietary diversity within the communities. To address persistent gaps in dietary diversity and promote healthier food consumption patterns, it is important to implement targeted nutrition interventions in the most affected districts.
4. **Strengthen Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services:** Collaborate with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food security (MAFS) and NGO partners to provide farmers with knowledge and skills in climate-resilient agriculture and advanced farming techniques.
5. **Improve Post-Harvest Management:** Reduce post-harvest losses by investing in better harvesting, storage facilities, training farmers in effective handling techniques, and promoting the adoption of improved post-harvest technologies.

6. **Enhance Market Access:** Prioritize investments in feeder roads to connect farmers with markets, reduce transportation costs, and increase incomes.
7. **Facilitate Agricultural Credit:** Create an enabling environment for the private sector and financial institutions to offer tailored credit facilities to farmers. This includes implementing risk-reduction policies, incentivizing financial institutions, and enhancing farmers' financial literacy.
8. **Recommended Interventions to Strengthen Household Food Insecurity:** Implement targeted economic support, food assistance, and job creation programs to strengthen household resilience and achieve lasting food security through coordinated, multi-sectoral interventions.

Background & Context

The World Food Programme (WFP), in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS) and Statistics Sierra Leone, conducted the latest round of the Food Security Monitoring System (FSMS) during July 2025. This assessment monitors food and nutrition insecurity levels across Sierra Leone during the lean season (July-September). Sierra Leone's food security situation has gradually deteriorated, with the share of food-insecure individuals increasing from 62 percent in 2020 to 78 percent in September 2025 and among them, 13 percent were classified as severely food insecure.

The structure of Sierra Leone's economy has critical implications for food security. Following GDP rebasing, agriculture's share declined to 34 percent from 60 percent, while services emerged as the largest sector at 43 percent (Government of Sierra Leone, 2024). Agriculture remains the backbone of the economy, providing employment for 55 percent of the population and accounting for 57 percent of GDP¹. Nevertheless, the majority of farmers operate on a small scale—typically less than 2 hectares—and depend on rain-fed farming, which leaves them susceptible to climate change and limits their access to essential resources such as land, financing, and modern technology.

Sierra Leone's economic landscape provides essential context for understanding food security dynamics. The country's economy, valued at \$8.39 billion GDP as of 2025, has demonstrated resilience with average growth rates between 4-7 percent since the civil war ended in 2002, though growth slowed to 3.9 percent in 2024 from 5.7 percent in 2023 due to inflationary pressures and declining iron ore prices (African Development Bank, 2025)². However, this economic progress has not translated into improved food security outcomes. The World Bank (2025)³ projects that extreme poverty, measured by the share of population living on less than \$3.00 per day (2021 PPP), has risen dramatically from 38.2 percent in 2019 to 51.6 percent in 2024.

Rural poverty is widespread, with nearly 79 percent of rural residents living below the poverty line. Women are disproportionately affected, making up over 70 percent of the rural poor and depending heavily on agriculture⁴. Climate change, environmental degradation, and inflation have

¹ [Sierra Leone's Medium-Term National Development Plan \(2024 - 2030\)](#)

² [AFDB Country Focus Report 2025](#)

³ [World Bank Macro Poverty Outlook October 2025](#)

⁴ [UNDP Multidimensional Poverty in Sierra Leone 2023](#)

made food less affordable and reduced dietary diversity, with 70 percent of households spending most of their income on food. Education outcomes are poor, especially in rural areas, and only 23 percent of young children get the minimum dietary diversity needed for healthy growth.

Contemporary research identifies multiple interconnected factors driving food insecurity in Sierra Leone. First, economic vulnerabilities manifest through high food prices and currency depreciation. Second, agricultural productivity constraints perpetuate food insecurity. Despite higher overall food production than some regional peers, Sierra Leone depends on food imports, particularly rice to meet its food needs. To help make rice more affordable and ensure fair prices, the Government of Sierra Leone has introduced a new trade policy through the Ministry of Trade and Industry⁵. Third, climate change poses severe and escalating risks. The IMF's Climate Policy Diagnostic (2024)⁶ notes that significant warming trends and increased extreme hot days are pushing Sierra Leone's climate beyond historical norms, threatening ecosystems, human health, and food security. Fourth, infrastructure deficits and market access constraints exacerbate food insecurity. Critically, the research showed that households with better market access consume more diverse diets and are more food secure across all seasons.

To help tackle these challenges, the government introduced the Feed Salone strategy (2023–2028), which emphasizes mechanization, rural finance, market connections, climate-smart farming, and opportunities for youth and women. These efforts are complemented by wider reforms in areas such as human capital, economic growth, infrastructure, and governance. Despite these initiatives, progress has been gradual, mainly because of limited resources, coordination challenges, and gaps in data and disaster risk planning. Social safety nets also remain insufficiently funded and coordinated, which restricts assistance to the most vulnerable groups, particularly in rural communities.

⁵ <https://moice.gov.sl/trade-minister-provides-update-on-rice-pricing-formula/>

⁶ [IMF Sierra Leone: Climate Policy Diagnostic 2024](#)

Objectives

The main objective of the FSMS is to assess household food and nutrition security and vulnerability levels across the country during the lean season. This data collected offers insights at both the national and district levels, enabling targeted short and long-term interventions. Additionally, the FSMS serves as a key data source for the Cadre Harmonize (CH) analysis. The aim is to support Sierra Leone's efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 2: End hunger, ensuring food security and improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture.

Methodology of FSMS

A total of 6,384 households were sampled nationwide of which 74 percent represents rural households and 26 percent represents urban households using a two-tiered sampling method. In the initial phase, Enumeration Areas (EAs) were chosen from the 2015 sampling frame using Probability Proportional to Size (PPS), while in the second-tier, households were selected using systematic random Sampling.

An exhaustive and mutually exclusive list of EAs spanned all 16 districts, detailing the estimated and cumulative number of households. This EA list was supplied by Statistics Sierra Leone based on the 2015 Census. From this list, 228 EAs were randomly selected proportional to population size, and 28 households were randomly chosen from each EA, totaling 6,384 households.

Data were collected from 1–15 July 2025 using a structured, pretested household-level questionnaire. The survey employed a cascaded training approach to ensure standardized data collection across all survey areas. A Training of Trainers (ToT) was conducted in June 2025. Following this, the master trainers delivered field training at two centralized venues in Bo and Makeni during the last week of June. The three-day intensive training program brought together 135 enumerators and 19 supervisors from across all 16 districts. The training covered survey methodology, enumeration area protocols, demographic data collection, smartphone-based data collection platforms, and various food security indicators relevant to the FSMS. Data collection was implemented by 135 trained enumerators working under the supervision of 19 district supervisors, with oversight provided by 4 regional coordinators to ensure consistent implementation and quality standards throughout the fieldwork period.

Data quality was monitored continuously at the country level through a real-time dashboard system. Regular quality checks were conducted, and feedback was promptly communicated to both the field data collection teams and the FSMS technical team to address any issues and maintain data integrity throughout the survey period.

The following food security indicators were examined and analyzed using the Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators to Food Security (CARI)⁷.

1. Household Food Consumption Score (FCS)
2. Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS)
3. Reduced Coping Strategy Index (r CSI)
4. Livelihood Coping Strategy Index
5. Share of Expenditure on Food

Data were collected digitally through face-to-face surveys using the WFP MoDA⁸ platform, which included a digital survey form with food security indicators to guide enumerators during interviews. Data collection was conducted by 135 enumerators and 19 Supervisors who were trained by a technical team lead by WFP Research, Assessment and Monitoring (RAM) in the last week of June and were supervised by the technical committee that comprised technical expert from Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), Statistics Sierra Leone and WFP (for details, see Annex 1 on team composition). Food security analysis was done through the Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) by WFP RAM and MAFS.

Households' Demographic Profile

Household Size

Amongst the 6,384 sampled participant households, the mean household size was 7. An analysis of household composition reveals that, 60 percent were comprised of 5 to 8 members followed by households within the range 9 to 12 members and 1 to 4 members with 17.5 percent each and lastly household with 13 or more members have 4.5 percent (**Figure 2**). When examining the

⁷ [The Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security \(CARI\)](#)

⁸ MoDA (<https://moda.wfp.org/>), WFP's corporate mobile platform, streamlines field data collection for monitoring, assessments, and reporting across humanitarian operations.

mean household sizes by districts, households in Tonkolili have the highest (9) followed by Kambia with mean household sizes of 8 (**Figure 3**).

Figure 2: Household size.

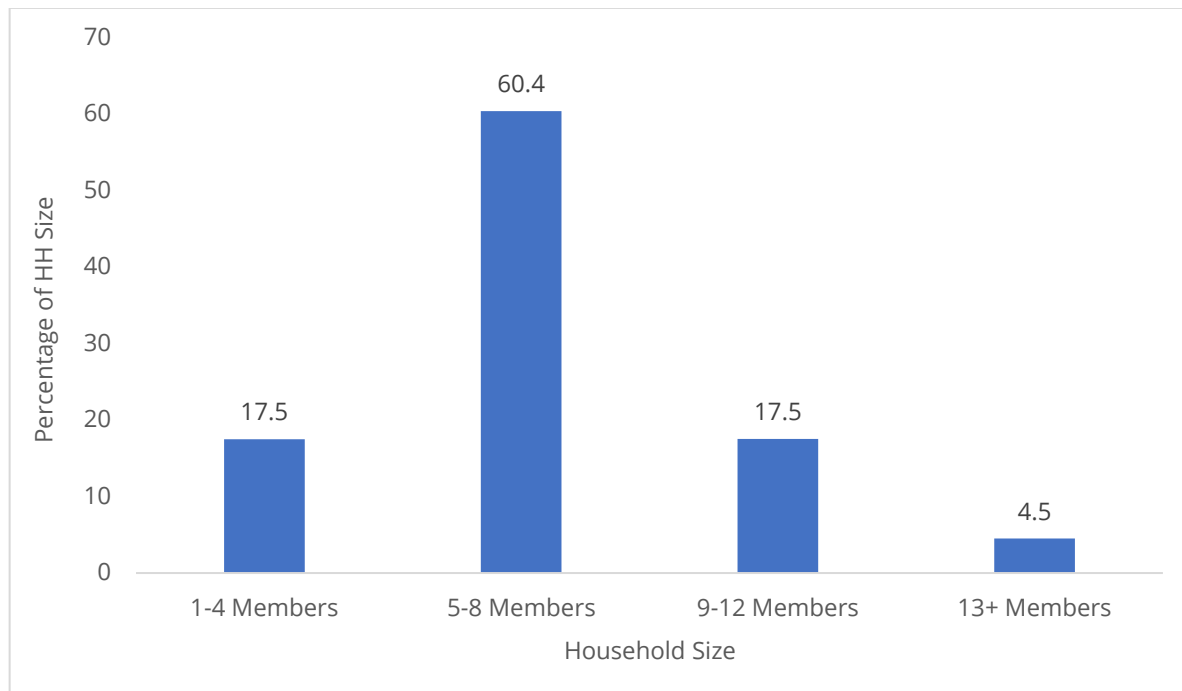
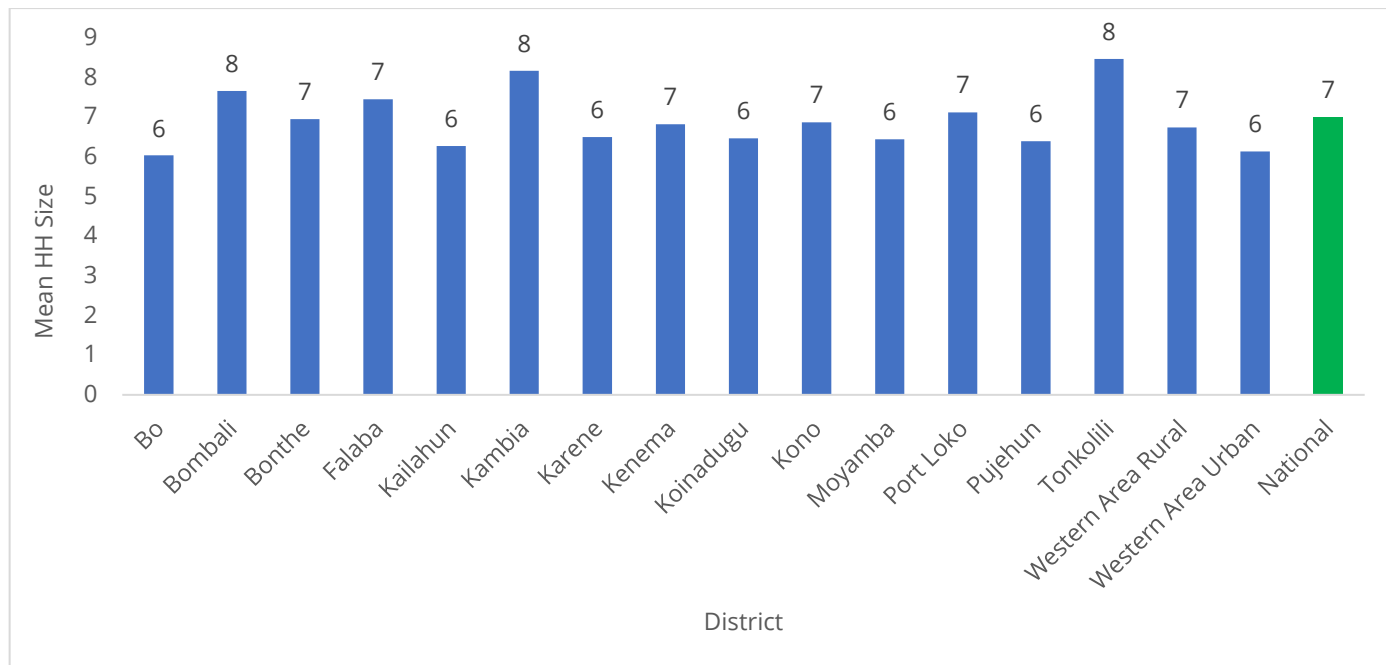


Figure 3: Mean Household Size by district.



Head of Household Demographics

Figure 4 illustrates that 71 percent households were headed by men, while 29 percent were headed by women. **Figure 5** represents a breakdown of households heads by gender and

district. The districts of Koinadugu, Kailahun and Western area Urban had the smallest discrepancy between male and female headed households with proportions of 41.8 percent, 40.6 percent and 40.5 percent respectively.

Figure 4: Household Gender (%).

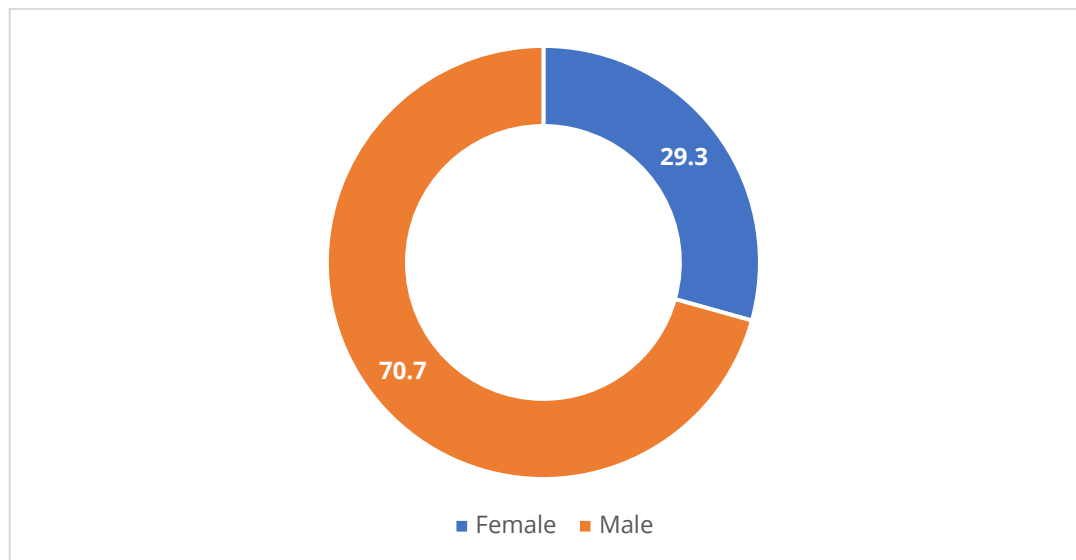


Figure 5: Household Gender by district.

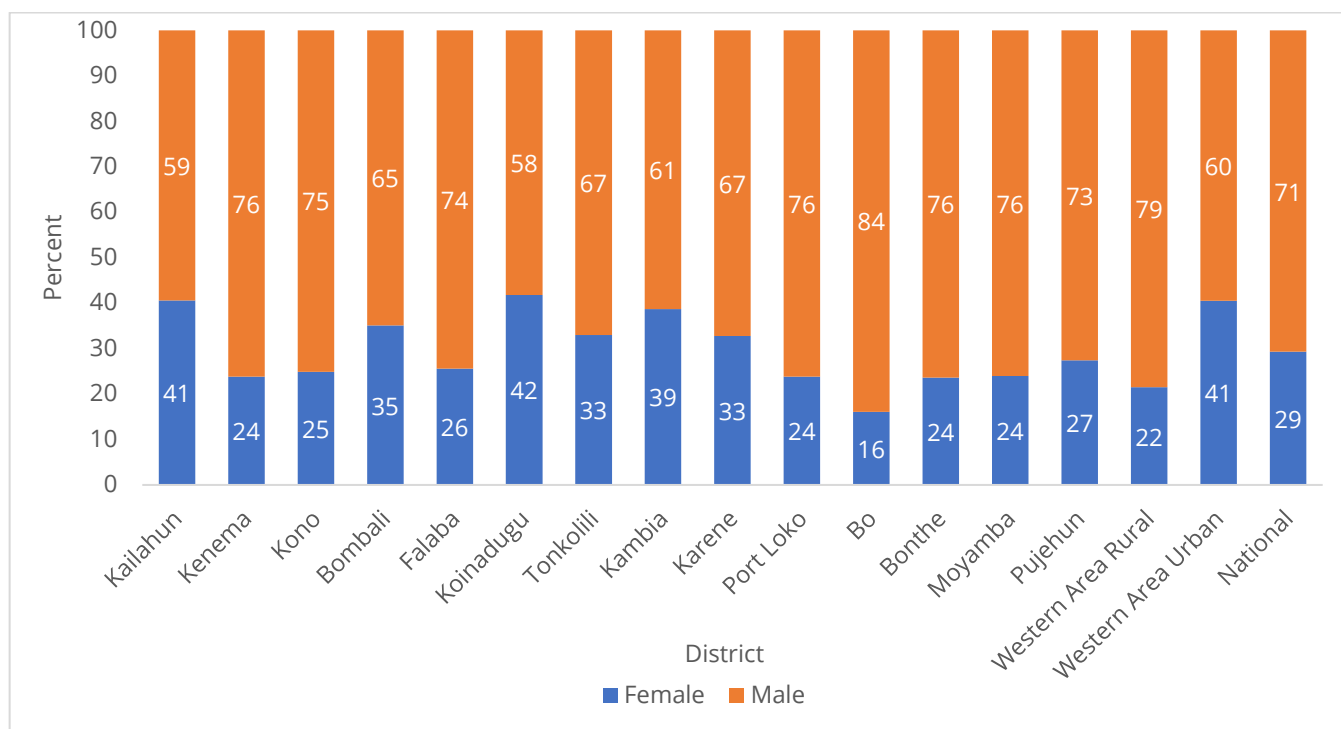
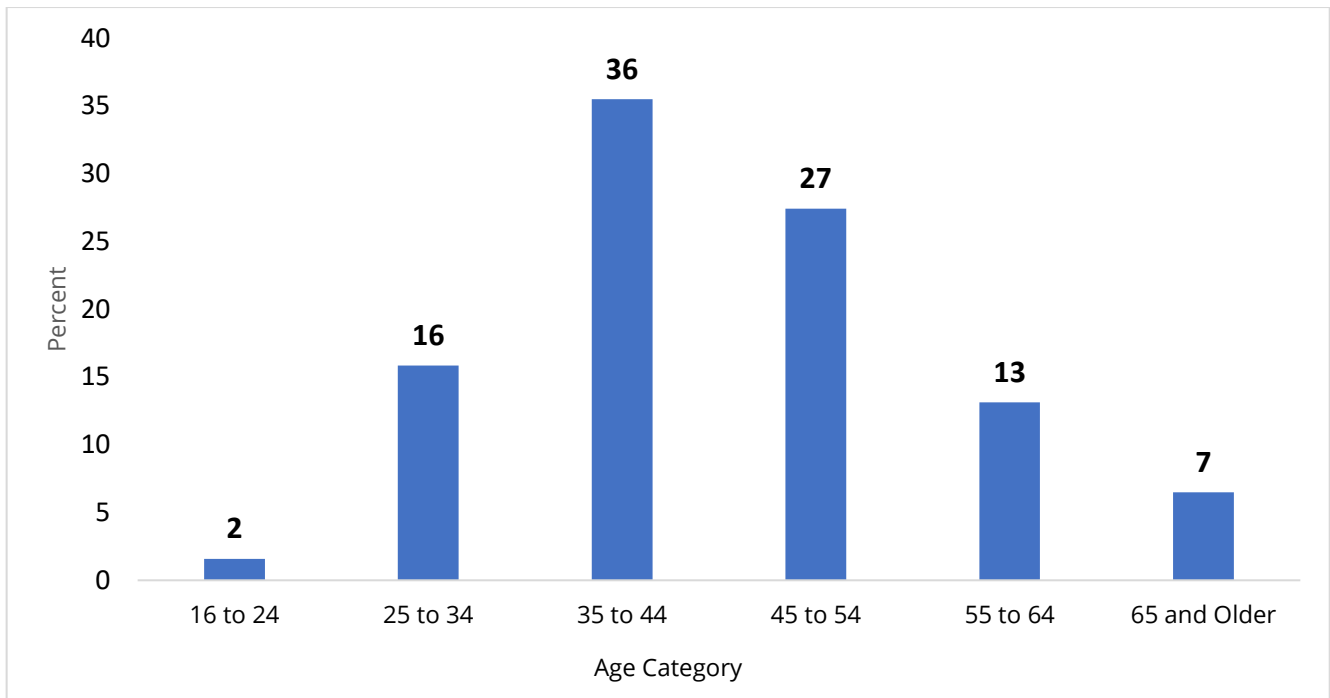


Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of head of households across age categories. The majority (35.5 percent) fall within the 35–44 age group, followed by 27.4 percent in the 45–54 category. This indicates that most household decision-makers are concentrated in the middle-age range (35–64 years), representing 76 percent of the total.

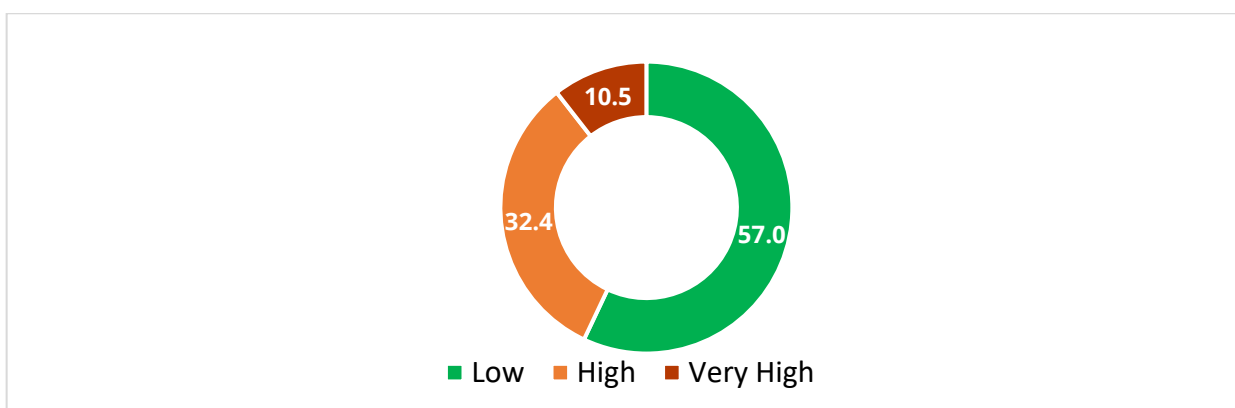
Figure 6: Mean age of Household head (in Years)



Dependency Ratio

The dependency ratio serves as a key indicator in beneficiary selection methodologies for humanitarian assistance. It is determined by dividing the number of dependents—specifically children and elderly individuals—by the number of able-bodied adults within targeted households. **Figure 7** indicates that 57.0 percent exhibit a low dependency ratio (below 1.5), 32.4 percent have a high dependency ratio (between 1.5 and 3), and 10.5 percent present a very high dependency ratio (3 and above).

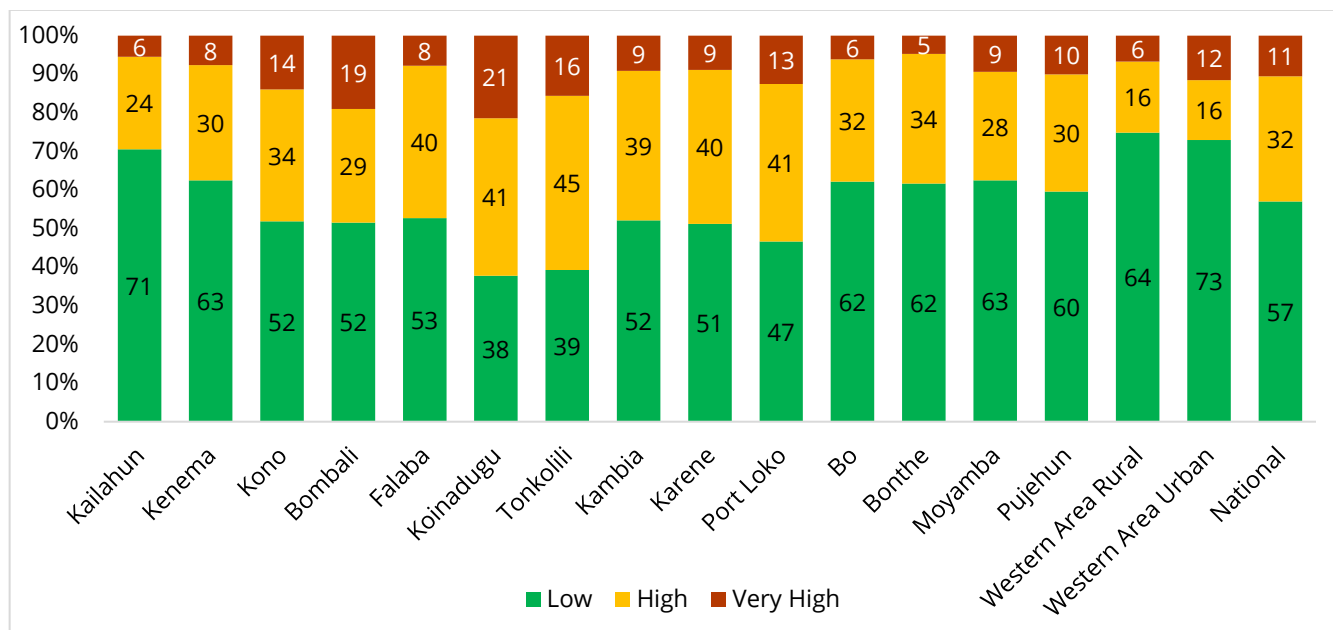
Figure 7: Dependency Ratio of households (%).



Notably, the districts of Koinadugu and Tonkolili reported the highest proportions of elevated dependency ratios, at 21.4 percent and 15.6 percent respectively. Conversely, Western Area Urban

(73 percent), Kailahun (70 percent), and Western Area Rural (63.9 percent) recorded the lowest rates of high dependency ratios (**Figure 8**).

Figure 8: Dependency Ratio by districts



Food Security Indicators

Food Consumption Score

The Food Consumption Score (FCS) assesses the quantity and quality of diets consumed by the households that participated in the survey. The indicator allows for measuring the dietary diversity, food consumption frequency and the relative nutritional value of the food items consumed⁹. The FCS is computed from a 7-day recall period and based on the nutritional value.

According to the latest survey results, 14 percent of Sierra Leonean households have a poor Food Consumption Score (FCS), representing a 4-percentage-point deterioration from the 10 percent reported in September 2024. However, the proportion of households in the borderline category reduced from 62 percent in September 2024 to 55 percent in July 2025. Also households in the acceptable category improved from 28 percent to 31 percent (**Figure 9**).

Figure 9: FCS Lean season Trend.

⁹ Technical guidance for the Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security:

<https://vamresources.manuals.wfp.org/docs/the-consolidated-approach-for-reporting-indicators-of-food-security-cari>

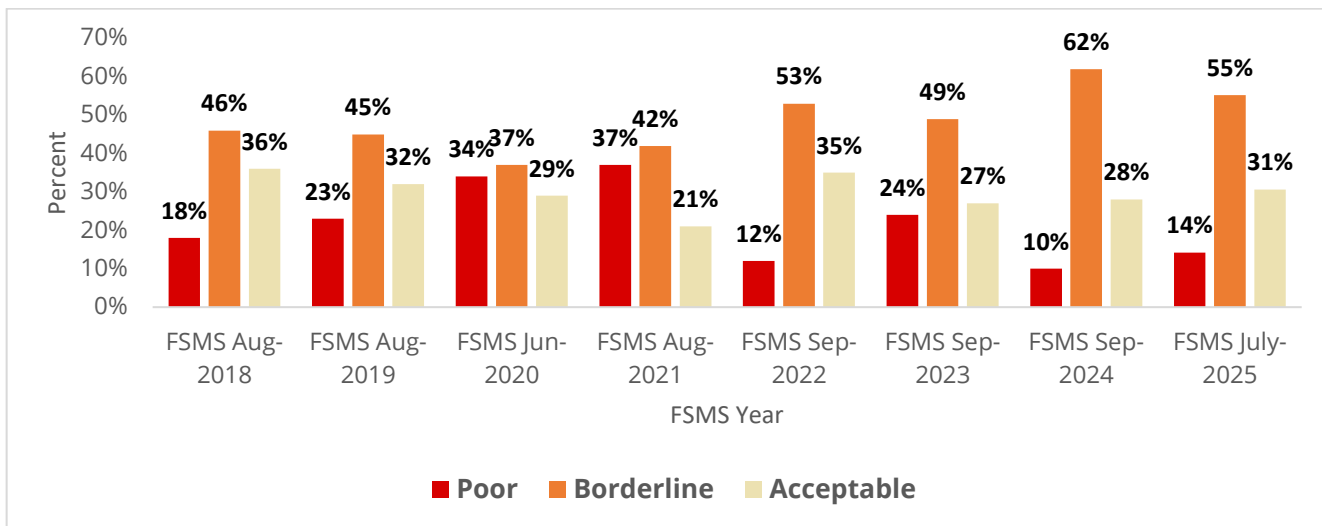
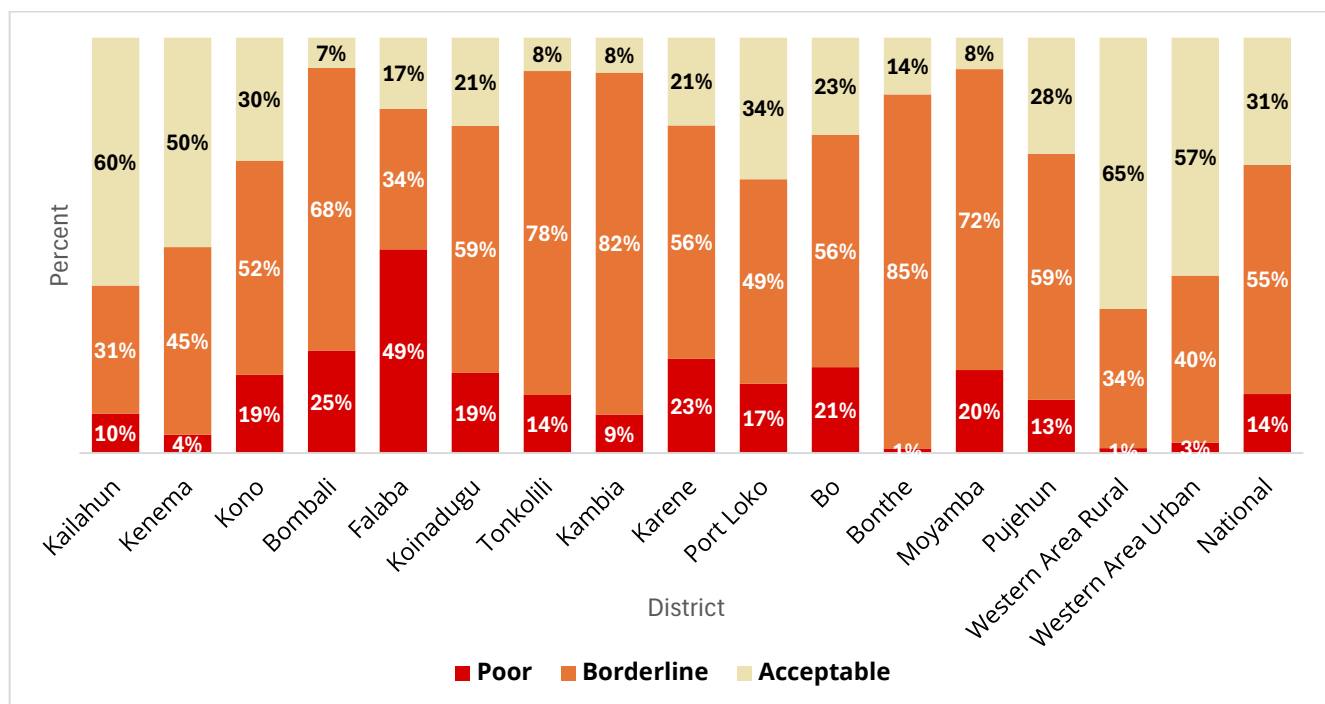


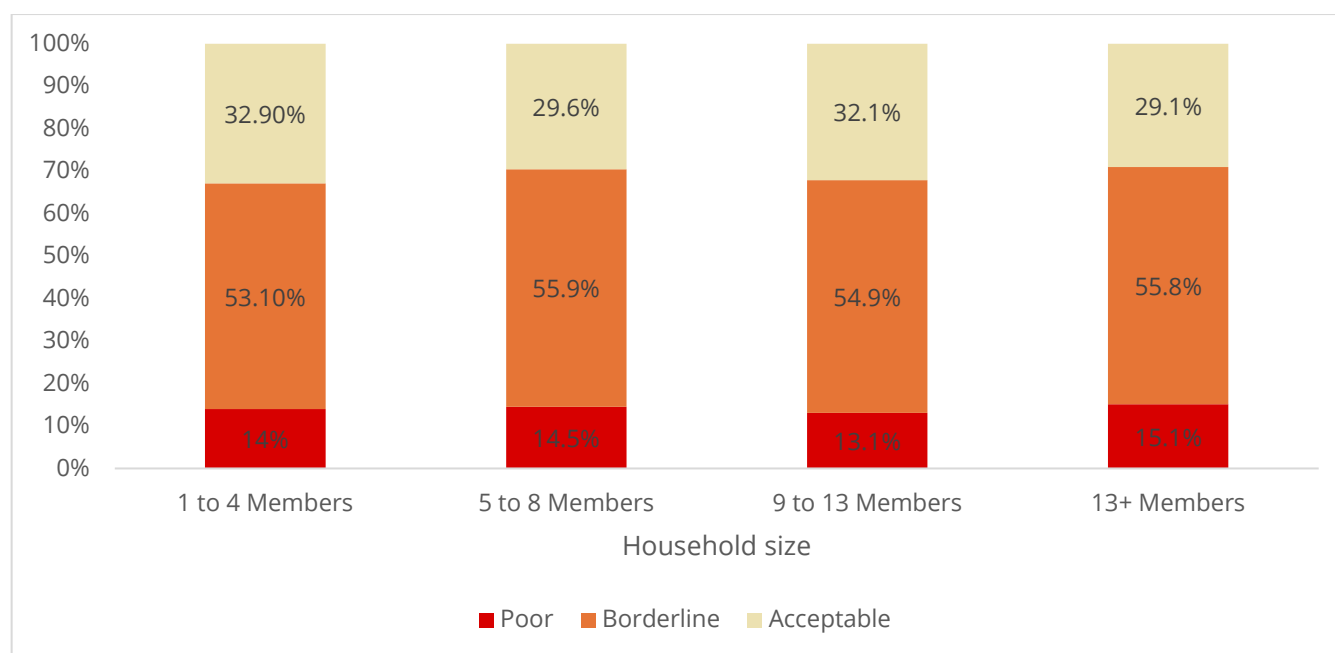
Figure 10 depicts the disaggregated results by districts, shows that Falaba, Bombali, Karene, Bo and Moyamba districts have the highest proportion of their population in poor food consumption. An analysis of districts with the lowest proportion of households in the poor food consumption category revealed Kailahun at 2.9 percent, Kambia at 2.1percent, and Bo at 2.9 percent.

Figure 10: Food Consumption Score (FCS) by district



When the Food Consumption was compared with the household size the result shows that larger households are likely to have poor food consumption as compared to smaller households (**Figure 11**).

Figure 11: FCS by household size.



Household Dietary Diversity Score

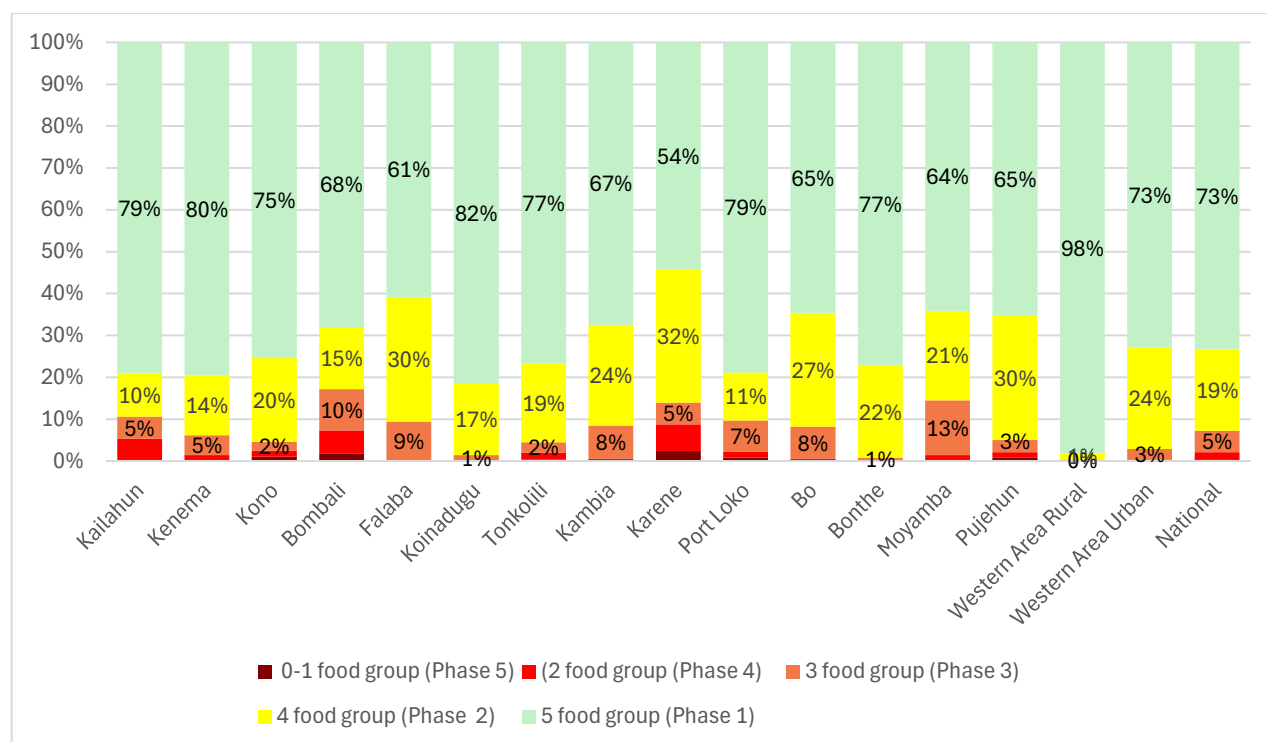
Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) assesses the number of unique food groups consumed by household members during the 24 hours preceding the survey interviews. HDDS can be used as a proxy measurement of household food access and quality of diets consumed¹⁰. **Figure 12** from the FSMS July 2025 highlights notable disparities in household dietary diversity across Sierra Leone.

Districts such as Western Area Rural, Koinadugu, Kenema, Kailahun, and Bo demonstrate strong household dietary diversity (HDDS), with the majority of households consuming five or more food groups. However, districts like Karene, Falaba, Moyamba and Bombali show notable vulnerability, with higher proportions of households consuming fewer food groups.

Nationally, while 73% of households consume five or more food groups, masking a relatively positive average, however considering looking into district level results there are clear pockets of severe nutritional vulnerability. These findings highlight the need for targeted nutrition interventions in the most affected districts to address persistent gaps in dietary quality.

¹⁰ FANTA Project; Household Dietary Diversity Score (HDDS) for Measurement of Household Food Access: Indicator Guide: https://www.fantaproject.org/sites/default/files/resources/HDDS_v2_Sep06_0.pdf

Figure 12: Share of Households DDS five or less by districts.



Reduced Coping Strategy Index

The Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI) is an indicator used to measure the impacts of hardships faced by households on their food consumption behaviour. The index measures the frequency and severity of the food consumption related coping mechanisms the households engaged in the 7 days reference period prior to the survey¹¹. The index is based on five coping strategies as follows:

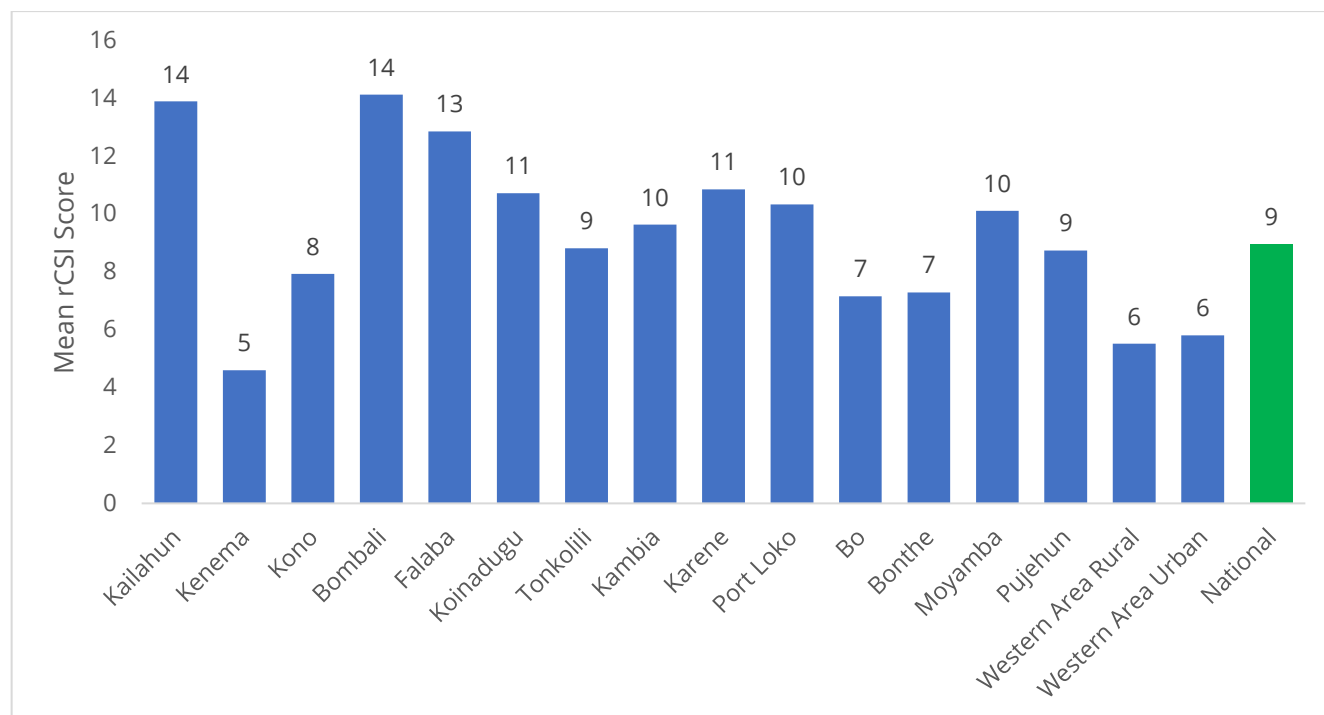
- i. Rely on less preferred and less expensive food
- ii. Borrow food or rely on help from relative(s) or friend(s)
- iii. Limit portion size at meals
- iv. Restrict consumption by adults for small children to eat
- v. Reduce number of meals eaten in a day

Higher rCSI scores indicates higher vulnerability levels for the households. In July 2025, the national average rCSI score stood at 9 (**Figure 13**). When the results were disaggregated by

¹¹ Technical guidance for the Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security: <https://vamresources.manuals.wfp.org/docs/the-consolidated-approach-for-reporting-indicators-of-food-security-cari>

geographic location, Bombali and Kailahun district reported the highest average rCSI score of 14, followed by Falaba with 13, Karene and Koinadugu with 11 respectively. Additionally, the districts of Moyamba, Port Loko and Kambia with 10 score also exceeded the national average rCSI score of 9.

Figure 13: Mean rCSI by district.



Livelihood Coping Strategies

Livelihood coping strategies is an indicator used to understand medium and longer-term coping capacity of households in response to lack of food or lack of money to buy food (or essential needs) and their ability to overcome challenges in the future¹². The indicator is derived from 10 questions regarding the households' experiences with livelihood stress and asset depletion to cope with food shortages. The questions consist of at least 4 stress coping strategies, 3 crisis coping strategies and 3 emergency coping strategies that are most relevant for the Sierra Leone context. Stress strategies indicate a reduced ability to deal with shocks because of a current reduction in resources or increase in debts. Crisis strategies are often associated with the direct reduction of future productivity. Emergency strategies also affect future productivity but are more difficult to

¹² Technical guidance for the Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security.

reverse or more dramatic in nature than crisis strategies. As shown in **Table 1**, ten questions were administered to respondents to assess their coping strategies.

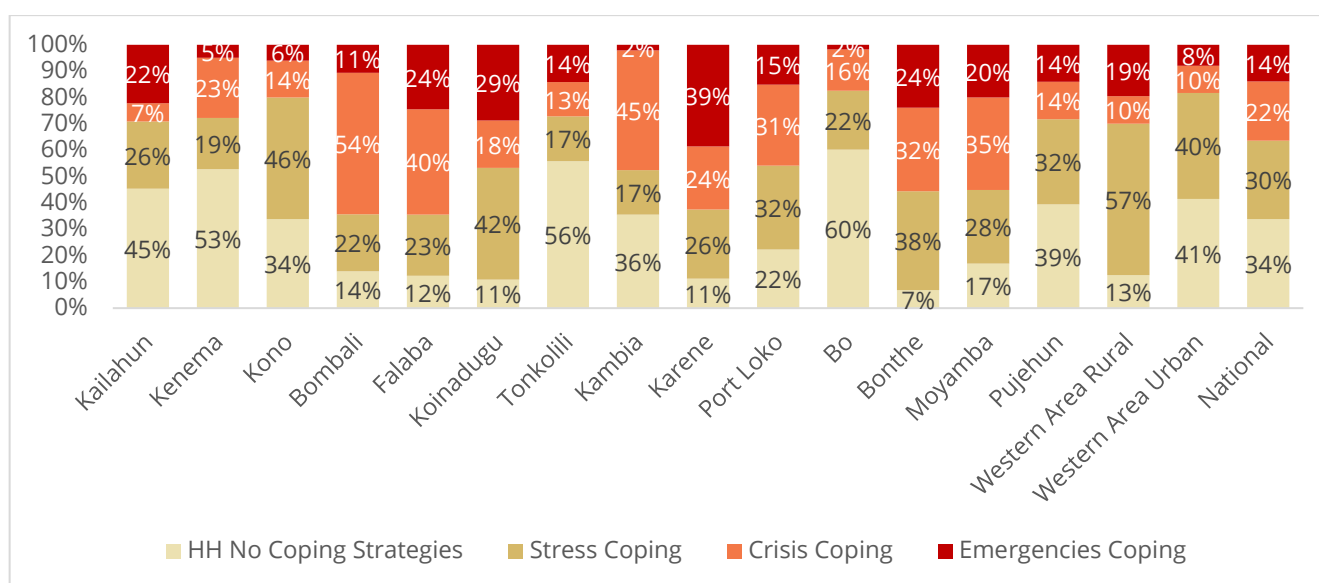
Table 1 Coping strategies by category and level

Stress	Crisis	Emergency
Sold household assets/goods	Sold productive assets or means of transport	Sold house or land
Purchased food on credit	Reduced health and educational expenditures	Begged
Spent savings	Withdrawn children from school	Sold last female breeding stock, eat seed stocks
Borrowed money		

Overall, the proportion of households that adopted emergency coping strategies is 14 percent in which Karene district and Falaba districts showed the highest prevalence of emergency coping strategies whilst Bo, Kenema and Kono districts accounted for the lowest prevalence of emergency coping as shown in **Figure 14**.

Regarding the crisis coping strategies, 22 percent of households across the country practise some crises coping strategies, Bombali, Kambia and Falaba districts accounted for the highest prevalence. Comparing LCSi with the same period last year, the results show an improvement for emergency coping strategies. The emergency coping strategies decreased from 20 percent in September 2024 to 14 percent in July 2025, whilst the crises coping strategies increased from 18 percent in September 2024 to 22 percent in July 2025.

Figure 14: Livelihood Coping Strategies by district.



Livelihood coping strategies when analysed by household size shows that households with larger members of households are more prone to emergency coping and crises coping strategies as compared to households with smaller households' size.

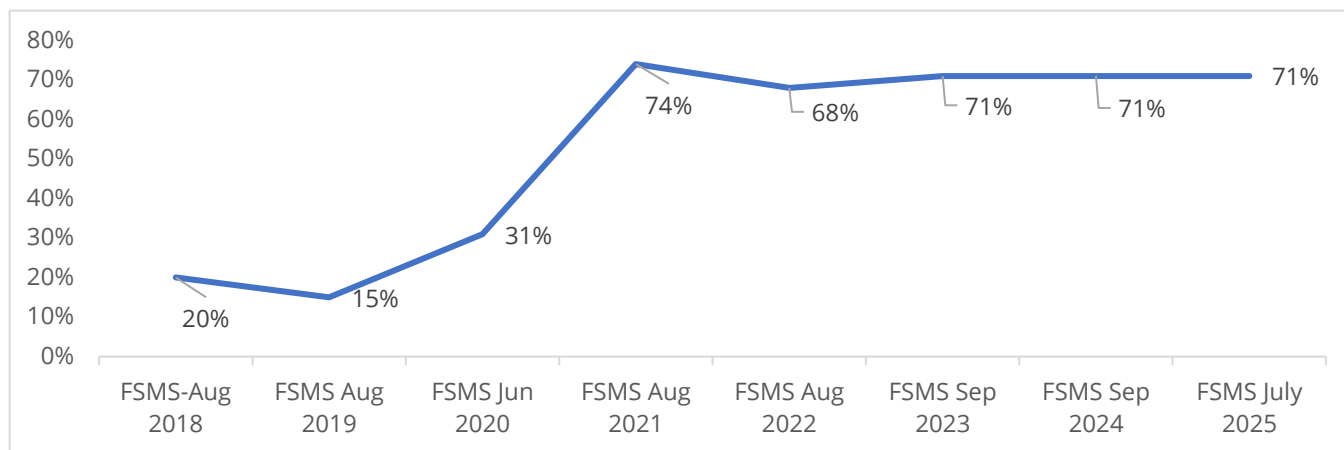
Figure 15: Livelihood coping strategies by household size.



Food Expenditure Share

The food expenditure share (FES) measures the economic vulnerability of households based on the premise that the greater the expenditure on food when compared to other essential needs, the more economically vulnerable the household is. When the level of income reduces or when prices increase, the share of food expenditure as a proportion of total expenditure also increases.

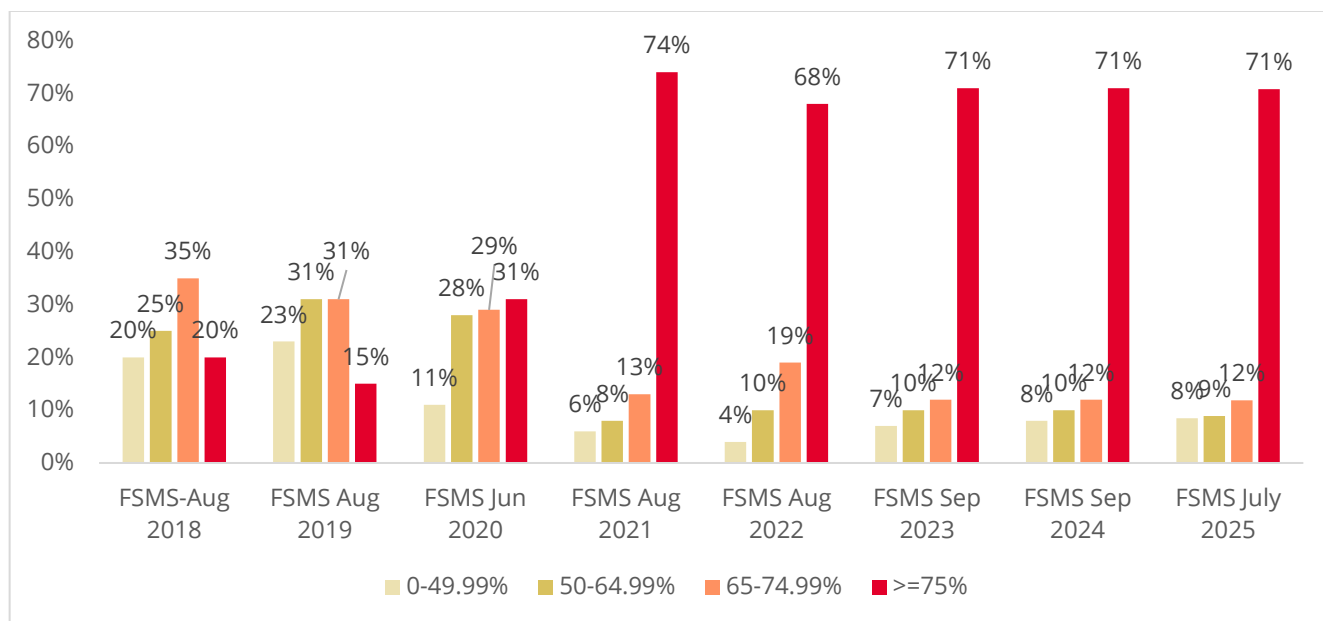
Figure 16: Trend in Food Expenditure Share During Lean Season (75% or Higher)



For poor households this means reducing expenditure on other essential non-food items and services, such as education and health, eating less or eating less preferred foods that are cheaper.

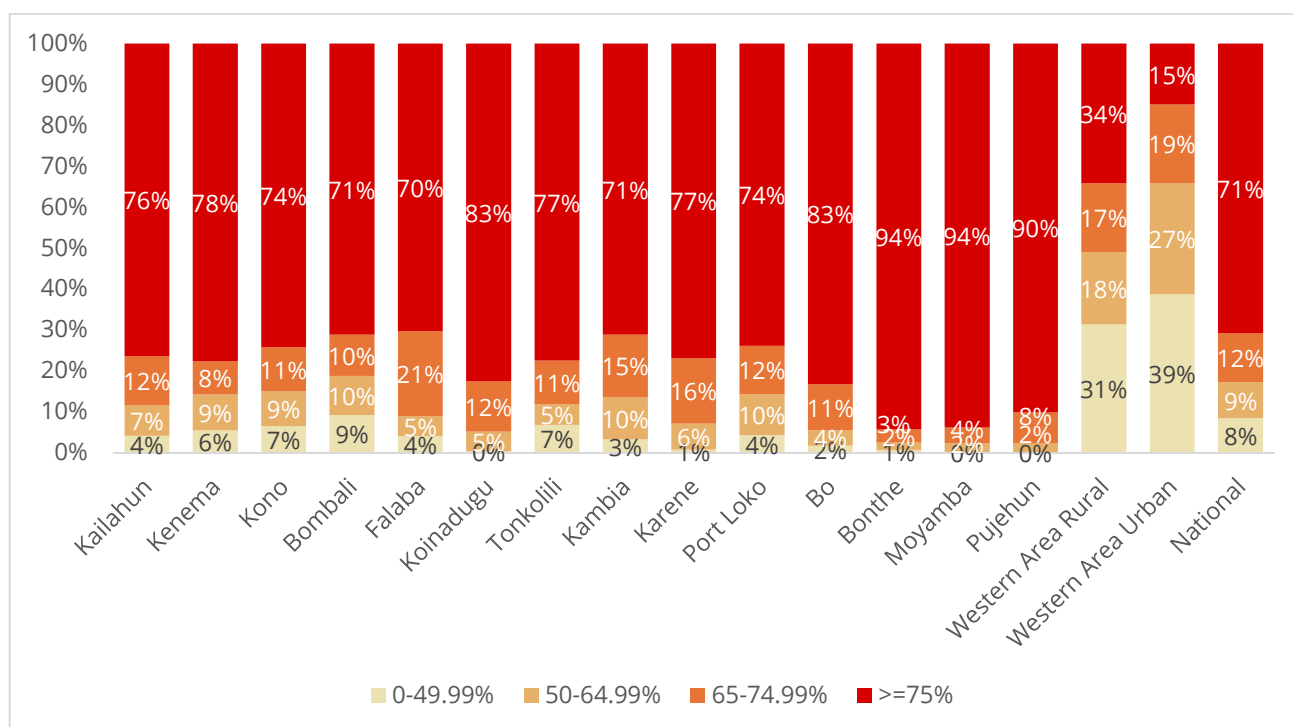
As shown in **Figure 17**, around 71 percent of the survey participant households reported spending more than 75 percent of their total expenditure on food.

Figure 17: Food Expenditure Share Trend During Lean Season (FSMS).



Districts that reported the highest share of their populations with food expenditure spending above 75 percent of their total household expenditure included Bonthe with 94.2 percent, Moyamba with 93.8 percent, Pujehun with 90.1 percent (**Figure 18**).

Figure 18: Food Expenditure Share on by District.



Market Conditions

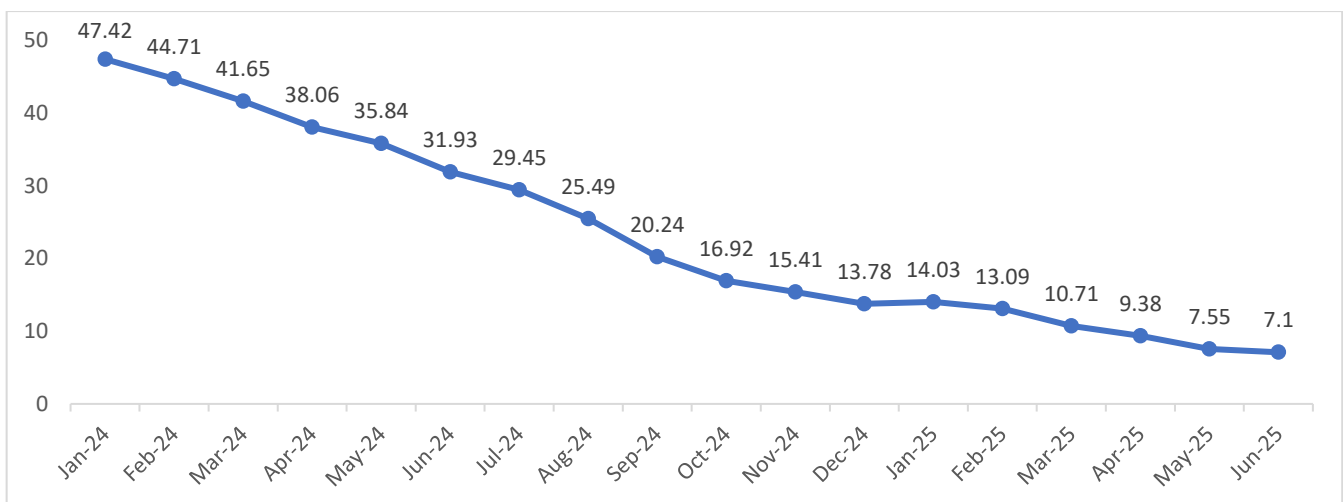
The quarterly Sierra Leone Market Price Bulletin provides updates on its economic outlook, price changes for staple food commodities; terms of trade between wages of unskilled labour and main staple food commodities as well as exchanges rates (USD/SLE). To compile the bulletin, the WFP, in collaboration with the MAFS collect monthly information on 29 food commodities and daily wage rate of manual labour in 60 markets across all 16 districts in Sierra Leone and use the secondary information from Statistics Sierra Leone and Sierra Leone Central Bank. The economic outlook presented below is a synthesis from the quartely bulletin produced¹³ highlighting Apr-Jun 2025 align with previous trend.

Inflation

The food and non-alcoholic beverages inflation rates have shown a significant reduction in the first and second quarters of 2025. The national food and beverages inflation for June 2025 was 4.63 percent, down by 22.62 percentage points from 27.25 percent in June 2024 (**Figure 20**).

Figure 19 shows that the national headline inflation rate was 7.10 percent in June 2025, a notable decrease of 24.83 percentage points from 31.93 percent in June 2024, indicating a downward trend.

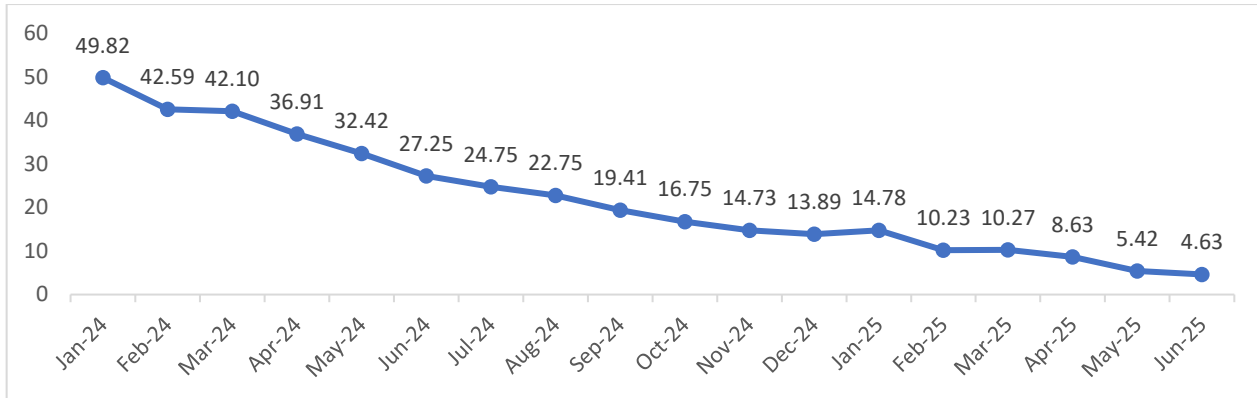
Figure 19: Trend in General Inflation Rate



Source: Statistics SL (<https://www.statistics.sl/index.php/cpi.html>)

¹³ <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000168344/download/>

Figure 20: Year-on-Year Inflation Trend for Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages

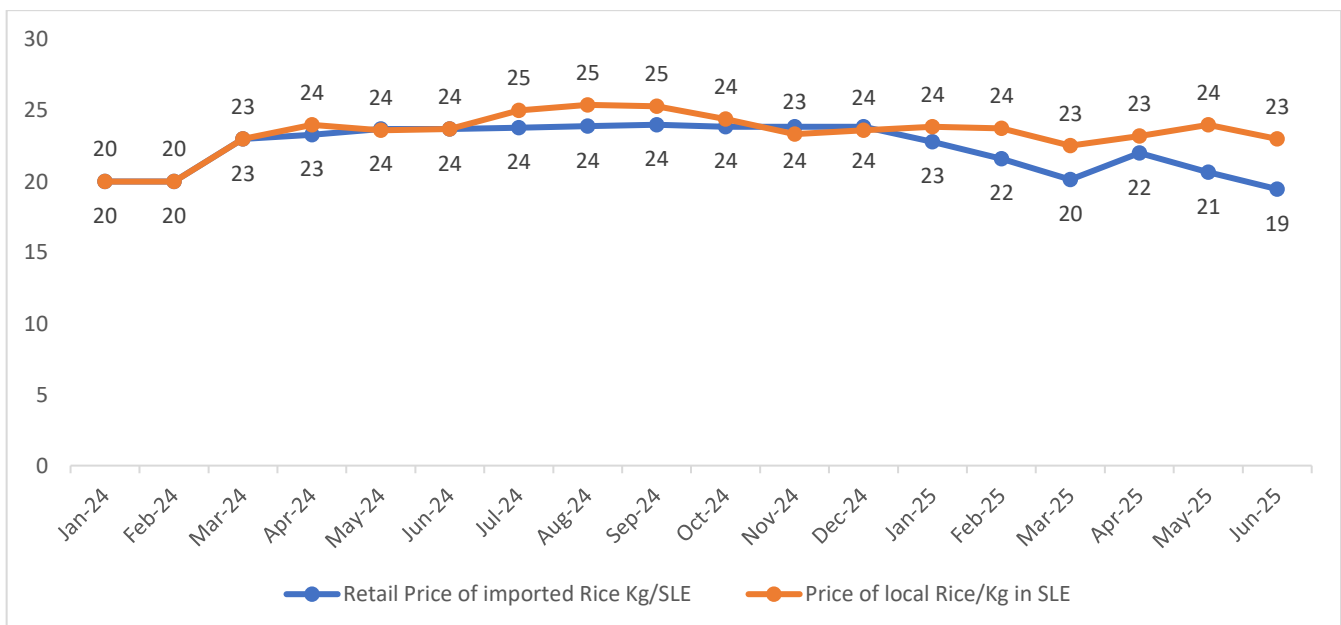


Source: Statistics SL (<https://www.statistics.sl/index.php/cpi.html>)

Food Commodity Prices

In the first and second quarters of 2025, there was a noticeable improvement in the prices of key staples, particularly rice and cassava, compared to 2024. This positive change can be attributed to the pricing policy for rice implemented by the government of Sierra Leone through the Ministry of Trade and Industry in January 2025. Nationally, the prices of imported and local rice decreased by 18 percent and 3 percent respectively when compared to June 2024 (**Figure 21**).

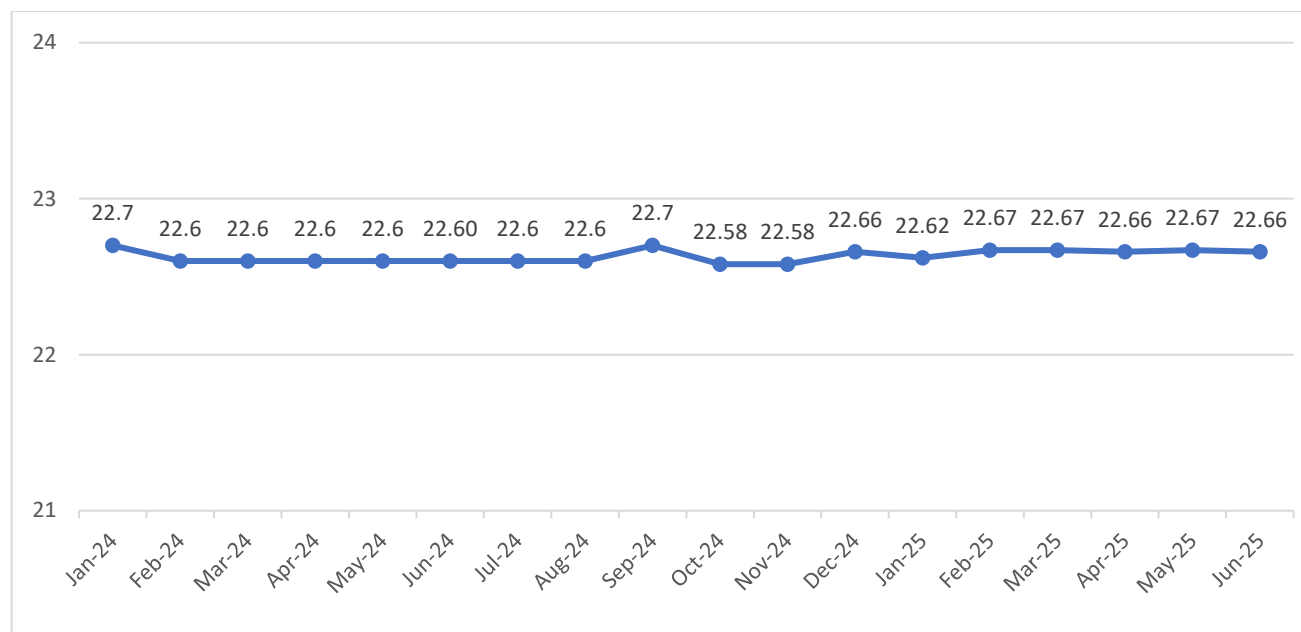
Figure 21: Retail Price Trends for Imported and Local Rice (Per Kilogram) in Sierra Leone



Currency Exchange Rates

The Leone (SLE) experienced a steady exchange rates against the United States Dollar over the period, with no depreciation against the United States Dollar (**Figure 22**).

Figure 22: Exchange Rate Movements: SLE/USD



Source: Bank of Sierra Leone (<https://bsl.gov.sl/>)

Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security

The Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security (CARI) is a methodology that is used to aggregate different food security indicators into one index to report on a population's overall food security status. The CARI assesses availability and access to food through measuring the status of household consumption, the ability of a household to stabilize consumption over time by measuring the Coping Capacity through economic vulnerability and livelihood coping strategies¹⁴. The approach culminates in a food security console which supports the reporting and combining of food security indicators in a systematic and transparent way, using information collected in the February FSMS survey.

The console classifies food insecurity into 4 categories i.e.

1) Food secure, 2) Marginally Food Secure, 3) Moderately Food Insecure, and 4) Severely Food Insecure as illustrated in **Figure 27**: For the CARI analysis the following indicators were collected and used:

- i. Food consumption score,
- ii. Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)

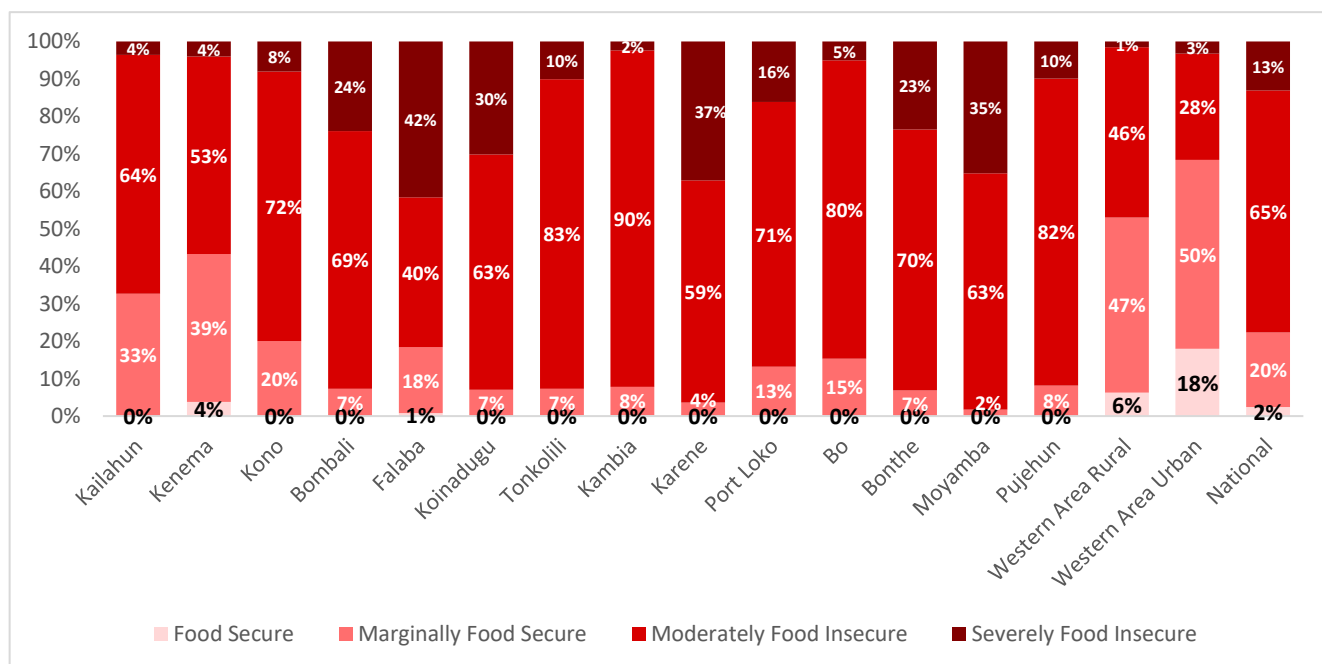
¹⁴ Technical guidance for the Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security.

iii. Food expenditure share and

iv. Livelihood coping

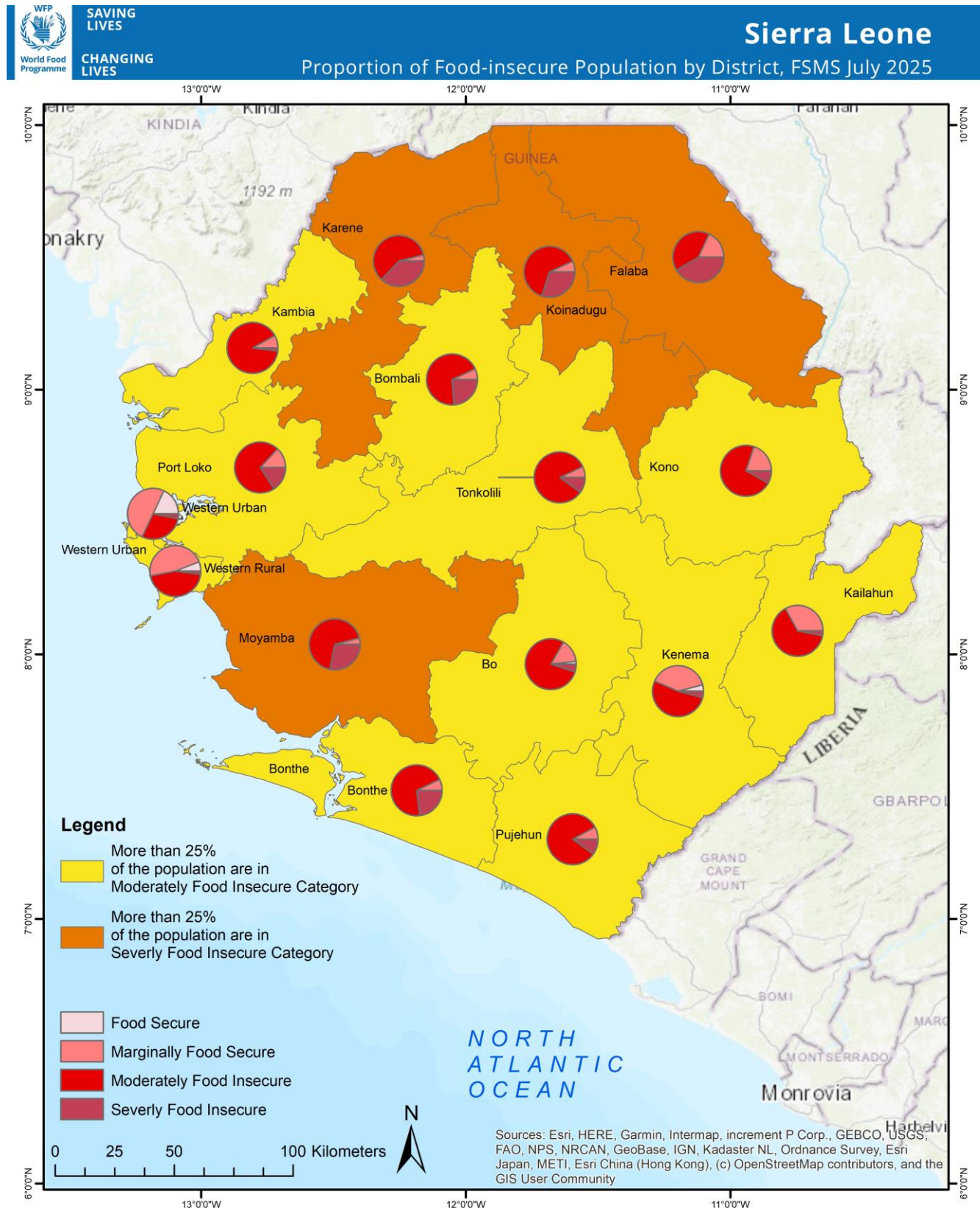
The food security analysis was done using the revised CARI guidelines¹⁵ and the most noticeable updates applied during this analysis are. The **Figure 23** illustrates the distribution of food security status across Sierra Leone’s districts. Each bar represents a district and is segmented into four categories: food secure, marginally food secure, moderately food insecure, and severely food insecure. The data reveal that food insecurity is widespread, with the majority of households in most districts classified as moderately or severely food insecure (**Figure 23**). About 71% of households spend at least three-quarters of their expenditure on food, indicating widespread vulnerability. This is most severe in districts like Pujehun, Bonthe, Moyamba, Bo, Kailahun, and Kenema (**Figure 18**). Districts such as Falaba, Karene, and Moyamba have the highest proportions of severely food insecure households, exceeding 35 percent. In contrast, urban districts like Western Area Urban and Rural show higher percentages of food secure and marginally food secure households, with Western Area Urban having 18 percent food secure and 50 percent marginally food secure. Nationally, only 2.4 percent of households are food secure, while 64.6 percent are moderately food insecure and 13.1 percent are severely food insecure. These findings highlight significant regional disparities and the urgent need for targeted interventions.

Figure 23: Food Security Classification by District (CARI Guidelines)



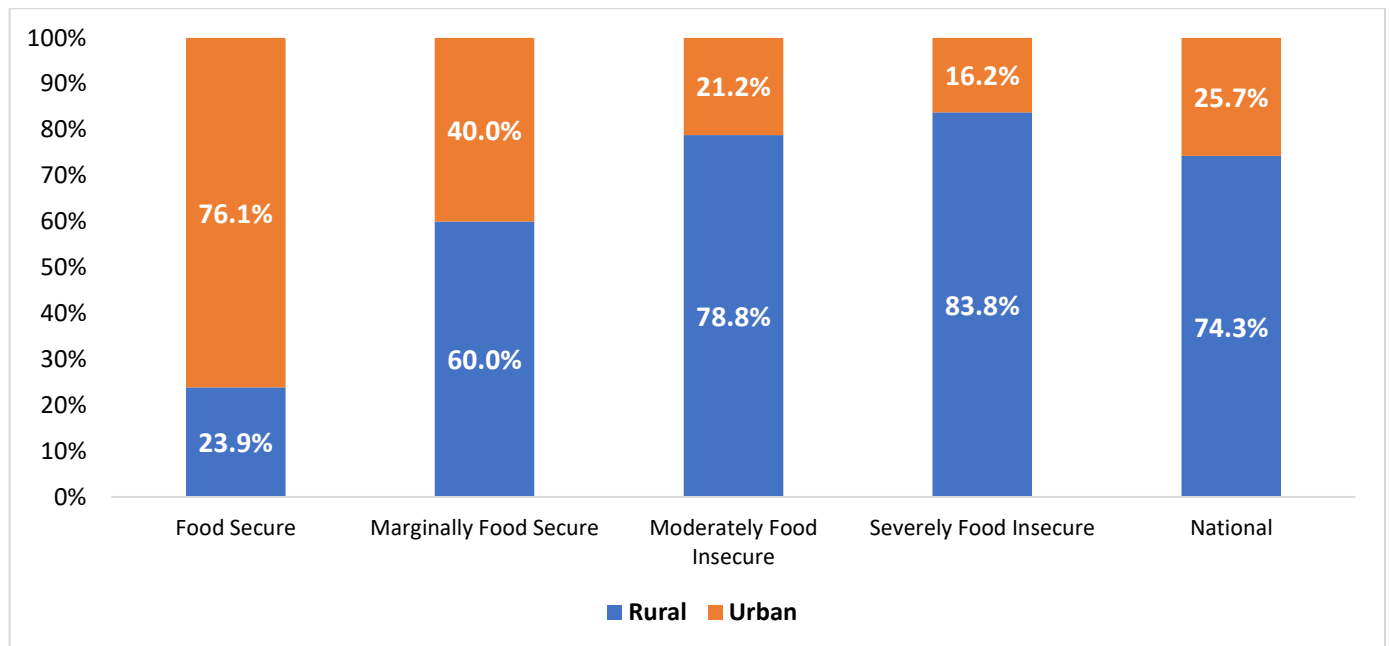
¹⁵ [The Consolidated Approach for Reporting Indicators of Food Security \(CARI\)](#)

Map 1 Proportion of food-insecure population by districts



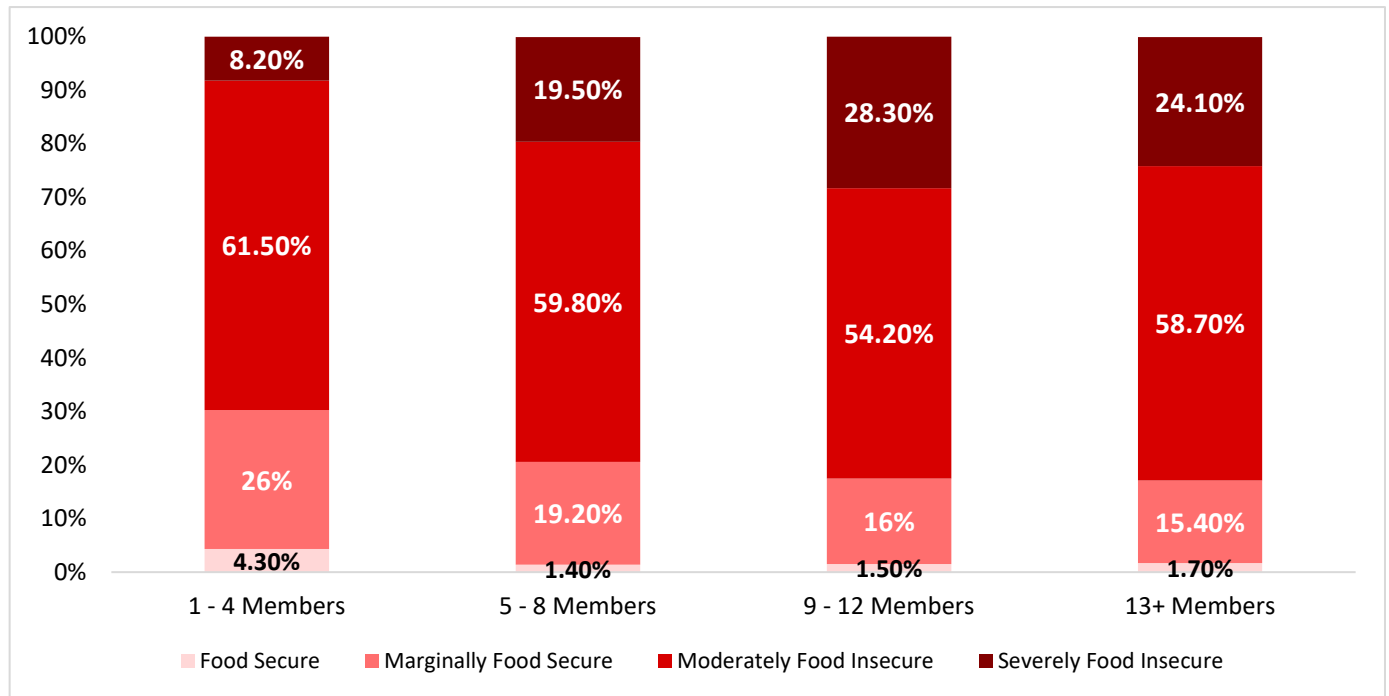
While looking into the food security situation by urban and rural households, it was found that 25.7 percent of surveyed households were from urban areas, while the majority (74.3 percent) lived in rural areas. The results reveal that rural households face a higher risk of severe food insecurity. Among all severely food-insecure households, 83.8 percent were in rural areas compared to just 16.2 percent in urban areas. In contrast, the pattern reverses for food-secure households: 76.1 percent lived in urban areas, while only 23.9 percent were rural residents (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Food Security Classification in Rural and Urban Areas (CARI Guidelines)



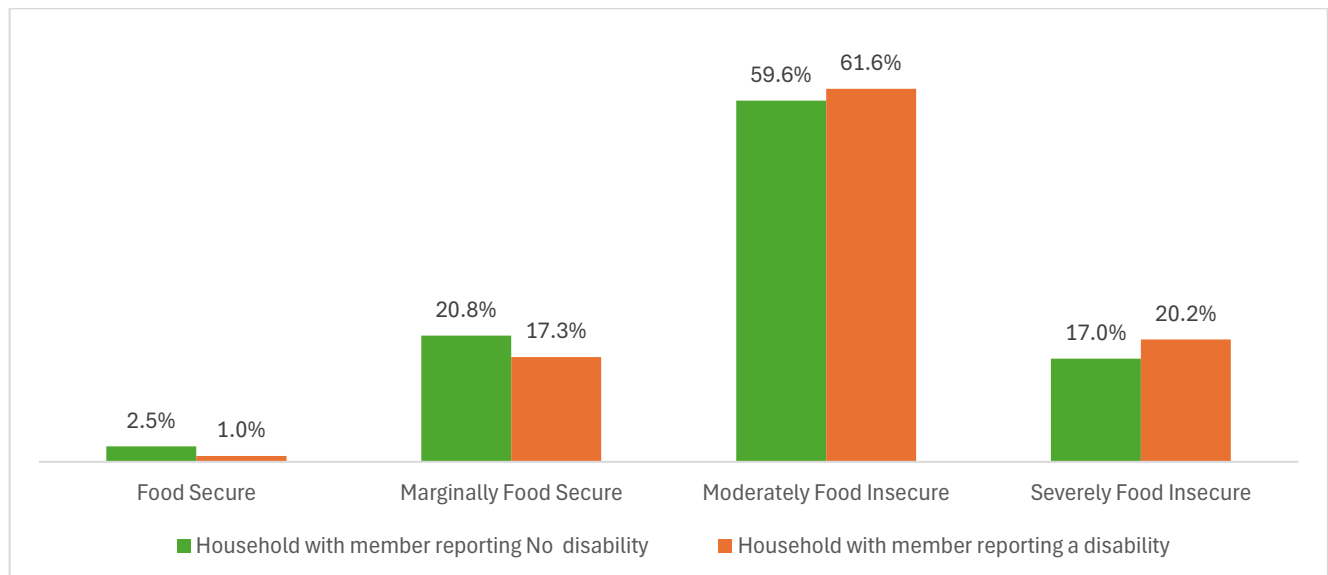
A bivariate analysis of household size and food insecurity status reveals that households with large household size are prone to severe food insecurity compared to households with small household size 1 to 4 (Figure 25).

Figure 25: Food Security Classification by Household Size (CARI Guidelines)



The FSMS also captured households with a disable person and the result shows that households with disability status are more prone to severe food insecurity compared to households without disable persons (**Figure 26**).

Figure 26: Food Security Prevalence by Reported Disability Status.



The CARI score brings together various food security indicators to categorize households according to their food security status. The findings (**Figure 27**) indicate that a small proportion of households (2.4) are fully food secure, while a larger group (21) is considered marginally food secure, suggesting that their situation could change with even minor shifts in circumstances. Most

households (78) are classified as moderately or severely food insecure (65 moderately, 13 severely), highlighting ongoing challenges for many families. This analysis suggests that while some households can maintain stability without additional support, many others face significant pressures.

Elevated food expenditures and the use of coping strategies indicate that a considerable number of households are at risk of further food insecurity. These insights underscore the importance of carefully designed interventions—such as economic support, food assistance, or job creation—to help ease financial pressures and strengthen household resilience. Achieving lasting food security will depend on efforts to enhance economic stability, build resilience, and support those who are currently at risk of becoming food insecure.

Figure 27: CARI Console

	Domain	Indicator	Food Secure	Marginally Food Secure	Moderately Food Insecure	Severely Food Insecure
Current Status	Food Consumption	<i>Food Consumption Groups and rCSI</i>	Acceptable 10.4	Acceptable and rCSI ≥4 20.2	Borderline 55.2	Poor 14.2
	Economic Vulnerability	<i>Food Expenditure Share</i>	<50 8.5	50 - <65 8.9	65 - <75 11.9	≥75 70.8
Coping Capacity	Livelihood Coping Strategies	<i>Livelihood Coping Strategies – Food Security</i>	None 33.9	Stress 29.8	Crisis 22.5	Emergency 13.9
	CARI		2.4	19.9	64.6	13.1

Discussion

The July 2025 FSMS survey shows a steady decline of severe food insecurity in Sierra Leone over last three years, dropping from 28 percent to 13 percent. This trend is encouraging and needs to be sustained through continued collective actions to improve food security. The moderately food insecure households further need to be considered for different level of intervention along with the severely food insecure population.

Food insecurity varies considerably across districts. Severe cases are concentrated in rural districts such as Falaba, Karene, and Moyamba, where rates exceed 35 percent. Rural households account for over 80 percent of severe food insecurity, highlighting persistent structural inequalities in access to markets, services, and livelihood opportunities. This rural-urban divide mirrors patterns documented in previous assessments, reinforcing the need for targeted rural interventions.

Dietary diversity remains low. Nationally, 24 percent of households fall into the low diversity category, and 2 percent consume only 0–2 food groups, signalling poor nutritional quality. Districts such as Falaba, Karene, and Port Loko show the highest vulnerability. According to studies from UNICEF, child feeding practices are particularly concerning despite some progress in minimum dietary diversity for children aged 6–23 months—from 13.4 percent in 2013 to 25.1 percent in 2019—coverage remains inadequate. UNICEF reports indicate that most young children consume meals from only two food groups, with legumes, dairy, fruits, and vegetables rarely included (UNICEF, 2025)¹⁶.

Economic constraints exacerbate food insecurity. 71 percent of households allocate more than 75 percent of total expenditure to food, leaving little for education, healthcare, or housing. The poverty remains severe, with 57 percent of the population living below the national poverty line, driven by weak infrastructure, limited social protection, and post-conflict vulnerabilities requiring targeted development strategies (IMF, 2024)¹⁷.

Households increasingly rely on negative coping mechanisms. FSMS data show high adoption of emergency and crisis strategies, particularly in larger households and vulnerable districts. While emergency coping has slightly declined, crisis strategies have risen, signalling ongoing stress and

¹⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/sierraleone/stories/innovative-nutrition-approaches-improve-childrens-diets-sierra-leone>

¹⁷ International Monetary Fund. (2024). Sierra Leone: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2024/11/22/Sierra-Leone-Poverty-Reduction-and-Growth-Strategy-558782>

asset depletion. Poor food consumption scores have deteriorated compared to previous lean seasons, reflecting worsening household resilience.

Climate change remains a critical threat to food security. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and frequent floods have damaged crops and displaced communities. Agriculture—employing over 65 percent of the households (StatSL, 2023)¹⁸—faces mounting challenges due to climate variability, limited access to improved inputs, and reliance on subsistence practices. These factors, combined with inflation and poverty, amplify food insecurity risks.

The evidence portrays a complex, multi-dimensional crisis driven by structural, economic, nutritional, and climatic factors. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated, evidence-based interventions that prioritize vulnerable populations, enhance dietary diversity, strengthen economic resilience, and promote climate-smart agriculture. Without urgent and coordinated action, the convergence of these risks threatens to deepen food insecurity and undermine progress toward food security and nutrition goals.

Recommendations

The evidence presented underscores the imperative for a comprehensive, multi-pronged approach to address food insecurity and build resilience in Sierra Leone. The following recommendations align with both the empirical findings and contemporary best practices:

1. Target Social Protection Programs: The pronounced concentration of severe food insecurity in specific districts (Falaba, Karene, Moyamba) and among vulnerable groups (large households, persons with disabilities, rural populations) highlights the critical importance of geographically targeted and demographically sensitive social protection programs. Programs should incorporate shock-responsive mechanisms that can rapidly scale up assistance during crises. Transfer values must be regularly adjusted to reflect the current cost of meeting Minimum Essential Needs, particularly given the documented high food expenditure shares and inflationary trend.

2. Finalize and Operationalize Emergency Preparedness Plans: Given the recurring nature of food security crises and the documented impact of climatic and economic shocks, robust emergency preparedness and response mechanisms are essential. Plans should incorporate anticipatory action frameworks that enable rapid response before crises escalate, drawing on

¹⁸ https://www.statistics.sl/images/StatisticsSL/Documents/2023_Sierra_Leone_Annual_Agricultural_Survey_Report.pdf

lessons from WFP's emergency preparedness initiatives. Coordination between the Ministry of Social Welfare, the National Disaster Management Agency, and humanitarian partners must be strengthened to ensure timely, adequate support for vulnerable families during emergencies.

3. Promote Climate-Smart Agriculture and Agro-Ecological Practices: The disparities in dietary diversity and food consumption, coupled with documented climate vulnerabilities, necessitate a transformation in agricultural practices. Interventions should focus on facilitating transitions to climate-smart and agro-ecological farming methods that enhance resilience, boost productivity and potentially enhance dietary diversity within the communities. Recent initiatives demonstrate promise—WFP's collaboration with the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute has introduced four standardized enriched local complementary foods, including pro-vitamin A rich tubers such as orange-fleshed sweet potato and yellow cassava. It is recommended to implement targeted nutrition interventions in the most affected districts, in order to address persistent gaps in dietary diversity and promote healthier food consumption patterns.

4. Strengthen Agricultural Extension and Advisory Services: Effective transfer of knowledge and skills requires robust extension services. Collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), NGO partners, research institutions such as the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute, and farmer-based organizations is essential for equipping farmers with knowledge of climate-resilient agricultural practices, integrated pest management, post-harvest loss management, and advanced farming techniques.

5. Improve Post-Harvest Management: High food expenditure shares and vulnerability to price shocks can be substantially mitigated by reducing post-harvest losses, which remain a significant challenge for smallholder farmers. Investments in improved harvesting techniques, storage facilities (including solar-powered cold storage), and training in effective handling and preservation methods will help preserve both food availability and farmer incomes.

6. Enhance Market Access and Infrastructure: Poor market connectivity exacerbates food insecurity by limiting farmers' ability to sell produce at fair prices and access essential inputs. Prioritizing investments in feeder roads, particularly connecting rural production areas to district and national markets, will reduce transportation costs and transaction times, thereby contribute to increase farmer incomes and improving food availability in deficit areas.

7. Facilitate Access to Agricultural Credit and Financial Services: Economic vulnerability is compounded by severely limited access to formal financial services, particularly for smallholder farmers and women-led enterprises. Creating an enabling environment for tailored agricultural credit facilities, implementing risk-reduction policies (such as crop insurance schemes), promoting village savings and loans associations (VSLAs), and providing financial literacy training will empower farmers to invest in productivity-enhancing inputs and technologies.

8. Recommended Interventions to Strengthen Household Food Insecurity: Implementing carefully designed interventions to address financial pressures and strengthen household resilience. Priority actions should include economic support programs tailored to vulnerable households, targeted food assistance for at-risk populations, and job creation initiatives to improve income stability. To achieve lasting food security, stakeholders should focus on enhancing economic stability and building resilience among households, with particular attention to those currently at risk of falling into food insecurity. These interventions require coordinated efforts across sectors to ensure sustainable impact and prevent further deterioration of food security status.

Conclusion

The FSMS findings, supported with contemporary evidence from multiple authoritative sources, provide a compelling empirical foundation for urgent and coordinated action. Addressing food insecurity in Sierra Leone requires simultaneous interventions across social protection, emergency preparedness, agricultural transformation, market infrastructure, financial inclusion, and climate adaptation.

Recent years have shown encouraging progress in reducing severely food insecurity. The government's Feed Salone initiative, combined with substantial commitments from development partners including WFP, FAO, UNICEF, the World Bank, and the African Development Bank, presents an opportunity to address moderately food insecure population become food secured and prevent them from slipping into severely food insecure category through long term transformative investments in agriculture, health, education and infrastructure.

This requires sustained political will, adequate resourcing, effective coordination, and community participation.

FSMS Team Composition

Annex 1: Team composition

Team Members	Designation	Organization	Role	Involvement
Professor Abdulai Jalloh	Chief Agriculture Officer	MAFS	Overall Supervision	Concept, Planning and design
Mr. Aiah Joseph Thorlie	Deputy Chief Agriculture Officer	MAFS	Supervision	Concept, Planning and design
Mr. Sahr Joseph Kaifineh	Acting Deputy Director of PEMSD and FSMS Focal Point	MAFS	Lead	Concept note, Training, Data collection, quality control, report writing
Mr. Umaro M. Sankoh	Director of PEMSD, MAFS	MAFS	Support	Concept note, Training, Data collection, quality control
Mr. Ballah Musa Kandeh	VAM officer and National Coordinator of FSMS, WFP	WFP	Lead	Concept note, Training, Data collection, quality control, analysis and report writing
Mr. Mohammad Nasir Uddin Khan	Head of RAM	WFP	Support	Concept note, Training, Data collection, quality control, report writing
Mr. Bernard Jones	M&E Officer	WFP	Support	Training, Data collection, quality control
Mr. Momodu M. Kamara	Principal Statistician	STATS SL	Support	Concept note, Training, Data collection, quality control
Mr. Patrick Vandt	Statistician, STATS SL	STATS SL	Support	Training, Data collection, quality control
Mr. Baibai Sesay	Assistant Director of Planning PEMSD	MAFS	Support	Training, Data collection, quality control

Team Members	Designation	Organization	Role	Involvement
Mr. Edward Kargbo	Assistant Director of Statistics PEMSD	MAFS	Support	Training, Data collection quality control
Mr. Mack Kargbo	Acting Assistant Director of Monitoring and Evaluation	MAFS	Support	Training, Data collection, quality control
Mr. Andrew Samura	Assistant Director of Statistics PEMSD	MAFS	Support	Training, Data collection, quality control
Mrs. Margaret M. Bangura, MAFS	Assistant Director of Statistics PEMSD	MAFS	Support	Training, Data collection, quality control
Mr. Moses Kailie	Meal Specialist	Action Against Hunger	Support	Training, Data collection, quality control

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