



**Ms. Miatta B. Kargbo**  
Minister of Health and Sanitation

## EU Export Market Certification of Sierra Leone Fishery and Marine Products

Dear Readers,

There is global consensus, among both developing and developed nations, that strong health systems are essential to effective delivery of health services and improved health outcomes. The Ministry of Health and Sanitation is committed to a health system that provides Better Health, Better Care, Better Value, using dedicated teams of professionals for service delivery for the people of Sierra Leone. In 2014, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation has set bold targets which signals our commitment to innovation and quality service delivery in all areas of operation.

Our strategic work focuses on strengthening our health systems at all levels and we believe that food safety is one of the corner stones of good human health. Important ingredients for food safety are good hygiene, sanitation and effective environmental management. The identification of hazards and the establishment of critical control points for all foods and feeds, including fish and fishery products, is one of my Ministry's priorities.

The Competent Authority (CA) under the Food Safety Unit of the Environmental Health Division has been established as an independent and trusted authority to ensure the safety of food supplies and feed products to service providers, consumers and export markets. The work of the CA will prohibit unsafe food reaching the consumer to avoid adverse effects on health. It is better and cheaper to take preventive measures in addressing health issues than dealing with curative measures.

The Ministry of Health and Sanitation as co-chair with the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources is working with Précon and other MDAs to raise the level of standards applied in the food chain to increase food safety within the country and to adhere to international standards and food trade.

In this regard my ministry is actively taking leadership in the development of a new General Food Safety law in Sierra Leone, which will enforce a high level of food safety nationally and for international markets.

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Minister of Health and Sanitation

## Promotion of Aquaculture in Sierra Leone

Aquaculture is given high priority by the Government for Food Security, job creation and income generation as well as improved nutrition. The Agenda for Prosperity expresses the need and importance of providing affordable fish to all Sierra Leoneans. This challenge is addressed by the Ministry of FMR responsible for the management, development and conservation of fisheries resources. The Ministry in close collaboration with ACP Fish II and NEPAD has conducted two comprehensive aquaculture baseline studies and has provided technical support to fish farming communities as well as local and international organizations supporting aquaculture activities in Sierra Leone. Presently aquaculture is mainly carried out at a low level within farming communities to achieve food self-sufficiency. Several factors have been identified as the main contributors to the present under development of aquaculture such as poor quality baby fish (Fingerlings), unavailability of local fish feed, lack of hatcheries, weak capacity of the MFMR with respect to suitable infrastructure and staffing and low interest of private sector in aquaculture. To ameliorate the constraints hampering aquaculture, the Government has made an adequate budgetary allocation in the 2014 budget.

## Events and project milestones

### December 2013

Results of the second simulation audit were presented to the key stakeholders followed by a discussion with representatives of the MoH&S and the MoFMR. The report on this audit has been published and it has been formally passed on to these both ministries.

Publication of the second newsletter from the project.

Key activities for the 2014 projects of the program plan discussed in a workshop with MoFMR senior staff. Key elements were the plans on the private regulation compliance, the fishery vocational school and the activities for the aquaculture development.

A video was prepared to report progress and to give an insight in the total realm of the project in Sierra Leone

### January 2014 calendar

Visit to the Précon team by Dr. Ibrahim Khadar, manager at CTA which is our partner in information dissemination and media awareness activities.

Third Steering Committee meeting.

Monitoring program for food safety control on SL fish and marine products to be drafted.

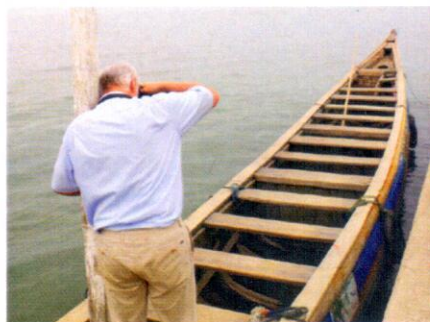
### February 2014

Presentation of the National Monitoring for Environmental Contaminants program at the MoH&S and the MoFMR.

Training sessions on sensory evaluation of fish and fisheries products for MoFMR and MoH&S staff.

Training on sampling for official controls for MoFMR and MoH&S staff.





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## Competent Authority - Food Safety Unit Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS)

The Competent Authority (CA) for food and feed products is officially designated to the Food Safety Unit of the Environmental Health Division in the Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MOHS). It is charged with the responsibility of carrying out official controls on food and feed products in Sierra Leone. The CA in collaboration with the Fishery Observers in the Ministry of Fishery and Marine Resources (MFMR) monitor and control the safety and quality of fish and its products throughout the production chain.

The CA has received support from the European Union (EU) Strengthening Fishery Products (SFP) Programme in the form of trainings, inspection materials, vehicles, motorbikes, IT and modern laboratory equipment for official controls and testing of fish, water and ice. The MOHS and MFMR with technical support from Précon are currently working hard to meet the EU export standards required for export of our fish and fishery products to the EU and other world markets as against the end of 2014.

## The Précon Project

by the Director of Fisheries and Marine Resources:- Mr. Alpha A. Bangura



Sierra Leone has abundance fishery resources which is a major and most accessible source of animal protein for the bulk of the country's population. In addition, the sector employs a large number of youths and women currently contributing handsomely to the GDP. It is the most accessible source of income, revenue and a major source of foreign exchange.

Returns from the sector could be substantially increased if our fish and fishery products get access to lucrative international markets such as the United States of America and the European Union. Considering our geographical location and the high valued fish species from our waters, we have a comparative advantage if we can overcome the current impasse in fulfilling our hygiene and sanitary obligations to authorize fish export from Sierra Leone.

In pursuance of this desire to export to the EU, the Government has contracted Précon to fast-track this process. As a nation, what is needed is to work together to build our fishing industry capacity to enable us improve sanitary and hygiene conditions in premises where our fish and fishery products are processed. In this direction Précon has implemented a series of activities such as the development of SOPs, training of personnel that will be involved in quality assurance and maintenance. The Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resource appreciates the continuation of building capacities of all stakeholders from both the public and private sector to ensure that standards are improved and maintained and above all the credible national institution that will monitor that achievement.

## Questions & Answers

This month's edition of question and answer session was organised with René Dijkstra, Précon's food safety and quality assurance specialist.

**Q:** Your role in the project is to develop Sierra Leone's first Guides on Good Hygiene Practices with industry representatives. Can you explain the activities undertaken?

**A:** The first step is to establish a risk analysis so that relevant hazards are identified and risks determined for the subject branch. Then we establish control points to make sure the risks can be kept under control. Finally we create a registration system with records to give evidence that the system is continuously under control.

**Q:** How do guides on good hygiene practices help the Sierra Leone fish industries in exporting their fish products to European Union and other international markets?

**A:** The guides contain the way of working to assure buyers (including the importing countries) that a good food safety management system is in place at the supplier's processing facility in the Sierra Leone fishing industry.

**Q:** Who is responsible for the guides after you leave?

**A:** We are working with a selection of companies that are representative for similar industries. They have asked us to develop these guides with them. Guides on Good Hygiene Practices are therefore normally prepared and maintained by the industry themselves and then presented to the relevant ministries responsible for the enactment and enforcement of food safety laws. Such guides are not laws themselves but they need regulatory approval to ensure consistency and coherence in the country.

Do you have a question? Send your question to [questions@precon.sl](mailto:questions@precon.sl)

## Guides for good hygiene practices



It is known that the HACCP method is introduced and implemented in the laws of many member countries of the United Nations. HACCP stands for Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points. It calls for a documented hazard analysis done by individual food operators. Each business or mass catering operation does assess his process and must highlight health dangers that could be caused. Based here upon he must implement control points which are critical for the supply of healthy food. For example the regular registration of the temperature in the cold store.

This HACCP method is quite demanding and asks for expertise which is little available, especially in the small and medium size enterprises (SME's).

Most countries made legal arrangements that branches – or industries producing identical products may make use of common HACCP systems. Once developed for a whole branch and applied many times by many companies where processes or products are alike. As an example we can consider the baking of bread which is done in the same way using the same ingredients (wheat flour) at many bakeries. Therefore similar risks for this industry are encountered all over. The same is true for many groups of operators in the fisheries. We are busy now to introduce these legal opportunities in SL and are developing 4 so-called guides for good hygiene practices based on one common HACCP analysis. These can be implemented by fish-food operators to replace the cumbersome work of a proprietary HACCP system. The following 4 are in progress: - 1 Water and ice making; 2 Fish landing operations; 3 Fish processing (on board and on shore); and 4 Fish transport operations. We are not limited to these 4 as it is not uncommon for a country to use 20 – 40 of these legally approved good hygiene practices across the food supply chain.

Jan Moggré  
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