



**Captain Momodu Alieu Pat-Sowe**  
Minister of Fisheries & Marine Resources

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

Dear Readers

This is a wonderful opportunity to introduce this first edition of the PRECON Newsletter, which we believe is part of the process that will herald a new dawn in the fisheries industry in Sierra Leone.

PRECON is here as a partner of the Government of Sierra Leone to help actualize the resumption of fisheries and marine product export from this country to the European Union. This state of affair is an outcome of years of neglect and deteriorating sanitary and handling condition in the fisheries industry, which led to the slamming of an EU ban on the export of these commodities to their union.

The importance of fish as source of food is unquestionable because 20% of the world's population or over 1 billion people rely on fish as the main source of animal protein. And in Sierra Leone about 80% of our population or over 4 million Sierra Leoneans depend upon fish as their main or sometimes the only source of animal protein, making it a vital component for the attainment of the national food security drive.

Worldwide, fishing provide a source of livelihood for over 55 million people and in Sierra Leone over 500,000 people are employed in the fishing industry and contributes about 10% to our GDP. Sierra Leone has a rich reserve of fish and marine products, which if properly harnessed has the potential of driving this economy by contributing over 40% to the GDP with an annual earning of over 60 million dollars. This dream could be realized through efficient management of the fisheries industry, implementation of best practices, value addition and upgrading our food safety standards including hygiene and food handling practices to reach acceptable standards that will allow us to export our fish and marine product to the EU and other countries.

This is a key corner stone in the strategy for the Government's Agenda for Prosperity

## Strengthening Food Safety Assurance

In the beginning of the program, main attention is given to the Food Authority within the Environmental Health Division of the MoH, called the Competent Authority. This Authority has to become the independent, trusted party where foreign (EU) countries can rely upon. Foreign governments should trust that an export certificate signed by the Sierra Leone Authority should ensure that the exported fish and other food does not adversely affect the health of their population. Just like the referee on the soccer field, independent of either team and with superior knowledge about the game and the rules of the game, he ensures a fair play and conduct an honest contest, being backed by a strong governing body nationally (SLFA) and internationally (FIFA). This ensures that no match making is allowed and that red and yellow cards are given as appropriate. Likewise, the CA ultimately has to play by the international rules of the game set by the Codex Alimentarius Committee of the WHO and the FAO within the United Nations Organization. Maybe the name of the CA should be changed to Sierra Leone Food Safety Authority (SLFSA).

## Events

### August/September 2013

#### Week 33-34

Visit by Alexis Fossi, consultant from CTA. In this visit a detailed work-plan on media communication and information dissemination for the project was drawn up. An implementation strategy was established.

#### Week 35-36

Visit by Theo Appelhof, former director at the Competent Authority in the Netherlands. Mr. Appelhof now works as a Précon consultant and legal expert on food related issues. On his mission the Terms of Reference for the working group to develop Food Safety legislation for Sierra Leone were established.

#### Week 37-38

Start of research to establish the national sampling and monitoring for environmental contaminants program. The research project will run until February 2014.

### October 2013

#### Week 42

Steering committee meeting.  
Visit by Précon CEO Jan Moggré to the Sierra Leone team

#### Week 43

Training and Capacity building at Competent Authority and Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources by Sander Delfos, Précon trainer on the subject of food safety and management related issues:  
"Internal and External Auditing for official Fish and Food Inspectors",  
"Good Hygienic Practises for Fish Processing Operators".

### Arrival of new team members in October/November:

**René Dijkstra**, Senior Précon consultant on the topics Food Quality and Industry Standards. René will be working together with the fishing industry in developing Good Hygiene Guides and the practical implementation of legal requirements.

**Thomas van Schie**, Précon consultant on Aquaculture, Marine Biology and Food Safety. His mission is to establish best practices in developing Environmental and Residue Monitoring Plans for Sierra Leone's fish and fisheries products.



October | 2013



## The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA)

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU). Our mission is to advance food and nutritional security, increase prosperity and encourage sound natural resource management in ACP countries. Central to achieving our mission is our valued partnerships with ACP national and regional bodies. We also work with a wide network of ACP-EU public and private sector bodies as well as international organisations around the world.

Our vision and core values are at the heart of our organisation. They inspire our people, underpin our decisions and motivate our actions. CTA seeks to be the partner of choice for those working to empower agricultural and rural communities in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific with the knowledge and skills they need to fight poverty and hunger. And fish for food is a major part in that.

## Strengthening Sierra Leone's Fish Sector

The project aims to contribute to Sierra Leone's export development in the post conflict economy. The project is implementing the changes required to enable the fish sector in Sierra Leone to comply with actual international standards and more specific with EU import requirements. To this end, the project has a short term objective to acquire EU authorization to sell and deliver from Sierra Leone fish produce into the EU territory, and a long term objective to develop an enforced SL fish sector able to compete in the world fish market. The project will attain this by the undertaking of implementing required EU standards conformity and by undertaking business planning – and business management actions to market, sell and deliver fish products to EU customers. It has developed legal proposal to remedy SL legislation anomalies on fish processing as required.

In the not too distant future, the project will initiate a vocational schooling infrastructure to prepare a new generation of fish craftsmen to start their working life equipped with state of the art fishing know how. An information dissemination campaign is undertaken to bring awareness on food safety to the fishing communities. The program consists of 10 projects which are being undertaken out of a central SL project organization working with the concerned officials and business representatives. The program is mapped out for 36 months as to give ample time for implementation and installation of needed changes and developments. The project is being manned by a mixture of Dutch and Sierra Leonean staff as to ensure an international scope with a local touch.

## Questions & Answers

**Q:** Is there a need to change the current Sierra Leone food legislation before exporting fishery products to the EU?

**A:** Sierra Leone food related laws need to be comparable to EU Food Legislation, essential principles such as risk analysis, precautionary principles, transparency are currently not addressed.

**Q:** What is modern food law aiming to achieve?

**A:** A high level of protection of human life and health, the protection of consumers' interests and the free movement of goods.

**Q:** Can you give some examples of how a high level of protection can be achieved?

**A:** Through appropriate laws, high performance official controls, holding business operators responsible for their actions (must have are: food safety plans, traceability, correct labelling of food) and withdrawal of unsafe food from the market.

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

## Fish for Food



At Précon we are proud to have been assigned the important task of helping Sierra Leone to enable the country to export food from fish to the world market. Through continuous efforts by also the United Nations there are minimum standards established regarding hygiene, cleanliness and food safety required in any food supply chain for nations, importers and retailers to import, process and retail food products. From farm to fork, from seed to feed and from catch to table. Also the precious food products derived from fish must comply with these food safety standards if trade is to work. Especially cross borders with exports but also domestically, governments and retail business operators demand that the health of the consumer is protected with maximum guarantees against adverse effects from eating their purchased food. In the food business this is the most critical success factor. Especially for fish. It is Précon's craft and expertise to implement compliance with all the technological - , operational - , managerial - , legal - and governmental standards required in the international food arena. Through a development process of more than 50 years now after their war the EU has arrived at world class standards and a legal framework regarding hygiene and food safety. Précon will draw on that experience to fast track Sierra Leone to become a trusted partner in the world fish market and as a preferred supplier of also fish for food.

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