AGRICULTURE SECTOR

2025

NATIONAL INVESTMENT BOARD SIERRA LEONE

Torma Bum Rice Complex, Bonthe District



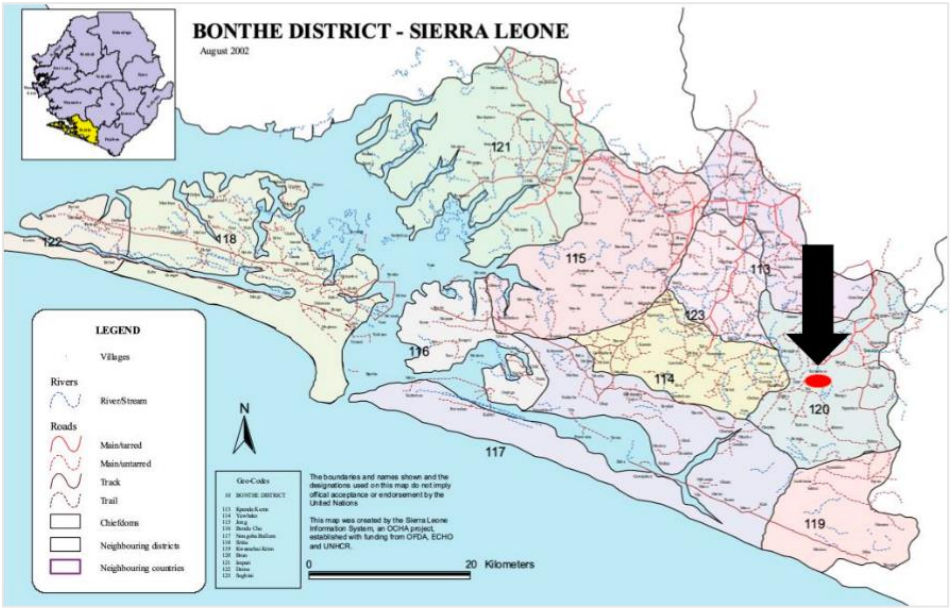
Private sector investors are sought for the development and operation of a major rice cultivation and processing facility at Torma Bum, Bonthe District. The government will make available up to 57,000 ha for lowland rice cultivation in riverine and boli land ecologies. With a target production of 480,000 MT by 2030 (equivalent to current rice imports) in a market currently dominated by small scale unmechanised farming and by large-scale rice importers, Torma Bum provides an opportunity for investors to establish a dominant position in the Sierra Leone market and to seek a share of the West African market, which currently (2023) takes 11.4% of global rice imports of US$33.4 billion.

Rice is Sierra Leone's staple food, consumed by over 90% of the population.

Despite challenges in rice production in Sierra Leone over the past two decades, trends indicate the potential for efficient and large-scale rice production:

- From 2000 to 2010, rice production increased five-fold, while the area harvested also expanded.
- The Ebola outbreak resulted in a severe shock to the agriculture and food sectors in 2014. Rice production was most affected, with an annual decrease of between 2014 and 2015 of 28% in production and 18% in area harvested.
- Since 2016, rice production has gradually recovered and stabilised.
- In 2020 and 2021 there was an increase in production, reaching 1.05 and 1.98 million MT, respectively. The area harvested also showed growth, reaching 944,447 hectares in 2021.

Investment proposition



The proposal is for the development of a rice cultivation, processing and distribution complex at Torma Bum in Bonthe District.

Figure 1. Location of proposed rice cultivation, processing and distribution complex at Torma Bum

The existing infrastructure dates to the 1970s and is dilapidated, derelict and outdated. The existing rice mill is inoperable, and the warehousing facilities are in need of a complete overhaul and rehabilitation.

Currently, 35,000 hectares of low yielding rice are under cultivation in the Torma Bum area. There are run-down storage facilities that are currently being used by agribusiness companies including the Abhajar Rice Development Company and the West African Rice Company. There is some mechanised equipment supporting current rice growing activities but the investment proposal envisages expansion of equipment and facilities through private partnerships.



Government will provide the rights to up to 57,000 ha of riverine and boli land by way of a lease to the developer for cultivation, or by way of leases to farmers to be contracted to supply rice for processing to the complex.

In addition, the government will invest US$12 million for the irrigation of an initial 7,000 ha and will facilitate the development of a 90km road and an electricity supply. It will also support, as necessary, contracting into the national market, creation of a strategic reserve and the export of any surpluses. The government is open to engagement with private sector partners in the marketing and export of rice.

Government commitment amounts to £33 million out of a total investment cost estimated at US$800 million. It proposes use of a special purpose vehicle with government as one of the partners. Initial financial modelling indicates a project return of 20%.

Production targets are 8 MT/ha and two annual cycles, leading to 480,000 MT by 2030, based on 30,000 ha under cultivation. The total project covers the following infrastructure:

- Irrigation to 30,000 ha
- Rice processing mill
- Worker housing and facilities
- Renovation of a 90km road
- Electricity supply
- Warehousing, logistics and distribution centre

Primary distribution would be by road to national markets, and to Freetown for exports by sea to the rest of West Africa.