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“Global food security and food safety:
The role of universities”

Empowering Young Scientists on Food and Nutrition Security and Right to Food in Sierra Leone

HEINRICH HAGEL¹, MEMUNA KADIE SAWI², TAMBA STEVEN SONDA², FRIEDERIKE
BELLIN-SESAY¹, NICOLE SCHOENLEBER¹, JENNY KOPSCH-XHEMA¹

¹*University of Hohenheim, Food Security Center, Germany*

²*Njala University, School of Agriculture, Sierra Leone*

Abstract

Sierra Leone belongs to the poorest countries in the world and has emerged from a decade long civil war in 2001. This war has led, amongst others, to a dramatic reduction of food availability and a serious brain-drain which adversely affects the human capacity in the country on the long term. In the recent years, Ebola outbreak counteracted the country's development. The food and nutrition security situation remains precarious and a lot of effort is needed to improve livelihoods of people in Sierra Leone.

Njala University is the only Sierra Leonean university combining programs in agriculture, food technology, nutrition, and home economics, which aim directly at improving knowledge on food and nutrition security, at one institution. The university had to leave the campus during the rebel war and was re-opened at Njala Campus in 2005. During the Ebola outbreak it had to be closed again. Brain-drain at university level and partial destruction of physical infrastructure still require long term assistance.

The Food Security Center of the University of Hohenheim combines scientific expertise in agriculture and nutrition with broad visibility and, thus, was asked to coordinate a partnership in training and research between the University of Hohenheim and Njala University, specifically in the field of “International Food and Nutrition Security and the Right to Food” (NutritionSec).

The NutritionSec project aims at qualifying university lecturers at PhD and PostDoc level, as well as future professionals at MSc level on Food and Nutrition Security and the Right to Food. Lecturers of both universities participate at joint existing teaching programs in Germany. In addition, they develop innovative MSc modules at Njala University in close collaboration taking into account the local conditions in Sierra Leone. These MSc modules will qualify future professionals to support the country's recovery from the serious brain-drain in the past decades. In addition, the teaching infrastructure of Njala University is upgraded to ensure up-to-date high quality education. These measures should significantly contribute to improving the food and nutrition security situation in the country.

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