

Windfall for Two SLARI Research Centres

Agriculture Minister Dr. Joseph Sam Sesay has handed over vehicles, newly constructed and rehabilitated staff quarter buildings and also contracts to contractors to put up other building facilities for the Rokupr and Njala Agricultural Research Centres of the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute (SLARI) to help facilitate research in the generation of appropriate technologies that will increase the output of our farmers as well as meet the need of national food security and commercial agriculture



Minister Driving One of the Buses

commercial agriculture

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Speaking at the occasion, Minister Sesay recalled how it was initially difficult for many of the research and supporting staffs to return to the two centres following the conclusion of the war. "I thank God, and because they heeded my advice, we today have the steady and satisfactory development the two centres are making", he said. He also recalled the more than ten decades of agricultural research in Sierra Leone, its excellent performance in mangrove research and other areas and a place where very prominent world scientists were groomed including a son of the soil, Professor Monty Jones." But alas! This glory melted even before the civil war and the agricultural research situation worsened during and for some long time after the war with very profound negative effect on the livelihoods of the bulk of our population who are farmers as well as the national economy", Dr. Sesay explained.



Minister Handing over Vehicles keys to SLARI DG

He told the audience that with the will and resources of the government and together with the interventions of its partners, significant inroads have been made adding that the windfall for the two centres will help to provide conducive working environment to redeem and regain the reputation and past glory of agricultural research in Sierra Leone. He commended the recovery and advances the research institute is now making, citing the recent release of 21 high yielding crop varieties, saying they were subjected to rigorous screening through structures they have established so that farmers can be assured of quality materials relevant to their variously unique situations and little means.

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Minister Sesay argued that agricultural research should justify tax payers' money the bulk of whom are farmers by generating appropriate technologies that will address the serious and complex challenges they are facing, opining that SLARI cannot singularly meet this vital need as its technologies only address very limited needs of our farmers. To this end, he explained that they have discussed and formed a committee to look into the need of a robust National Agricultural Research System in a way that leading actors of our research system will be able to holistically address the felt needs of our farmers along the agricultural product value chain.

The need to collect market intelligence so as to anticipate and determine for our farmers what and how much to produce for both internal and external markets, what to fall back on in the event of price fall at an injurious level, appropriate irrigation, packaging and other related technologies for value addition were among the many examples he cited for the case of setting up a National Agricultural Research System to effectively and efficiently complement the activities and programmes of SLARI. Dr. Sesay admonished and encouraged the beneficiary two centres to use the support for the intended purpose to even do more, citing the import of the Biblical saying: "to whom much is given, much is expected".

While Professor Abu Sesay Vice Chancellor and Principal of Njala University (NU) expressed gratitude for the support, he appealed for support for his institution especially for serving as host to the Njala Agricultural Research Centre (NARC) and for the purpose of effectively teaching and conducting agricultural research in the country.



Cutting the Tape to Completed Buildings

Acting Programme Coordinator of the West Africa Agricultural Productivity Programme (WAAPP) Suleiman Sesay said that the WAAPP support to the two research centres was intended for them to make meaningful contribution to improving the quality of lives of our farmers who form the majority of our population. He added that the support was not only timely but a big boost and will continue to linger long in the minds of both the direct and indirect beneficiaries.

"I can understand how happy you are for this momentous occasion; but the crux of the matter is not so much how much WAAPP has offered to you, but how much you can do in effectively and efficiently using the resources to achieve the goal of my programme by working hard to come up with technologies that will make our farmer productive and live a meaningful life", Sesay underscored the key purpose of the support to researchers of the two centres

SLARI Chief Researcher and Administrator Dr. Joseph M. Kargbo drew attention to the glorious days of agricultural research in the country. "But several powerful and unfortunate forces brought it down including the costly, senseless and long standing civil war", he said; disclosing that reports of the daunting and deteriorating level of agricultural research in the country was frightening and intimidating for many of their colleagues to return home to serve the sub sector. Dr. Kargbo expressed his deep appreciation to the Minister, his Ministry and Partners in the sector and in particular WAAPP for their courage, diligence and tireless efforts in bringing back on feet agricultural research in Sierra Leone.



Symbolic Laying of foundations of the buildings

"With your support and my staff, I pledge to do my best to take full advantage of what is provided to deliver on the mandates of SLARI", he concluded,

The contractors of the remaining structures to be put up promised to continue to do their best to deliver quality work

and on schedule.

Earlier, the Heads of the two Centres warmly welcomed the participants of the occasion, also giving a background to the two research centres, the challenges they have gone through over the years and their deep appreciation for the interventions. They promised to make judicious use of the resources in a way that they will meet expectations.

Minister Sesay inspected other facilities and on-station research sites at the two Centres and the Magbosi Land and Water Development Research Centre at Mile 91, Yoni Chiefdom, and Tonkolili District.