

capacity building and protect rights of all groups in the country, for example around access to land (Namati) and responsible private investment (Solidaridad).

**Commercial and community banks** exist within the country, though with limited capacities and reach within the agriculture sector. These institutions, including Apex banks, are being supported by several initiatives, including an upcoming Agricultural Credit Facility, as well as an EU support under 11<sup>TH</sup> EDF through UNCDF and domestic financial institutions, to strengthen the sectors understanding of the agriculture sector, but also to develop appropriate financial products and services for agri-business development.

**The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security** is the main counterpart for this project. MAFS hosts *Feed Salone* strategic orientation and is expected to monitor and coordinate its implementation.

**The Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs (MGCA)** oversees the advancement of gender parity and well-being of children. MGCA shall be the complementary partner to the Ministry of Health – Directorate of Food and Nutrition in the implementation of activities related to communication campaign on infant nutrition (*read below*).

**The Ministry of Trade** regulates enterprises and cooperatives, but several policy are currently under review. It also oversees the **Sierra Leone Bureau of Standards (SLBS)**, the national statutory body responsible for the management of the nation's quality infrastructure (metrology, standardization, testing and quality). While the organization has an important mandate for the agricultural sector, especially in the quality assurance of processed products, its outreach and enforcement/inspection capacities are minimal, due to lack of decentralized operational offices. **Cross-sectoral/ministerial coordination** lacks especially to govern the food systems transformation.

**Agricultural research** is mandated to the **Sierra Leone Agricultural Institute (SLARI)** to enhance sustainable productivity, commercialization, and competitiveness of the agricultural sector and, specifically, the generation and promotion of innovative agricultural technologies and empowerment of stakeholders. This mandate has been augmented to include commercial research enterprise activities, to improve dissemination of innovation and technology, notably quality inputs. Efforts have been made to strengthen action-oriented research (for example at the newly established Technology Lab), but improved varieties are hardly available to farmers. In Sierra Leone, The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) leads in efforts to co-develop and promote climate-smart agricultural innovations in ways that restore soil health and enhance climate change adaptation for increased and sustainable agricultural productivity. Applied research is also happening under the **Ministry of Environment, Department of Forestry**, where a National Forest Inventory is currently underway with EU 11<sup>th</sup> EDF financing as complementary measures to support to be provided under EU AAP 2023- *Nature Nourishes* to lay down the foundation to carbon markets access, including for agriculture investments.

**The Directorate of Food and Nutrition (DFN)**, at the Ministry of Health, is mandated to advocate on nutritional issues and is responsible for advocating and supporting the adoption of sustainable feeding practices, required to generate demand for infant foods. They work to raise awareness amongst pregnant and lactating mothers on healthy eating, infant and young child feeding practices, dietary diversity, and the production of homemade complementary foods through cooking demonstrations. Yet, the directorate is financially constrained. It also lacks diversity in homemade foods to promote. Their work is supplemented by several NGOs and CSOs, including mother to mother support groups; Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and UN Agencies like UNICEF and WFP.

**Technical and vocational Training (TVET)** is under the responsibility of the **Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE)**. In Sierra Leone 350 technical and vocational training institutes (TVETs) exist; 11 of which public (**Government Technical Institutes- GTIs**). While most have engaged staff, there is a lack of a decent operational environment to offer much-needed practical training. Courses are also largely out-of-date, and unresponsive to industry demands partly due to slow, centralized accreditation processes. It is estimated that only 40% of TVETs offer programmes that are relevant to economic demands and that only 2% of graduates hold official certificates. The slow and wanting certification process directly impacts the employability of youths. Furthermore, attracting female students is constrained by lack of accommodation facilities. The sector has been supported by AfDB IOM and GIZ, including with EU financing in the past. However, the sector remains underfunded and the National Qualification Framework, which is expected to guide curriculum development at all levels, including for the agricultural sector, is incomplete. The National Council for Technical and Vocational Training and other Academic Awards (**NCTVA**) is charged with providing supervision, quality assurance, approving courses, conducting examinations and certification, but is highly centralized and delays in awarding certificates to graduates, directly impacts employability of graduates.