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University of Sierra Leone Strengthens Role in National Food Systems Resilience

In a significant step toward reinforcing the nation's agricultural backbone, the Vice Chancellor and Principal of the University of Sierra Leone, **Professor Aiah Randolf Lebbie**, took center stage at the 2nd Annual Project Review and 3rd Year Work Planning Meeting of the IITA Technical Assistance to Feed Salone Strategy. The two-day event, held on March 20th and 21st, 2026, at the Radisson Blu Mamy Yoko Hotel in Freetown, brought together key players to assess progress and chart the course for the final year of the Food System Resilience Program.



This three-year initiative, backed by the World Bank and the Global Agricultural and Food Security Program, is designed to build a resilient food system in Sierra Leone. The recent meeting focused on the technical implementation of the project, with particular attention on food safety and the development of cassava and soybean value chains. The overarching goal is to integrate cutting-edge agricultural technologies to revolutionize farming practices, enhance productivity, and bolster seed development.

The gathering drew a host of dignitaries, including Dr. Alfred O. Dixon, Director of the Development and Delivery Office and IITA Country Representative for Sierra Leone. Goodwill messages were delivered by key stakeholders such as Dr. Abdul Rahman Conteh, Director General of the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute; Madam Yatta Sama, President of the National Farmers Federation of Sierra Leone; and Professor Abdulai Jalloh, Chief Agricultural Officer at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. Leaders from other tertiary institutions were also present, including the Vice Chancellors of Ernest Bai Koroma University and Eastern Technical University, Professors Edwin JJ Momoh and Tailu Lahai, respectively.



For Professor Lebbie, the meeting was more than a review; it was a catalyst for action. He saw it as a vital opportunity to connect with major stakeholders and articulate a clear vision for how the university system can drive the nation toward food self-sufficiency, a key component of the Government's "Big Five Game Changers."



“This is about making the university visible in the national agenda for food security,” Professor Lebbie stated. He emphasized that the University of Sierra Leone is poised to contribute far beyond traditional research, adding value in critical areas such as food chemistry, entrepreneurship, agricultural engineering, and health analysis related to food.

In a decisive move to turn this vision into reality, the Vice Chancellor initiated several new partnerships, signing Memorandums of Understanding with strategic institutions. He outlined a clear path forward, promising to engage the university administration to ensure that all constituent campuses play a prominent role in the food value chain.

“I expect many of these ideas to be captured in our curricula review process,” he noted, underscoring his commitment to embedding food systems resilience into the academic fabric of the university. **“We must focus not only on research and publications but on our access, participation, and the tangible impacts we create through these projects.”**

By

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