



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Sierra Leone

DIEM – Data in Emergencies Monitoring brief, round 12

Results and recommendations
October 2024

Key highlights

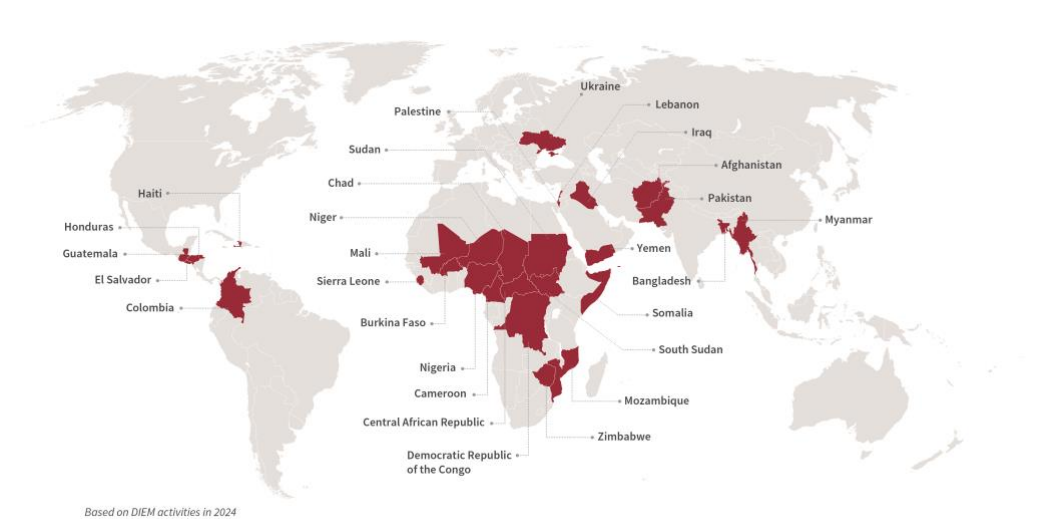
- > Data collection for the twelfth round of Data in Emergencies Monitoring (DIEM-Monitoring) in Sierra Leone took place during the early harvesting period between 10 September and 8 October 2024.
- > Rising food prices remained a challenge for respondent households (31 percent) as increases continued in line with the increase in inflation compared to the same month in 2023.
- > Fuel prices increased this round, likely as a result of the removal of the fuel subsidy in August 2024.
- > Crop production difficulties were still evident, including plant diseases and access to agricultural inputs such as fertilizer. Tonkolili has historically been a hotspot for pest diseases such as fall armyworm (World Bank, 2018) and Bombali was more recently included among the states at risk of pest outbreak, together with Kambia (Ministry of Finance, 2024).
- > Regular clashes between herders and farmers over grazing land affected some of the bordering districts such as Karene and Falaba, where transhumance occurs regularly with herders moving seasonally with their cattle in search of grazing land and water points.
- > Livestock producers continued reporting production challenges such as diseases, and difficulties accessing veterinary services and inputs. This combined with the long-term adverse impacts of conflict has led to a reduction in herd size and livestock productivity (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2024).
- > Moderate or severe food insecurity increased compared to the previous three rounds. The number of households adopting emergency coping strategies also increased and an overall increase in the worse-off household hunger categories was observed.
- > Food and cash support should be provided to households facing severe food insecurity as a short-term measure. Long-term interventions should boost both the crop and livestock sectors, by expanding access to agricultural inputs and improving markets.

Methodology

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) conducted a household survey in Sierra Leone through the Data in Emergencies Monitoring (DIEM-Monitoring) System to monitor agricultural livelihoods and food security. This twelfth-round survey reached a sample of 2 550 households through face-to-face surveys in all 16 districts: Bo, Bombali, Bonthe, Falaba, Kailahun, Kambia, Karene, Kenema, Koinadugu, Kono, Moyamba, Port Loko, Pujehun, Tonkolili, Western Area Rural and Western Area Urban. Data collection was conducted from 10 September to 8 October 2024 during the early harvesting period. The data are representative at administrative level 2, with the exception of Pujehun where the target was not reached. Data were weighted using population counts.

Throughout this brief, the results of the twelfth round have been compared with results from the following rounds: nine (March 2023), ten (September 2023) and eleven (February 2024).

Figure 1. Countries with an established DIEM-Monitoring System



Note: Refer to the disclaimer on the back cover for the names and boundaries used in this map. The final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined. The dotted line represents, approximately, the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

Source of data: FAO. 2024. DIEM-Monitoring. In: *FAO Data in Emergencies Hub*. Rome. [Cited 11 December 2024]. <https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org>

Source of map: United Nations Geospatial. 2023. Map of the World. In: *United Nations*. [Cited 11 December 2024]. <https://www.un.org/geospatial/content/map-world-1>

About DIEM-Monitoring

FAO established the DIEM-Monitoring System to collect, analyse and disseminate data on shocks and livelihoods in countries prone to multiple shocks. DIEM-Monitoring aims to inform decision making by providing regularly updated information on how different shocks are affecting the livelihoods and food security of agricultural populations.

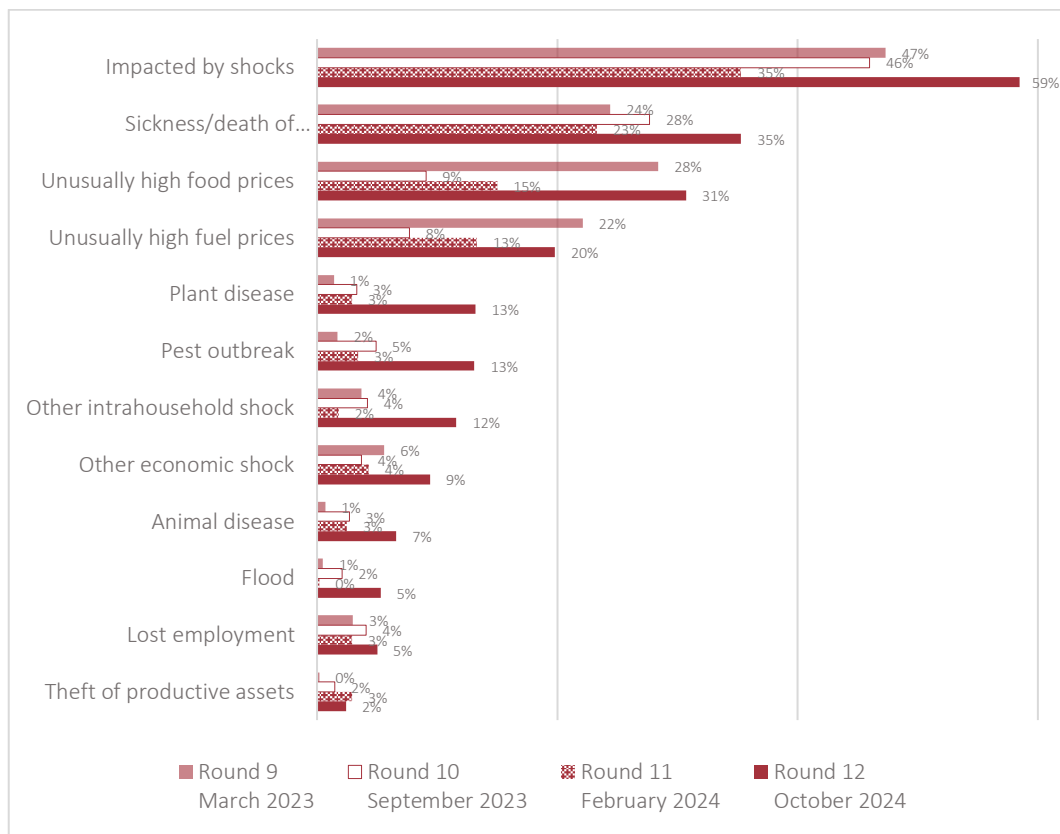
At the core of the DIEM-Monitoring System are country-level dashboards. Readers are encouraged to explore these dashboards to gain more insight into the context of Sierra Leone and other countries.

Learn more at <https://data-in-emergencies.fao.org/pages/monitoring>

Income and shocks

Fifty-nine percent of households surveyed faced at least one shock during the three months prior to the survey (Figure 2), particularly in Bombali (94 percent), Bonthe (82 percent), Port Loko (70 percent), and Bo, Falaba and Western Rural (all 68 percent). Among the most reported shocks were sickness, accident or death of household members (35 percent); unusually high food prices (31 percent overall and 62 percent in Western Area Rural, 52 percent in Bonthe, 49 percent in Bombali, 48 percent in Kambia, 45 percent in Bo and 42 percent in Port Loko); unusually high fuel and transport costs (20 percent overall and 61 percent in Western Area Rural); plant diseases (13 percent overall and 25 percent in Kenema); and pest outbreak (13 percent overall, 27 percent in Kenema and 24 percent in Bo).

Figure 2. Main shocks reported (percentage of households)



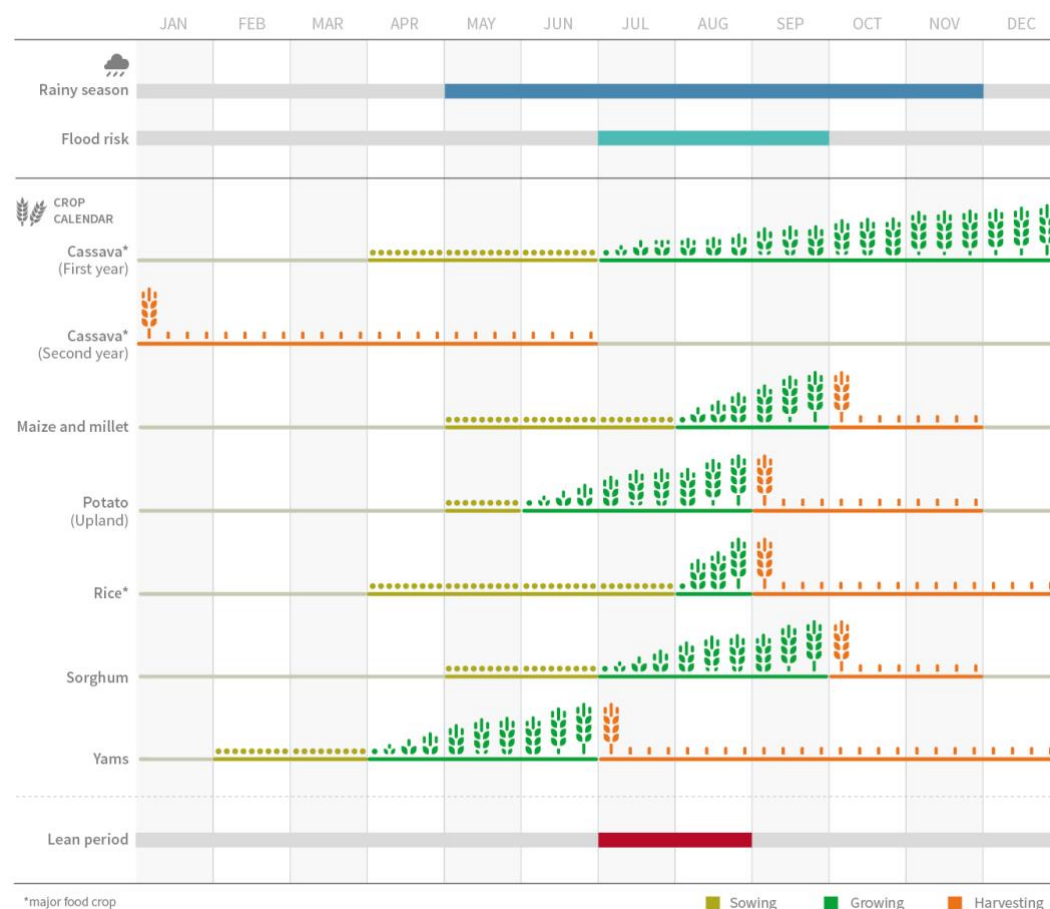
Source: FAO. 2024. Data in Emergencies: Sierra Leone assessments results (March and September 2023, and February and October 2024). [Accessed on 28 October 2024]. <https://data-in-emergencies-hqfao.hub.arcgis.com/pages/monitoring-country-specific>. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.

There was an increase in households reporting at least one shock compared to the previous rounds. Food prices continued increasing and the country registered a food inflation increase compared with the same month in 2023 (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2024). Unusually high fuel prices were also reported, which could be the result of the government’s removal of the fuel subsidy in August 2024 (African Development Bank Group, 2024).

A reduction in the main source of income compared to the same period in a typical year was reported by 26 percent of households surveyed, particularly in Koinadugu (52 percent), Kambia (41 percent), Bo (41 percent), Moyamba (39 percent), Port Loko (34 percent) and Kono (31 percent). In an inflation-dominated environment, uneven price increases reduce the purchasing power of some consumers, as evident in the survey results.

Crops

Figure 3. Sierra Leone agricultural calendar



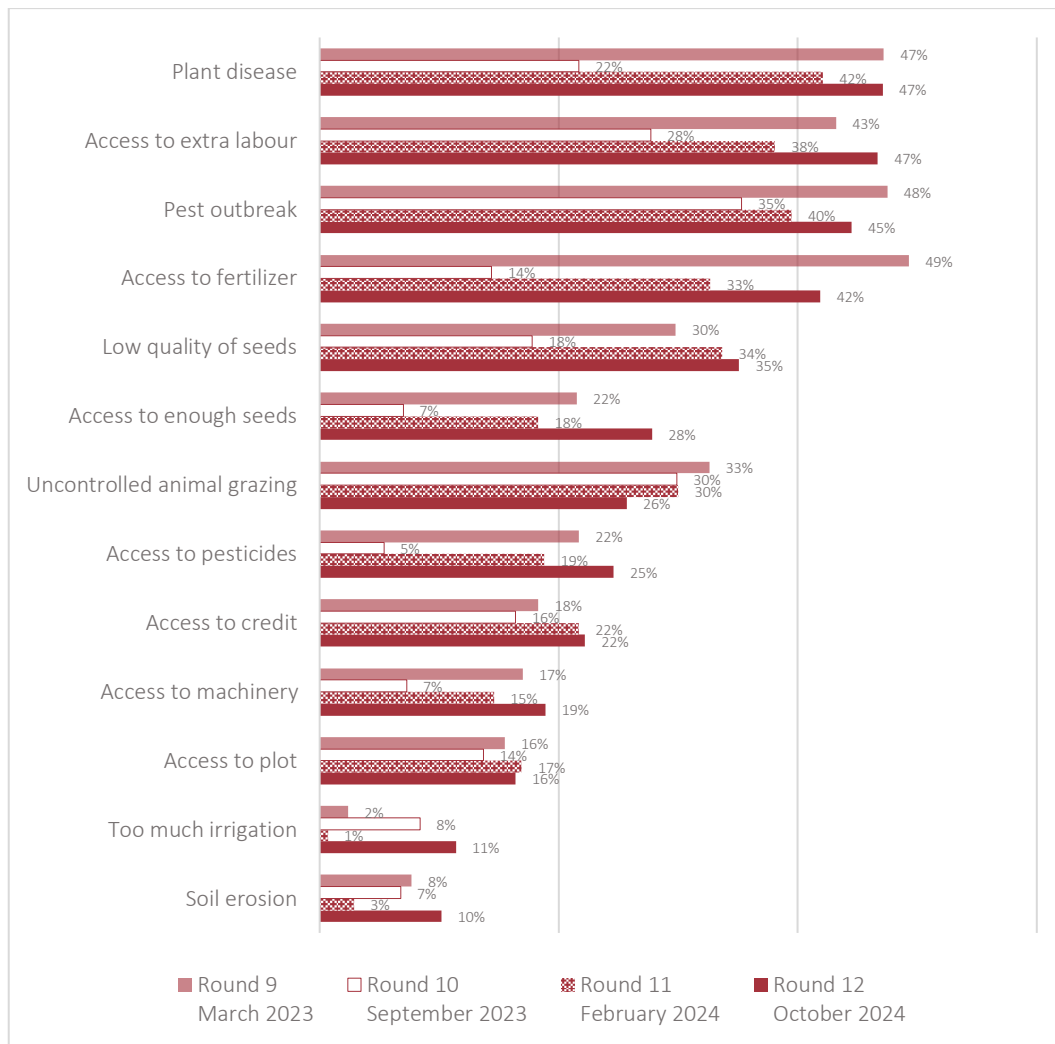
Source: FAO. 2024. GIEWS – Global Information and Early Warning System Country Briefs: Sierra Leone. In: *FAO, 11 March 2024*. Rome. [Cited 28 October 2024]. <https://www.fao.org/giews/countrybrief/country.jsp?code=SLE&lang=en>

Sixty-five percent of crop producers reported production difficulties in the most recent season, particularly in Bombali (97 percent), Bonth (92 percent), Kailahun (92 percent), Kambia (90 percent), Bo (88 percent) and Moyamba (87 percent). After a decrease from the beginning of 2023, some crop production difficulties returned this round, affecting more than 40 percent of the surveyed population.

The main crop production difficulties were: plant diseases (47 percent overall, 81 percent in Tonkolili and 76 percent in Bombali); access to extra labour (47 percent); and pest outbreak (45 percent overall, 78 percent in Tonkolili, 60 percent in Bombali and 53 percent in Kambia) (Figure 4). Other crop production difficulties included access to fertilizer (42 percent), access to quality seeds (35 percent), uncontrolled animal grazing (26 percent overall and 80 percent in Karene), access to credit (22 percent), access to pesticides (25 percent) and access to enough seeds (28 percent). Karene and Falaba are border districts where transhumance regularly occurs with herders moving seasonally with their cattle in search of grazing land and water points. This causes regular clashes between herders and farmers over grazing land.

Tonkolili has historically been a hotspot for pest diseases such as fall armyworm (World Bank, 2018) and Bombali has more recently been included among the states at risk of pest outbreaks, together with Kambia (Ministry of Finance, 2024).

Figure 4. Crop production difficulties (percentage of crop producers)



Source: FAO. 2024. Data in Emergencies: Sierra Leone assessments results (March and September 2023 and February and October 2024). [Accessed on 28 October 2024]. <https://data-in-emergencies-hqfao.hub.arcgis.com/pages/monitoring-country-specific>. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.

Planted crop area slightly decreased for about 19 percent of households compared to 2023. A significant decrease in planted area was reported in Kambia (45 percent), which was statically associated with the occurrence of floods in the area (25 percent).

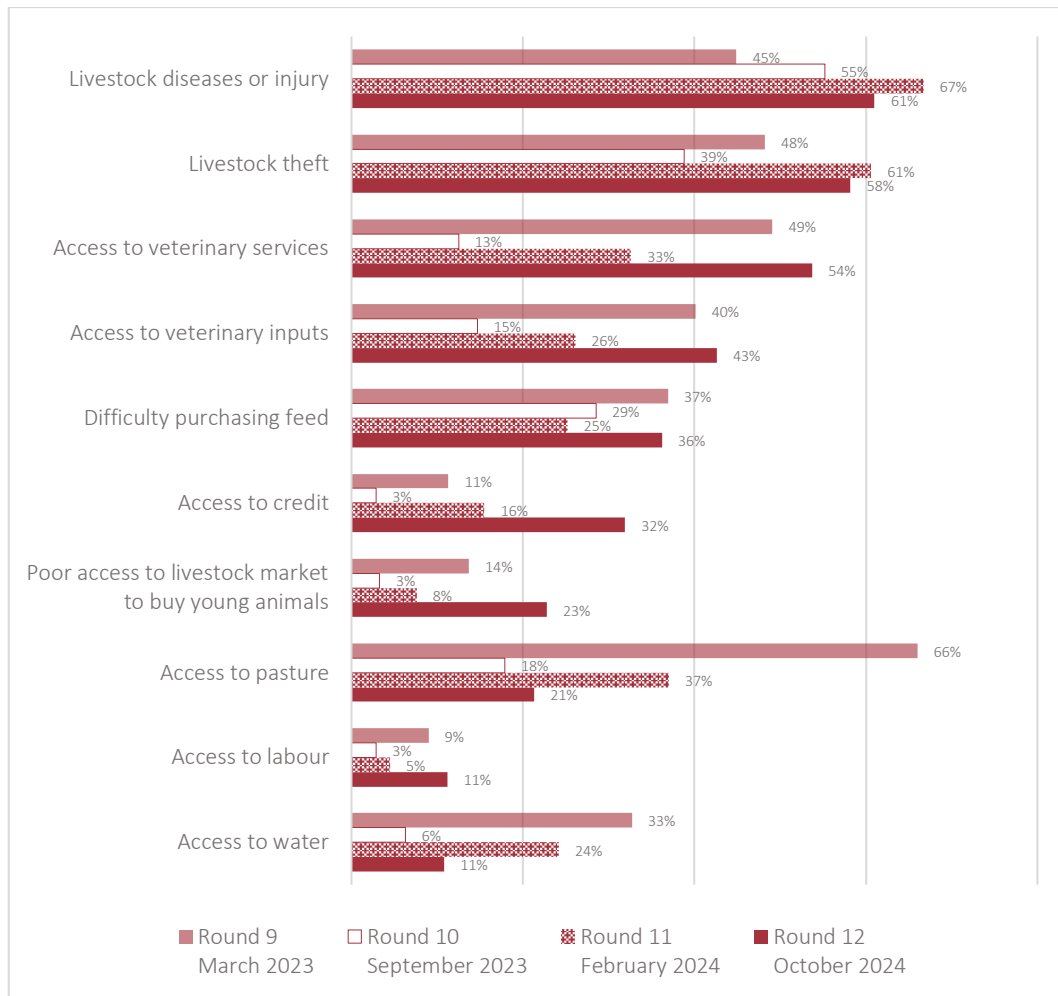
Crop sales difficulties were reported by 66 percent of crop producers, and included high transport or marketing costs (86 percent), and difficulties accessing markets (45 percent). Sixty-two percent of crop producers reported that the price of crops increased slightly more than it had in the previous three years.

Livestock

Seventy-eight percent of livestock producers reported facing production difficulties in the three months prior to the survey. The main livestock production difficulties encountered were

livestock diseases or injuries (61 percent), livestock theft (58 percent), access to veterinary services (54 percent), access to veterinary inputs (43 percent), difficulty purchasing feed (36 percent) and access to credit (32 percent) (Figure 5). These difficulties were also reported, although to a lower extent, over the previous three rounds.

Figure 5. Livestock production difficulties (percentage of livestock producers)



Source: FAO. 2024. Data in Emergencies: Sierra Leone assessments results (March and September 2023 and February and October 2024). [Accessed on 28 October 2024]. <https://data-in-emergencies-hqfao.hub.arcgis.com/pages/monitoring-country-specific>. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.

Thirty-five percent of livestock producers reported a decrease in the number of livestock compared to 2023. This could be the result of concurrent factors, such as diseases, and difficulties accessing veterinary services and inputs, together with the long-term adverse impacts of conflict (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2024).

Sales difficulties were reported by nearly 60 percent of livestock producers and were mainly due to high transport and marketing costs (85 percent); damage and losses during transportation, or difficulty accessing the market (53 percent); and payment delays from traders and buyers (53 percent). This was the result of unorganized livestock markets, characterized by limited availability of meat processing facilities and a poor cold-chain system. Sixty-four percent of livestock farmers reported that livestock prices increased slightly compared to the previous three years.

Food security

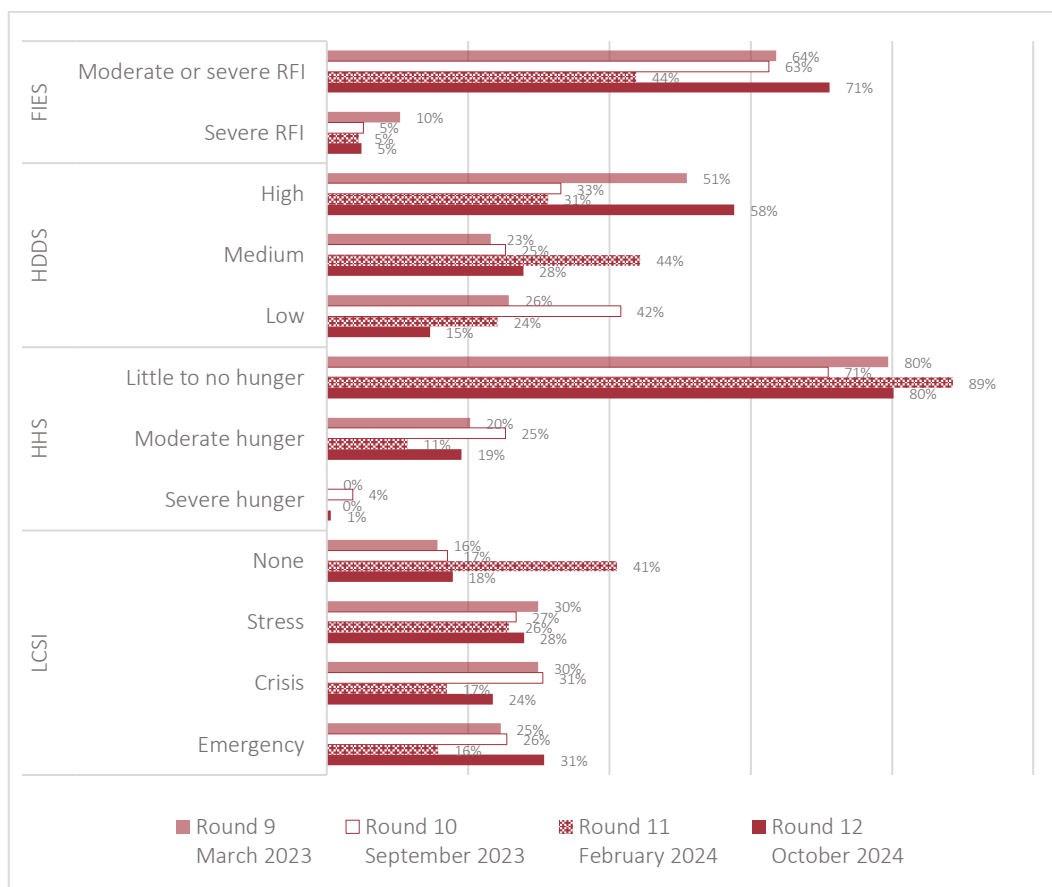
According to the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES),¹ 71 percent of the households surveyed experienced moderate or severe recent food insecurity, and 5 percent experienced severe recent food insecurity (Figure 6).

Using the household dietary diversity score (HDDS), 58 percent of households surveyed had a high level of dietary diversity, 28 percent medium and 15 percent low. The household hunger scale (HHS) indicated that 80 percent of households experienced little or no hunger, 19 percent experienced moderate hunger and 0.7 percent experienced severe hunger.

According to the livelihood coping strategy index (LCSI), 28 percent of respondents adopted emergency coping strategies, 24 percent stress coping strategies and 18 percent crisis coping strategies.

Moderate or severe food insecurity increased this round compared to the previous three rounds. The number of households adopting emergency coping strategies also increased.

Figure 6. FIES, HDDS, HHS and LCSI by round

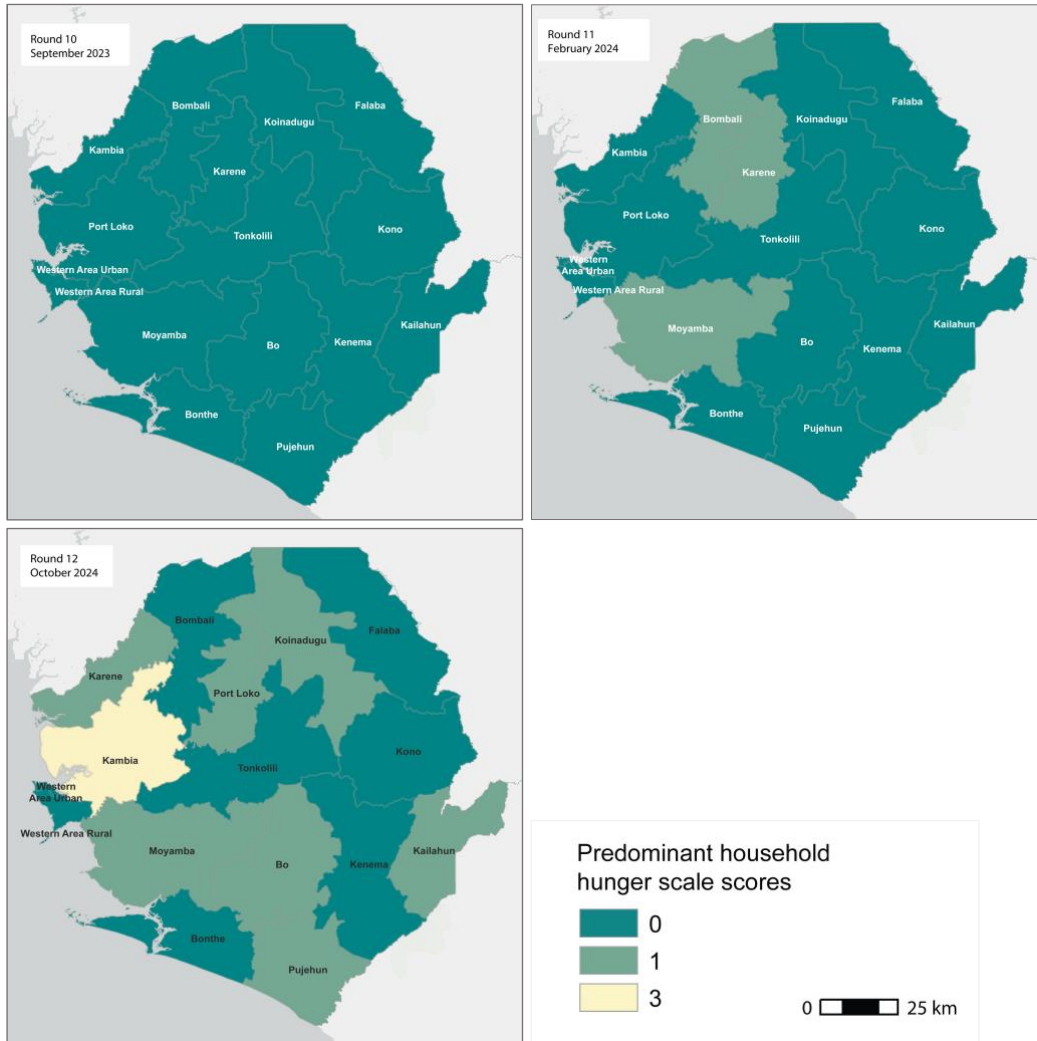


Source: FAO. 2024. Data in Emergencies: Sierra Leone assessments results (March and September 2023 and February and October 2024). [Accessed on 28 October 2024]. <https://data-in-emergencies-hqfao.hub.arcgis.com/pages/monitoring-country-specific>. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.

¹ FIES results are subject to change, until the country scale is established for more consistent comparability across rounds.

The maps below show the evolution of the predominant HHS scores, displaying an overall increase in the worse-off household hunger categories (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Predominant HHS scores by round



Note: Refer to the disclaimer on the back cover for the names and boundaries used in this map.

Source: FAO. 2024. Data in Emergencies: Sierra Leone assessment results (September 2023, and February and October 2024). [Accessed on 28 October 2024]. <https://data-in-emergencies-hqfao.hub.arcgis.com/pages/monitoring-country-specific>. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.

Needs

Almost all surveyed households (99 percent) reported the need for assistance. However, less than 3 percent had received assistance, mainly in the form of cash and food. Crop producers reported the need for cash (93 percent), food (65 percent), inputs for crops for vegetable production (60 percent), and training and technical knowledge (16 percent) in the three to six months following the survey. Livestock producers reported the need for cash (96 percent), food (50 percent), livestock feed (33 percent) and veterinary services (29 percent).

Recommendations

Short-term recommendations (1–6 months)

- > Provide food and cash support to households facing severe food insecurity.
- > Support affected households with critical agricultural inputs such as high yielding and short duration seeds, fertilizer and pesticides.
- > Restock animals as a short-term solution to support livestock households.

Medium- and long-term recommendations (6–24 months)

- > Work with farmers' cooperatives and organizations to provide training in integrated pest management to improve knowledge and skills in responding to plant pests and disease outbreaks.
- > Support smallholder farmers with storage and post-harvest loss management facilities.
- > Access to veterinary services, quality feed and fodder are among the main drivers for improving livestock productivity, yet they also represent some of the main production challenges. Improve this component of the value chain through training and deployment of community animal health workers, equipped to provide extension service support to livestock farmers.
- > Improve the capacity of the livestock division in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in Sierra Leone to provide veterinary coaching and mentoring support to community animal health workers in effective community service delivery.
- > Promote restocking and flock-building with improved breeds to combat the reduction in livestock numbers.
- > Improve meat processing facilities and cold chain systems to facilitate better marketing of livestock products and improve sales.
- > Provide reliable access to finance for livestock and crop farmers.

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