



# REVITALISING SIERRA LEONE'S AGRICULTURE

**PROJECT: SIERRA AGRA, INC. – PROJECT 10,000**  
**SPONSORS: SIERRA AGRA, INC.; TATA PEACE FOUNDATION;**  
**INTERNATIONAL FINANCE CORPORATION; LOCAL INVESTORS**

The Ebola crisis of 2014 had a profound economic impact on Sierra Leone, with the greatest burden falling on the agricultural sector. The crisis caused a tremendous loss of employment and income and led to a large-scale abandonment of farming, which pre-Ebola had accounted for around 45% percent of the country's GDP.

Post crisis, strenuous efforts have been put in place, with the support of the international community to rebuild the agriculture sector to pre-2014 levels with an emphasis on stimulating private business to engage in agriculture production and processing activities.

One result of these efforts is the fact that one company known as Sierra Agra, Inc (SAI) now operates the country's only state-of-the-art fruit processing and juicing plant in the country. In late 2016 SAI acquired the shares and assets of Africa Felix Juice which went into receivership during the Ebola crisis. SAI is committed to an ambitious agricultural development project called Project 10,000 that aims to generate significant new employment opportunities through enhanced production and mobilising Felix Juice employees in the agriculture sector in line with SDG8. Project 10,000 seeks to generate 10,000 tons of processed

fruit products annually, reclaiming and revitalising 10,000 acres of existing farm land and previously mined land for commercial organic farming. The company will initially employ 10,000 smallholder farmers producing organic and Fair Trade certified products, with a positive socio-economic impact on over 100,000 household members and others.

For this project to be successful, SAI focused on the creation of a multi-crop supply and processing approach that enables a continuous 12-month cycle of production. This ensures employment for smallholders, a steady revenue stream and an opportunity to open up new markets on a regional and international basis. In addition to this, their model includes strong provisions for re-investing profits into agri-businesses within their supply chain through micro-financing schemes.

SAI has strategically entered into a number of partnerships to enhance socio-economic impact and to mitigate risk. For example, SAI has entered a partnership with Tata Peace Foundation (TPF). TPF has a strong track record in training farmers engaged in rice and cacao planting. They also provide technical assistance in harvesting and marketing produce. SAI and TPF are working as a team to

## AGRICULTURE IN SIERRA LEONE

*The rural economy is a major source of income and employment*



of Sierra Leone's workforce is employed in agriculture.



of the rural workforce are women.



of the country's GDP is derived from agriculture.

provide dedicated administrative and logistical support to local agriculture training NGOs, recognising the need to bolster farmer capacity after dramatic declines in performance due to the Ebola crisis.

Furthermore, SAI has entered into a partnership with the housing NGO Home Leone. SAI seeks to use some of Home Leone's land for commercial farming and to employ some of the Home Leone's qualified residents in full-time agriculture development jobs. This partnership has the potential to create thousands of farming jobs while simultaneously developing a sustainable commercial industrialised out-grower farming model to supply SAI with consistent fruit supply for processing, and in addition to build social infrastructure.

Building on seed capital investments from its founders, SAI has secured \$1.25 million in bridge financing from local investors and \$150,000 from a Sierra Leonean bank, and is now in active dialogue with a range of investors to secure the required equity investment which will provide SAI with capital necessary to reach its target of \$20 million in annual revenue. SAI has also recently been approved by the African Guarantee Fund to make use of their guarantee products which will serve to de-risk third party investments into the business.



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