

The Republic of Sierra Leone

Geography

Area: 71,740 sq. km. (29,925 sq. mi.); slightly smaller than South Carolina.

Cities: *Capital*--Freetown (est. 786,900). *Provincial capitals*--Southern Province, Bo; Eastern Province, Kenema; Northern Province, Makeni.

Terrain: Mangrove swamps and beaches and mostly shallow bays along the coast, wooded hills along the immediate interior, and a mountainous plateau in the interior



Figure 1: Map of Freetown.

Government

Type: Republic with a democratically elected president and unicameral parliament.

Independence: From Britain, April 27, 1961.

Constitution: October 1, 1991.

Political parties: The Political Parties Registration Commission was formed in late 2005 to review registered parties to see whether they still met registration requirements. Most of the parties are inactive. *Major parties*--Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), All People's Congress (APC), Peace and Liberation Party (PLP), and People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC).

Freetown (Capital) City Profile

Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone, has a current estimated population of 772,837 (2005) with an expected growth rate of 1.5%.

Ecosystem and Climate: Freetown enjoys a sustained biodiversity including plants and animals with a climate equally divided into 6 months of dry season and 6 months of wet (rainy) season (between April and September each year). It has the highest amount of rainfall (>3500 mm) in West Africa.

Main Characteristics of the city: Freetown is a cosmopolitan and heterogeneous city in nature. The landscape is typically mountainous alongside a coastal line. The city is highly populated with associated scarcity for land, water and other basic facilities. There is a south to north range of valleys on which market gardening activities occur (See figure 1). Urban agriculture in Freetown resulted from a complex interaction of economic and social processes. Historical patterns of urban bias in policies of economic development, coupled with the recent political instability led to a huge rural-urban migration. In Freetown, the majority of the rural migrants establish squatter camps on the peripheries of the city. Some of these areas include the Bomeh and Kingtom dumpsites, New England/ George Brook and Regent Communities. Most of the gardeners belong to two minority tribes, the Limba and Lokko (which are recent immigrants to Freetown due to the war).

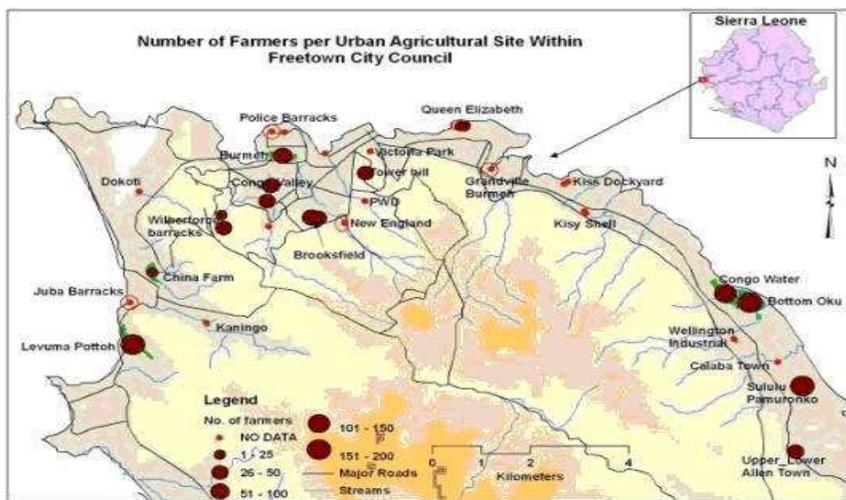


Figure 1: Urban agricultural sites and number of farmers in Freetown (Ref: Forkuor et al 2007)

Types of urban agriculture



Source: IWMI-RUAF Ghana

Most farmers in Freetown practice intensive cultivation through multiple cropping. Plot sizes vary, less than 0.01 ha (and sometimes even $< 0.003\text{ha}$) in the irrigated lowlands. There is an obvious correlation between plot sizes and crops cultivated: plots of less than 0.01ha are used for leafy vegetables and the larger plots are used for annual crops and primarily staple foods. The type of crops cultivated also depends on the market.

Mainly vegetables and short duration crops like maize, egg plant, cucumber, radish, beans, tomato, okra, pepper, melons and sweet potatoes are grown. Cassava is cultivated, more for the leaves than the tubers/roots. Rice is also grown rain fed in the lowlands because the soil is waterlogged during the rainy season and is unsuitable for any other crop. A few people engage in ornamental production for indoors. Fruit trees (mangoes, citrus, papaya and coconut) are planted around homesteads.

Livestock keeping is restricted to *poultry* and *piggery* production.



Women dominate in urban agriculture in Freetown, many of whom are heads of single households, responsible for a substantial share of the households' food security.



For more information please read: [Freetown exploratory study on Urban Agriculture](#)

Current and Future Challenges on UPA:

Urban poverty: About 60% of the urban population survives on less than a dollar a day. The problem may worsen if job opportunities are not created. As cost of living, education and other social amenities increase, this may go up to over 90% of the population in 2015.

Urban food security: Urban food security seemingly can be estimated to be achieved by 20% of the city population. About 60% of the city food requirements including rice are imported annually. Urban agriculture contribution to food security is significant but is threatened by unfavorable policies.

Urban environment: The urban environment is deplorable. Being hilly with heavy rainfall, there is massive erosion and deforestation is also a problem. There is no organized water disposal system and thus exacerbated by increased human population.

Empowerment of urban farmers: Urban farmers are empowered through capacity building involving training and inputs supply. However, poor legislation/policy has not assisted farmers in land acquisition.

Participatory city governance: The role of urban farmers in city governance is significantly influenced by the level of recognition and legislation on urban agriculture. Freetown City Council being the host of urban agriculture has accepted to incorporate urban agriculture in the city agenda. It is expected that city governance may require the input and participation of urban farmers.



Other major challenges faced by the city

1. The city is faced with severe water problem. Unless urgent action is taken, it is expected/projected that by 2010, about 50% of the city population will not be able to access quality water due to rapid increase in the city's population, which has increased by 40% in the last few years. Presently, the only major source of water supply (The Gumabali Water Company) is not able to meet the daily water needs of the city dwellers.
2. Presently, the city is over crowded with nearly 40% of the city population unemployed. It is projected that the population may decrease provided the current decentralization policies are vigorously pursued.
3. Availability and utilization of land is a serious problem to contend with. This is exacerbated by the proliferation of ever growing estate settlements.

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