

MANAGEMENT AND FUNCTIONAL REVIEW OF THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FOOD SECURITY

PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM UNIT 2005

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
GLOSSARY	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	5
 MAIN REPORT	
1.0 INTRODUCTION	13
2.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE.....	14
3.0 APPROACH TO THE STUDY.....	14
4.0 RESPONSIBILITY	15
5.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	15
6.0 BACKGROUND	15
7.0 OVERVIEW OF PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS	16
8.0 ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	29
9.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING PRIORITIES.....	49

Guide to Subject Areas in section 7 and 8 by paragraph

Statutory Framework	7.4	8.3
Functions	7.7	8.8
Structures	7.11	8.22
HRM, Staffing, and Training	7.23	8.43
Strategic Planning, Budgeting, and Accounting	7.30	8.60
Management Processes, Procurement, Records Systems	7.34	8.66
Communications and Relationships with Stakeholders	7.49	8.85
Priority Equipment Needs	7.53	8.89
Institutional Arrangements for Managing Change	7.55	8.91

APPENDICES

A	LIST OF PEOPLE CONSULTED
B	ORGANOGRAM OF PROPOSED STRUCTURE OF MAFFS
C	ORGANOGRAM OF CURRENT STRUCTURE OF MAFFS
D	DISTRIBUTION OF PAID STAFF BY LOCATION
E	DOCUMENTS AND PUBLICATIONS EXAMINED
F	FUNCTIONS OF THE MINISTRY TO BE DEVOLVED TO COUNCILS
G	DRAFT FRAMEWORK OF A DISTRICT AGRICULTURAL PLAN
H	DESCRIPTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISION AND DIRECTORATES
J	TERMS OF REFERENCE

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADB	- African Development Bank
AGs Dept.	- Attorney General's Department
AICU	- Agriculture Information and Communication Unit
CBO	- Community Based Organisation
CORAD	- Consortium for Rehabilitation and Development
DAO	- District Agricultural Offices
DAP	- District Agriculture Plan
DECSEC	- Decentralization Secretariat
DG	- Director General
DFID	- Department for International Development
ECOWAS	- Economic Community of West African States
ESO	- Establishment Secretary's Office
FAO	- Food and Agriculture Organization
FFS	- Farmer Field Schools
GBA Act	- Government Budgeting and Accountability Act
GOSL	- Government of Sierra Leone
HQ	- Headquarters
HRM(D)	- Human Resource Management (and Development)
HRMO	- Human Resource Management Office
IFAD	- International Fund for Agricultural Development
IT	- Information Technology
JICA	- Japan International Cooperation Agency
LGFD	- Local Government Finance Department
LWDD	- Land and Water Development Department
MAFFS	- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security
MOUs	- Memorandum of Understanding
NARCC	- National Research Coordinating Council
NATC	- National Agriculture Training Centre
NADOC	- National Agriculture Documentation Centre
NEC	- National Extension Coordinator
NGO	- Non Governmental Organisation
O&M	- Organisation and Management
OECD	- Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
PC	- Personal Computer
UNDP	- United Nations Development Programme
PEMSD	- Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Statistics Directorate
PS	- Permanent Secretary
PRS	- Poverty Reduction Strategy
RCPRP	- Rehabilitation & Community Based Poverty Reduction Programme
SES	- Senior Executive Service
SLPRS	- Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy
USAID	- United States Agency for International Development
WIAN	- Women in Agriculture and Nutrition

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report makes recommendations for changes to the functions and management arrangements of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), the assignment was undertaken by Sierra Leonean consultants, assisted by a UK consultant, as part of the Governance Reform Programme supported by DFID. The report was completed in July 2005, and it supersedes the earlier report completed in 2002 before recent legislation fundamentally changed the way MAFFS is expected to conduct its business:

- The Local Government Act 2004 which requires MAFFS to devolve its field operations to the elected Local Councils
- The Government Budgeting and Accounting Act 2005 which requires MAFFS to adopt a new strategic planning and budget system linked to poverty reduction goals

2. Agriculture was badly hit by the war and although the production of tuba crops has caught up with pre-war levels, rice production is not predicted to return to pre-war levels until 2007. Farm subsidies were discontinued in Sierra Leone following the IMF Structural Adjustment Programme, but paradoxically the challenges and problems facing local farmers are compounded by the heavy subsidies which OECD countries give their farmers – approaching \$ (US) one billion per day .

3. The Minister and his top officials have inherited a Ministry that employs 3300 staff approximately, (representing nearly 20% of the total Civil Service) In addition a further 500 staff are employed in the Research Institutions (Rokupr Research Station and Institute of Agricultural Research). However, the Ministry has been struggling to provide farm support services. For example, the extension service employs over 500 staff but is severely constrained due to its lack of funding and lack of mobility. Centrally purchased rice seeds are sometimes distributed too late for planting because of lack of fuel in the District Agriculture Offices. Other important services such as produce inspection and crop protection have declined due to loss of staff and inadequate funding. Over-centralisation for more than 30 years has made the Ministry remote from farmers and has progressively undermined customer-orientation and local accountability.

4. Faced with the political imperative of helping farmers to raise food production, and faced with the institutional weakness of the Ministry, the Minister has taken some bold measures to overcome capacity constraints by:

- Attracting substantial funds from donors such as the \$28 million Rehabilitation and Community Based Poverty Reduction Programme (RCPRP) from IFAD and ADB - plus an expected further \$130m in commitments from other sources over the next 2 years
- Recruiting through the Commonwealth Secretariat an experienced expatriate as DG to help rebuild professional capacity and groom a successor in due course
- Setting up an innovative executive agency as a separate structure from the Ministry to implement the RCPRP using modern management practices that are not yet part of the Ministry's own managerial culture. The agency reports to the

Minister and DG, and works closely with the District Agriculture Offices, elected Local Councils, and local NGOs

- Bringing in international agriculture experts, especially Chinese, to strengthen the technical capacity of the Ministry
- Strengthening the planning and management arrangements at the District Agriculture Offices to improve local interaction with farmers
- Setting up a Decentralisation Secretariat with UNDP support to implement the devolution of MAFFS's field operations to the elected Councils

5. The net result of these measures and the setting up of the RCPRP as an executive agency is that more than half of the Ministry's agricultural development and poverty reduction efforts will now be run on modern management lines by carefully selected and well qualified professionals, who are paid a competitive salary. This distancing of the Ministry from day to day implementation will enable MAFFS to stay focused on its key strategic functions of policy-making, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. This approach is in line with other Commonwealth countries, including UK, who find it is more effective and efficient to set up flexibly-managed executive agencies to deliver specific services, thus freeing up the time of politicians and senior civil servants to concentrate on defining public services rather than directly delivering them.

6. We endorse this approach being used for the RCPRP, subject to the necessary consultations with the PSC, ESO, and Ministry of Finance to safeguard public service standards, and ensure consistent service-wide policies on recruitment and pay etc. **We have therefore recommended** that a similar executive agency approach is adopted for organising and managing the estimated \$130m worth of projects currently known to be in the pipeline. This is expected to lead to a very high proportion of MAFFS's agriculture development and poverty reduction efforts being delivered by well qualified managers and agriculture professionals, recruited through open competition, and working closely with the new Local Councils.

7. In Section 8 we present other key recommendations on strengthening the Ministry's own internal administrative apparatus - which is based on the traditional Civil Service structures, procedures, and conditions of service:

- Updating the statutory framework governing MAFFS's operations
- Clarifying MAFFS's functions under Decentralisation and adding new functions for promoting agri-business and setting transparent standards of service delivery to farmers
- Streamlining the new decentralised structure of MAFFS
- Strengthening HRMD and rationalising the staffing arrangements
- Using the new strategic planning system to prioritise MAFFS's budget
- Strengthening management arrangements – especially for the NGOs
- Refining the procurement procedures
- Revamping records management
- Identifying priority equipment needs
- Creating institutional arrangements for managing change

8. A summary of recommendations is overleaf and in Section 9 we provide suggested implementation priorities to assist the MAFFS in developing an action plan.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

For ease of reference recommendations are grouped under the broad headings in line with the terms of reference. Each recommendation is cross referred to the main body of the report containing the relevant analysis.

Recommended Strategy for Managing the Ministry

1. **We endorse** the setting up of an innovative executive agency as a separate structure from the Ministry to implement the \$28m Rehabilitation and Community-Based Poverty Reduction Programme (RCPRP) - using modern management practices that are not yet part of the Ministry's own internal managerial culture. The agency reports to the Minister and DG, and works closely with the District Agriculture Offices, elected Local Councils, and local NGOs. A supervisory board consisting of key stakeholders, including Civil Society, is being set up to oversee the RCPRP.
2. This distancing of the Ministry from day to day implementation will enable MAFFS to stay focused on its key strategic functions of policy-making, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. This approach is in line with other Commonwealth countries, including UK, who find it is more effective and efficient to set up flexibly-managed executive agencies to deliver specific services, thus freeing up the time of politicians and senior civil servants to concentrate on defining public services rather than directly delivering them.
3. **We therefore recommend** that this executive agency approach is adopted for managing and organising the estimated \$150m worth of forthcoming projects reported to be in the pipeline - subject to the necessary consultations with the PSC, ESO/HRMO and the Ministry of Finance to safeguard public service standards and ensure consistent policies on recruitment and pay etc. This is expected to lead to a very high proportion of MAFFS's agriculture development and poverty reduction efforts being delivered by well qualified managers and agriculture professionals, recruited through open competition, and working closely with the new Local Councils (paras 8.69 and 7.38 to 7.41).
4. Hitherto, the Ministry has been an important recruiting source for staff to work on agriculture projects but this situation is now changing because of MAFFS's own shortage of experienced professional staff. Thus **we recommend** that in order to avoid delays in MAFFS's important forthcoming projects there will be the need to cast the net wide to find suitable staff, and this may require overseas recruitment in some cases - otherwise the Government's key strategic policy of food for all by 2007 will be put at risk (para 8.70).
5. Below we list our other key recommendations on strengthening the Ministry's own internal administrative apparatus - which is based on traditional Civil Service structures, procedures, and conditions of service.

Updating the Policy and Statutory Framework Governing MAFFS Operations

6. **We recommended** in the first review report, and we again recommend, that the initial ordinances and policies that define the broad powers and functions of MAFFS within the Agriculture sector should be reviewed and updated in the light of contemporary requirements in the increasingly important areas of environmental protection, environmental health, animal diseases, the import and export of animals/meat, biotechnology, and genetically modified foods (para 8.3).

7. **We recommend** that the Ministry develops specific policies for promoting commercial activities such as agri-business and private investment in agriculture, together with supporting legislation (para 8.4).

8. **We recommend** that the existing policy and legislation in the Forestry sector is strengthened in these important areas (para 8.5):

- Broadening revenue raising opportunities (e.g. water catchment charges)
- Upgrading revenue collection methods (only an estimated 25% is collected now) by using private collectors, and reviewing penalties for non-payment

9. **We recommend** that a wildlife policy be developed and incorporated into the forestry policy with supporting legislation (para 8.6)

Clarifying MAFFS's functions under Decentralisation

10. **We recommend** that a new function is instituted by the District Agriculture Office – the creation of a Farmers Services Unit to set, monitor, and progressively improve service delivery standards for the various support activities to farmers (para 8.11)

11. **We recommend** that the preparation of District Agriculture Plans (DAPs) is continued, strengthened, and devolved to the District Councils as an integral part of the compulsory/mandatory District Development Plans (para 8.13).

12. **We recommend** that the District Agriculture Plan (DAP) is approved by the Local Council and would take account of the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy and should, for example, include measures to promote local agri-business and local investment, as well as food production (para 8.12).

13. **We recommend** that the HQ provides technical assistance to the Local Councils on the design and implementation of the DAPs, and that this assistance should be locally driven to ensure sustainability (para 8.12).

14. **We recommend** that some of the issues which the DAPs might cover are as follows: expected levels of production of various crops and livestock, fallow land that can be cultivated, infrastructure improvements such as storage facilities, allocation of inputs to areas of greatest need, control and integration of NGOs, and opportunities for income generation through food processing etc. (para 8.13).

15. **We recommend** that the Ministry becomes more business-oriented in its outlook, and sets up a small commercial unit at HQ, to work closely with the Ministry of Trade (para 8.14).
16. **We recommend** that the Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Statistics Directorate (PEMSD) posts an officer to each District Council to assist in producing the DAPs, as well as gathering local agriculture data for sending to HQ for policy and planning purposes (para 8.15).
17. **At HQ we recommend** that PEMSD takes on the function of examining, analysing, and reporting on the policy issues emerging from the DAPs (para 8.15).
18. Given MAFFS's fundamental duty and obligation to report to the Cabinet and the nation, **we recommend** that PEMSD puts high priority on a regular and formal reporting system, in addition to the routine annual report (para 8.15).
19. In view of its central planning and coordinating role **we recommend** that PEMSD should also take on the function of coordinating and reporting on Food Security issues (para 8.16)
20. **We recommend** that if the priority is to improve the research capacity of LWDD then it should be converted into a research institute where the conditions of service are better than the Civil Service, and there is the possibility that good researchers can be recruited and retained (para 8.17).
21. Although the Ministry is operating under severe financial constraints, **we recommend** that the function of livestock support services is given greater prominence (para 8.18).
22. **We recommend** that the Horticulture Units in Freetown and Bo should be devolved to the appropriate Local Council for the Council to decide on their continuing relevance in the local context (para 8.20).
23. **We recommend** that the function of Engineering Services should also be devolved to the District Councils, and MAFFS ensures that all Districts have at least one qualified mechanic/fitter, and adequate tools and equipment (para 8.21)

Streamlining the Structure of the Ministry at HQ

24. **We recommend** that the new Professional Advisory Units are compact in size and that the number, grades, and workloads of the posts in each unit should be carefully assessed by the DG and the Deputy Secretary for HRM (para 8.23).
25. **We recommend** that the DG proposes suitable titles for each of the new Professional Advisory Units, (e.g. Crops Advisory Unit etc) and oversees the preparation of detailed job descriptions/job titles for the posts in each unit so that the individual duties are clearly defined and reflect the functions listed in para 8.9 above (para 8.23).

26. In cases where some professional and technical staff are no longer needed in HQ, **we recommend** that they are transferred to District Councils, or possibly posted to PEMSD to ensure that this key Directorate has sufficient high calibre staff (para 8.23)

27. **We recommend** that PEMSD retains its current status and structure as a full Directorate, and works closely with the DG and the Minister (para 8.24).

28. **We recommend** that the AIU should be placed under PEMSD, rather than under the narrower technical function of Crops as at present (para 8.25).

29. **We recommend** that the National Agriculture Documentation Centre (NADOC), which contains a large quantity of reference material and statistics, would fit well under PEMSD, along with the AIU (para 8.25).

30. **We recommend** that PEMSD would be positioned at a higher level than the Professional Advisory Units in the revised organisational hierarchy, see proposed organogram in Appendix B (para 8.26)

31. **We recommend** that the name of PEMSD is revisited to ensure that its title fully reflects the proposed new emphasis which MAFFS needs to put on the commercial and economic aspects of modern farming (para 8.26).

32. In view of the importance of the extension service **we recommend** raising the status of the National Extension Coordinating Unit (currently under the Division for Crops) by making it a separate Professional/Technical Advisory Unit with its own budget line at HQ (para 8.27).

33. **We recommend** that the Unit for Women in Agriculture and Nutrition (WIAN) at HQ, which focuses on extension services to women farmers, and is currently under the Crops Division, should now be realigned under the Unit for Extension Services (para 8.27).

34. **We recommend** that in the proposed new structure Engineering Services is given the broader status of a Professional/Technical Advisory Unit in its own right, see organogram in Appendix B (para 8.28).

35. **We recommend** that the new function of promoting a more commercial approach to Agriculture is the responsibility of a new Unit for Investment, Donor, and NGO Coordination, and is positioned at the same level in the structure as the Professional Advisory Units, see Appendix B (para 8.29).

36. **We recommend** that the central staff development unit should be discontinued under decentralisation, and that it should transfer its residual training activities for HQ staff to the Deputy Secretary for HRM (para 8.30).

37. **We recommend** that the Rice Unit under Crops should undergo a change of name to the Individual Crops Services Unit in order to reflect a broader role covering all crops, not just rice (para 8.31).

38. **We recommend** that there should be a maximum of 3 posts of Deputy Secretary at the Ministry's HQ (para 8.32).

39. In order to ensure that the internal auditor maintains the necessary degree of independence from the senior managers **we recommend** that he reports directly to the Minister, see the proposed organogram at Appendix B (para 8.33).

40. In anticipation of the implementation of the SES, **we recommend** that the proposed organogram in Appendix B depicts a new simplified senior management structure for MAFFS with a new post of Director General as the bureaucratic head and vote controller, supported by two Deputy Director Generals (para 8.37).

Creating the New Structure under the Local Councils

41. **We recommend** that the structure of each District Agriculture Office incorporates the Units listed in para 8.39

42. **We recommend** that MAFFS formally assesses the FFS (Farmers Field School) approach to extension with a view to adopting it in all Districts across the country (para 8.42)

Strengthening HRM and rationalising the Staffing Arrangements

43. It was reported that staff who only come on payday share their pay with the accounts staff, and other MAFFS supervisory staff, and **we recommend** that this situation is investigated (para 8.46).

44. **We recommend** that action is taken to remove remaining daily wage and work service employees from the payroll (para 8.47).

45. **We recommend** that the employment of Temporary Clerical Assistants is rationalised by setting a deadline for staff to take the Civil Service examination in cases where the post is needed (para 8.47).

46. **We recommend** that the Ministry takes the practical steps set out in para 8.50 to rationalise its staffing arrangements

47. **We recommend** that the Deputy Secretary for HRM prepares a financial plan showing the cost of phasing out the surplus staff and paying their benefits during the transitional period for implementing decentralisation (para 8.51).

48. **We recommend** that the Deputy Secretary for HRM, with help from the District Directors, puts priority on collecting data on the promotion backlog (para 8.52).

49. **We recommend** that the DG should be able to groom a high calibre successor, and thus effort should go into identifying possible successors well before he departs (para 8.53).

50. In order to resolve the anomaly in grading between Forestry and Agriculture professionals **we recommend** that the Deputy Secretary for HRM arranges for a review of

the MAFFS's schemes of service and grading structure of the professional and technical staff, and liaises with the ESO/HRMO on this matter (para 8.54).

51. **We recommend** that MAFFS sets up a more formal selection panel with external representation to provide advice, and support the decision making, when sponsoring candidates for training (para 8.55).

52. **We recommend** that the District Directors of Agriculture should become a priority target group for management training (para 8.56).

53. In order to strengthen control and supervision of local staff in Districts **we recommend** that MAFFS moves towards a more open system of staff reporting and seeks advice from the ESO/HRMO on its design (para 8.58).

54. **We recommend** that each District Director, together with his senior staff, prepares a training plan covering the essential staff under their control (para 8.59).

Using the new Strategic Planning System to prioritise MAFFS's Budget

55. **We recommend** that programme managers from the NACCR and the NATC are asked to join the Budget Committee as soon as possible (para 8.61).

56. **We recommend** that MAFFS uses the new strategic planning and budgeting system to re-orientate its expenditure priorities towards the national interest of raising food production, and away from the wasteful practice of ring-fencing its manpower budget (para 8.62).

57. The budget structure does not yet include separate items for the DG's and Minister's daily operational expenses, and **we recommend** that this is rectified for 2006 (para 8.63).

58. We noted that the format of the accounts will need to follow the new budget structure, and **we recommend** that this should be an urgent priority (para 8.64).

59. If the Ministry's existing complement of 43 accounts staff have difficulty with changing the format of the accounts, then **we recommend** that it could be contracted out to a professional accounting firm (para 8.64).

60. **We recommend** that the 43 posts for accounts staff should be a priority area for job inspection (para 8.64).

61. **We recommend** that the senior management ensure that the financial records and documentation in MAFFS are adequate for audit purposes (para 8.65).

62. **We recommend** that senior management collaborates closely with the Internal Auditor and provides more guidance on his operations (para 8.65).

63. If the present incumbent has difficulty in establishing adequate internal controls, then **we recommend** that this work should be contracted out to a professional audit firm (para 8.65).

Strengthening management arrangements – especially for NGOs

64. **We recommend** that MAFFS introduces formal memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with CORAD and other NGOs – both at the national level and District level (para 8.72).

65. **We recommend** that the management arrangements would include a formal Memorandum of Understanding specifying the respective roles of the District Agriculture Office and the local Farmers' Association (para 8.73).

66. **We recommend** that the District Director should agree and sign a performance agreement with the Local Agriculture Committee - to be endorsed by the Chairman of the Council (para 8.74).

67. **We recommend** that the District Directors meet the President and the Vice-President at least once a year to review progress with increasing food production in their respective Districts (para 8.75).

Refining the Procurement Procedures

68. **We recommend** that the authority for purchasing seeds, and other farm inputs, is devolved to the Local Councils as soon as possible (para 8.77).

69. **We recommend** that authority for fuel purchase is placed centrally in the Procurement Unit, and that clear records are kept of fuel consumption (para 8.78).

70. **We recommend** that authority for purchasing other recurrent items such as stationery are centralised at the Procurement Unit, and proper records maintained of these purchases - with periodic stock reconciliations (para 8.79)

71. At present the various bidding documents are not yet standardised, and in the interests of efficiency and simplicity **we recommend** that attention should be given to this (para 8.80).

72. For large procurement contracts, especially those involving international bidding and professional expertise, **we recommend** that MAFFS uses the services of the various professional procurement firms to assist them to get optimal terms and best prices (para 8.81).

73. **We recommend** that the Procurement Unit is allocated 3 rooms rather than just one (para 8.82).

Revamping Records Management

74. **We recommend** that the responsibility for records management is placed under the Deputy Secretary for HRM (para 8.83).

Identifying Priority Equipment Needs

75. **We recommend** that the priority items are costed, and then MAFFS should put a formal request in writing to justify and prioritise the expenditure, in line with the constraints in the GRS guidelines (para 8.90).

Creating Institutional Arrangements for Managing Change

76. Given that the Ministry is poised for fundamental changes **we recommend** that the DG leads a team of reformed-minded staff who would oversee all MAFFS changes and performance improvements (para 8.91).

Main Report – MANAGEMENT AND FUNCTIONAL REVIEW OF MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE FORESTRY AND FOOD SECURITY (MAFFS)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In 2002 GOSL and DFID agreed to commission management and functional reviews of key Ministries as part of the first phase of the Governance Reform Programme. The first group of Ministries consisted of Education, Health, Agriculture, and Local Government, and when these were completed in 2003 it was decided to extend this first phase to include reviews of two other Ministries in key sectors - Defence and Trade. These were completed by mid 2004, and then in October 2004 the initial review of Local Government was updated following the Local Government Act of 2004 which transformed the functions of the Ministry, and decentralised and restructured the whole system of public administration.

1.3 The second phase of the Governance Reform Programme was launched in 2005, and GOSL and DFID have commissioned the consulting firm, Public Administration International, in partnership with CoEn (Ghana), and in conjunction with local Sierra Leonean consultants, to undertake reviews of all the other Ministries, starting in May 2005.

1.4 However, given the major changes precipitated by decentralisation and the SL Poverty Reduction Strategy, it was considered necessary by the Steering Committee on Good Governance to update the earlier reviews of the Ministries of Education, Agriculture, and Health before starting reviews in other Ministries. Hence, this review of MAFFS is one of the first in Phase 2 and was conducted in June and July 2005 by a team of Sierra Leonean consultants, supported by an international consultant who had worked on the earlier review.

1.6 The second phase of the Governance Reform Programme also includes a complementary and parallel, DFID funded project to strengthen human resources management and records management throughout the Civil Service, and two local records management consultants joined the review team to examine the current status of the registries/records systems in MAFFS. Their findings are part of this report.

1.7 During our review of MAFFS the President announced that he is intending to remove responsibility for Forestry from MAFFS and create a special new Commission for Forestry and the Environment. The timescale for this is not yet specific so we have included Forestry in this report. When the proposed new Commission is created then our recommendations relating to Forestry can be highlighted and made available to the Minister with responsibility for the Commission and his officials.

2.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE

2.1 The full text of the Terms of Reference is in Appendix J, but in essence it is to examine and make recommendations on the following key aspects of the Ministry's operations:

- The statutory framework
- Revised functions following decentralisation
- The new organisation structure following decentralisation
- HRM, staffing, and training
- Strategic planning, budgeting, and accounting
- Management processes, procurement procedures and records systems
- Communications and relationships with stakeholders
- Priority equipment needs
- Institutional arrangements for managing change

3.0 APPROACH TO THE STUDY

3.1 The Permanent Secretary and the Director General were briefed about the review three weeks before it began so that they could prepare the Ministry's staff, locate a room for the consultancy team, and set up a contact group to liaise with the consultants. It was agreed that the main method of collecting data would be through comprehensive structured interviews with senior and middle level staff. A questionnaire was designed to assist this process and it was circulated in advance in order to enable the consultants to prepare for the individual interviews. The names of the people interviewed and consulted are listed at Appendix A.

3.2 During the review we travelled to the field to hold detailed discussions with the Ministry's officials at the District levels in all 3 Regions of the country, as well as with local councillors, members of the Agriculture Committees in the Councils, local farmers, and local NGOs.

3.3 Interviews were also held with officials from the Central Management Agencies – the Establishment Secretary's Office, the Ministry of Finance (Budget Bureau and Local Government Finance Department), the Auditor General's Office, the Ministry of Local Government and its Decentralisation Secretariat (DECSEC), as well as with farmers and their representatives, and with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), UNDP, World Bank, Civil Society, and relevant NGOs – see Appendix A for a complete list. In addition to interviews and many informal discussions we also examined relevant documents and reports – see Appendix E.

3.4 During the interviews and meetings attempts were made to seek agreement to and ownership of new ideas to reduce resistance to change. We noted that many people we spoke to felt that change was overdue.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITY

4.1 Although the production of this report has been supported by DFID under British aid arrangements, the British Government bears no responsibility for, and is not in any way committed to, the views and recommendations expressed therein.

5.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

5.1 We are most grateful for the interest and support provided by the Honourable Minister, Deputy Ministers, Permanent Secretary and Director-General during the review. Our thanks are also due to the many officials in the Ministry who gave generously of their time, especially to the liaison officers who made our task so much easier with their guidance around the Ministry. We are especially grateful to Tanzila Salia-Konneh, the UNDP consultant on Decentralisation in Agriculture, who not only shared her invaluable insights into the decentralisation process in the Ministry, but also allowed us to share the comfort and convenience of her office in the Youyi building for the larger part of our assignment.

5.2 During our field work we were indebted to the District Directors and to the Chairmen and members of the Agriculture Committees of the Local Councils for the time they spent on briefing us on local agriculture matters. We are also most grateful to the National Executive Committee of the National Association of Farmers, and the other key stakeholders who assisted us with our work.

5.3 The general assistance we received on Civil Service matters from Mr E B O Coker, Coordinator of Public Service Reform, was much appreciated and we wish to record our sincere thanks to him.

5.3 We are also very grateful to Keith Bastin, DFID's Senior Governance Adviser in Freetown, and the Project Team Leader, Stephen Catchpole, for their helpful comments and support during the assignment.

6.0 BACKGROUND

6.1 Following the elections in May 2002, the President reaffirmed top priority for agriculture and he pledged in his Address to the Nation that he would do everything in his power to lift food production, and provide food security for all by 2007. The inclusion of Food Security in the Ministry's title in 2002 reflects the importance which the Government is placing on eliminating food deprivation across the country. However, we noted that food security also depends on other Ministries and Agencies responsible for providing adequate infrastructure (roads, transport, markets, and storage facilities etc) and thus a concerted effort between several Ministries will be needed. This has led to the creation of the National Food Security Secretariat located in the Vice-President's Office - but ultimately food security depends on a stable macroeconomic environment and a healthy economy, as recognised in the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

6.2 During the war agriculture was badly hit - particularly in the rural areas ravaged by the rebels - and food production fell to low levels. Many of the staff of the Ministry took refuge

in Freetown and left their stations in the field. The challenge facing the Ministry since 2002 has been to restore normality and lift food production to pre-war levels and beyond. In 2005 rice production is approaching pre-war levels and tuba crops are now exceeding pre-war levels. Self-sufficiency in rice is due in 2007 according to UNDP predictions.

6.3 MAFFS's two main strategies for attaining national self-sufficiency in food are the formulation of policies which promote domestic food production/processing, and the provision of farm support services - although the latter are now being devolved to the elected Local Councils. The Ministry is no longer directly engaged in large-scale production and marketing of food. (The Produce Marketing Board collapsed ignominiously into debt in 1993, and has since been dismantled.) Farm subsidies have been discontinued in Sierra Leone since Structural Adjustment, and not surprisingly the Ministry and the Government oppose OECD countries subsidising their farmers by a billion US dollars per day, a policy which compounds the problems and challenges faced by farmers in Sierra Leone.

6.4 Until recently the Ministry was mandated to operate at 4 levels as follows: HQ in Freetown, Regional, District, and Sub-district or Block. However, the Regional Offices were closed in 2002 following the recommendation in the first management and functional review of MAFFS. More recently the Local Government Act of 2004 now requires the Ministry to transfer its field operations in the Districts to the new Local Councils over the period 2005 to 2008 – thus precipitating a major down-sizing of the Ministry.

6.5 The recurrent budget for GOSL/MAFFS expenditure on agriculture in 2005 is Le 21 billion, of which Le 7 billion is salaries and wages. The Development Budget consists of Le 0.8 million of GOSL funds and an anticipated Le 34.8 million from donor funds.

7.0 OVERVIEW OF PRESENT ARRANGEMENTS

7.1 This section of the report gives an overview of the Ministry's existing arrangements at June 2005, as it prepares to implement decentralisation and to devolve its field operations to the elected Local Councils over the period 2005 to 2008, in line with the timescales set out in the Local Government (Assumptions of Functions) Regulations 2004, see Appendix F for details.

7.2 Improvements introduced by the Ministry following the first management and functional **review report of November 2002 are incorporated in this section of the report.** Indeed, the main recommendations of the first report focused on the deconcentration of HQ functions to the Districts, and the progress made by the Ministry in implementing these earlier recommendations has greatly facilitated its current task of fully devolving its field operations to the Councils.

7.3 In the next section of the report (Section 8) we review and analyse the Ministry's present arrangements and we make recommendations for strengthening the Ministry in its new decentralised form.

The Statutory Framework

7.4 The Constitution and the original ordinances give the Ministry broad powers across the agriculture sector. However, the existing law is outdated and needs revision in the increasingly important areas of environmental health, environmental protection, animal diseases, the import/export of animals and meat, biotechnology, and genetically modified foods. The policy covering these new areas has not yet been adequately developed.

7.5 The law governing Forestry is currently being updated and strengthened to tackle the problem of illegal logging.

Present Vision and Mission

7.6 The Ministry has expressed its vision as:

- the right to food for the people of Sierra Leone

And its mission as:

- To achieve sustainable food security and reduce poverty through agricultural intensification, diversification, and the efficient management of the natural resource base

Present Functions

7.7 The Ministry is mandated to focus on the key areas of agriculture and forestry, and has traditionally had a major role in implementing policy in these areas, as well as formulating it. Hence, until the new law on decentralisation, the Ministry expressed its core functions thus:

- The central planning, evaluation and monitoring of agricultural production and the collection of agricultural statistics. This includes the formulation and promulgation of appropriate policies for the sector, and reporting to Cabinet and the nation.
- Promoting crops through crop protection and phytosanitary activities, supply of fertilisers, produce inspection and quality control and provision of extension services to farmers.
- Promoting animal health and livestock production through animal traction, examination of livestock and livestock products, and provision of extension services to farmers.
- Development of land and water resources through land evaluation, irrigation and drainage, agro-climatology, hydrology, analysis of soil, water and plants and remote sensing.
- Coordinating and promoting the national extension activities through the Extension Services, the Communication Unit, the Women in Agriculture

Unit, the National Agriculture Training Centre and the demonstration sites at Ogo and other locations.

- Efficient management and rational utilisation of the nation's forest resources, the preservation of the forest environment and wildlife, promoting and conducting forest research, and negotiating concession agreements
- Promoting and supporting donor-funded projects aimed at assisting with raising food production and reducing poverty, and seconding the Ministry's staff to these projects to help manage them

We noted that these core functions do not make explicit reference to the promotion of agribusiness, private sector investment in farming, ensuring the provision of adequate credit facilities for farmers, or lobbying for fairer trade policies for Sierra Leonean farmers. This suggests that the Ministry's officials have focused on farm production and have tended to neglect crucial commercial aspects of modern farming. Nor do we see explicit reference to the concept of customer care, and the need to improve the quality of service delivery to MAFFS's customers, the farmers, by strengthening the farm support services, and becoming more customer-oriented. We also noted that it is becoming difficult to second staff to projects because of the shortage of competent professionals still working in MAFFS, and ultimately this problem could curtail donor funding and hinder food production.

7.8 In addition to its core functions the Ministry also has integral support functions for Administration, Budgeting and Accounting, Human Resources Management, Procurement, Stores Management, and Records Management. Other residual functions such as running the Horticulture Unit and the farm at Newton are not mainstream activities (and the Ministry has contracted out the management of the Newton farm to a private farmer).

7.9 The Ministry has a close interest in the national agriculture research function but the supervision of the research activities is the responsibility of the National Agricultural Research Coordinating Council (NARCC) which is a body approved by Cabinet to oversee, independently from the Ministry, the 2 research organisations - the Institute of Agriculture Research and the Rice Research Station at Rokupr.

7.10 The Ministry also has the function of ensuring that there is an effective nationwide professional and technical training organisation covering the agriculture sector. This work is done by the National Agriculture Training Centre (NATC) which liaises closely with the Ministry, but which is not part of the Ministry's own internal structure.

Present Structures

7.11 The present organisation structure is still based on the Ministry's traditional role of implementing policies in the Districts, as well as formulating policies. It consists of two main parts - a very large professional structure with extensive field operations in each District, and a smaller administrative structure at HQ, see Appendix C for the existing organogram.

7.12 The administrative structure is headed by a Senior Permanent Secretary supported by four Deputy Secretaries. In addition to his broad Ministry-wide responsibilities for policy advice and inter-sectoral collaboration the Permanent Secretary also has overall

responsibility for the central support functions of Administration, Human Resources Management, Budgeting and Accounting, Procurement and Stores Management, and Records Management. In his capacity as vote controller he wields authority over spending decisions across the whole Ministry.

7.13 The professional/technical structure is headed by the Director-General who supervises an Assistant Director-General and the five Directors in charge of the technical Directorates of the Ministry:

- Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Statistics Directorate
- Crops Directorate
- Livestock Directorate
- Land and Water Development Directorate
- Forestry Directorate

7.14 The Director-General liaises closely with the Permanent Secretary but he has direct access to the Minister and the two Deputy Ministers. The DG is supported by an Assistant Director-General to help with policy work, technical matters, coordination of food security issues, and management tasks. However, we noted that at present there are no specific office budgets for the daily operational expenses of the Minister and the DG, and this tends to undermine their authority and waste their time when searching for simple items such as paper.

7.15 At present the Crops Directorate and the Livestock Directorate operate separate vertical structures aimed at providing extension services to farmers through the Districts and the smaller areas known as Blocks. Although a unified extension service with a new integrated structure for crops and livestock at District level was piloted in the 1990's in Bo and Makeni, it did not take root after World Bank funding stopped and the war brought extension services to a halt. More recently, since 2003 MAFFS has piloted the use of Farmers' Field Schools (FFS) which involve a more participative, compact and cost-effective structure for reaching out to the farmers. The initial indications are that the FFS approach (which is promoted and supported by FAO, CORAD - the major NGO grouping led by Care - and others) can work in Sierra Leone when farmers see mutual benefits in their participation. The Director of Crops also currently has an oversight and budget responsibility for the Agriculture Information and Communication Unit, the Staff Development Unit, and the Unit for Women in Agriculture and Nutrition.

7.16 Outside Freetown and the Western Area (which is covered from Freetown) the structure currently comprises 13 District Offices of Agriculture which represent the Ministry at the local level. The Provincial Offices were closed in 2002 as a result of a recommendation in the earlier review report. The structure of the District Office includes the extension workers, the Subject Matter Specialists and the support services such as stores, engineering and office administration. At the sub-District level the structure consists of 6 to 8 smaller areas known as blocks, with a block extension supervisor overseeing the local extension workers. We also noted that at the District Councils they have formed Agriculture Committees, and they have begun dialoguing with the District Offices of MAFFS about the devolving of functions.

7.17 The Land and Water Development Directorate has a similar vertical structure to the Crops and Livestock Directorates (although on a smaller scale) with 12 staff based at HQ and about 70 in the Districts.

7.18 The Forestry Directorate (which has a history of being transferred between different Ministries and came to Agriculture in 2003) also now has a similar structure to the other technical Directorates, following the implementation of the recommendation in the earlier review report that it should focus its field activities around its District Offices. It currently has 10 staff based at HQ and about 262 in the Districts.

7.19 The Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Statistics Directorate (PEMSD) is a strategic technical Directorate and its structure reflects this with a compact core of professionals based at HQ, and one officer based in each District to collect and analyse local field data and feed this back to HQ.

7.20 The structure of the Ministry also includes a senior post for a National Extension Coordinator (NEC) who reports to the DG, in the same way as the heads of the Directorates. But the extension service is not a Directorate in its own right, and the budget for the NEC is currently part of the Crops Directorate's budget.

7.21 The research institutions are structured to operate independently from the Ministry and have better conditions of service than the Ministry staff. The points of contact with the Ministry's HQ are the Director-General and the Minister, and the former sits on the Board of NARCC in order to represent the interests of the Ministry. The 2 institutions were badly damaged during the rebel war, and their staff are still based in Freetown, but are due to move back to their field sites over the next 12 months, and thereby strengthen their links with the Districts and help restore the field stations. The research institutions are not yet represented on the new Budget Committee of the Ministry.

7.22 The National Agriculture Training Centre (currently based at the Ogoo site in Freetown until its own site at Njala is rehabilitated after war damage) is structured to operate separately from the Ministry, and its main points of contact at HQ are the Staff Development Unit and the Director-General. NATC is not yet represented on the new Budget Committee of the Ministry.

HRM, Staffing, and Training

7.23 The importance of effective HRM has been seriously down-played in the Ministry, and the whole of the Civil Service, for a long time – thus leading to the current DFID-supported project to modernise the ESO. The current problems with HRM in the Ministry include:

- The Ministry does not have complete and accurate staff lists and staff data
- Existing staffing levels are bloated and many staff only turn up to claim pay
- There are allegations of internal conspiracies to defraud the payroll
- There is no system in place for relating the number of posts to validated functions and defined workloads
- The Ministry's staff population is ageing
- There is a reluctance to process promotions for deserving cases
- Staff are kept in acting positions for lengthy periods

- Professional staff leave for better pay whenever they can
- Recruitment is very slow or non-existent
- Anomalies exist in the schemes of service for agriculturists and foresters
- Annual confidential reporting is sporadic and used mainly to justify promotions
- Training activity is minimal, and there is no training plan
- Staff morale is low (and an unwilling horse cannot be driven)

7.24 The data we were able to obtain on staff has come from staff lists and payroll summaries supplied by the Ministry. The Ministry does not have complete staff lists of its field workers, but is carrying out a survey to collect and verify accurate staffing data in the Districts. Unfortunately, this important task was halted after completing only 2 Districts due to lack of funding, but it is expected to restart soon. The survey is uncovering ghost workers and staff who only turn up at the District Offices to collect their pay. It was also reported that many of these surplus workers share their pay with the accounts staff, and others, in order to remain on the Ministry's payroll. The problem of overstaffing has been exacerbated by MAFFS inheriting many residual employees from completed agricultural projects.

7.25 The overall picture obtained from payroll data indicates that the total number of staff paid by the Ministry is about 3330 (about 20% of the Civil Service), not including about 500 public servants employed by the 2 research institutions and about 50 employed by NATC, who manage their own payrolls. It is estimated that over 2400 of the Ministry's staff (including Forestry) are paid through the Districts. A distribution of the Ministry's paid staff across the country is shown in Appendix D, excluding Forestry where the breakdown was not available. The analysis of staff into different work categories is estimated as follows, and is shown separately for Agriculture and Forestry:

	Agriculture	Forestry	
Professional Grades	70	20	
Administrative Grades	8		
Executive Grades	3		
Clerical Grades (incl. temporary staff)	398	12	
Block Extension Supervisors	62		
Frontline Extension Workers	540		
Forest Surveyors, Rangers, Guards		173	
Other Technical Grades	576		
Labourers, Work Service Employees, and other junior non-technical staff	1401	67	
Totals	3058	272	
Overall MAFFS Total			3330

7.26 The Ministry has suffered from a loss of qualified professional and technical staff due to the rebel war, due to the unattractive conditions of service and promotion backlogs, and due to the NGOs and donors in the agriculture sector offering MAFFS staff more attractive opportunities. In some cases the Ministry also seconds staff to agriculture projects, thus further reducing the mainstream capacity. The consequences of this are that the Ministry is left with an ageing staff population, low staff morale, and insufficient professionals.

7.27 The vocational training of the Ministry's staff is primarily carried out by the National Agriculture Training Centre and it liaises closely with the research institutes to ensure that updated information is taught to its students. It offers about 40 vacancies to MAFFS each year, and currently teaches 150 students at its temporary base in Freetown (before relocating to its permanent site at Njala when this is rehabilitated). It has had to absorb the training activities formerly conducted at Makali and Teko before the rebels destroyed these important field facilities.

7.28 There is a Staff Development Unit at HQ but a shortage of resources has severely restricted its operations, and there has also been an unfortunate tendency for trained staff to leave the Ministry and take better paid jobs with NGOs or other organisations. We noted that at present the Unit is under the Crops Directorate and is not closely aligned with the Deputy Secretary for HRM. Senior and middle level staff in the Ministry have not received regular management training. Junior and clerical staff have had little job-related training.

7.29 It is apparent that the area of HRM needs urgent attention. Fortunately, following the recommendation made in the first review report, the Ministry has taken the positive and timely step of upgrading the status of HRM by making it the responsibility of a postholder graded at the level of Deputy Secretary. An experienced officer from the Establishment Secretary's Office was posted to this schedule in 2004. Detailed recommendations for strengthening the HRM function and rationalising the staffing arrangements for the new decentralised structure follow in Section 8 of the report.

Strategic Planning, Budgeting, and Accounting

7.30 The Government Budgeting and Accountability Act (GBA Act) of April 2005 has formalised the new strategic planning and budgeting processes which all the Ministries are required to adopt. The strategic plan for each Ministry is required to focus directly on improving service delivery, reducing poverty, and meeting the needs of stakeholders. The Act also specifically calls for each Ministry to constitute a formal budget committee chaired by the Permanent Secretary/vote controller and including all programme managers.

7.31 In compliance with the new GBA Act, MAFFS constituted a formal budget committee in early June 2005, and the Minister and 2 Deputy Ministers also asked to be included. However, we noted that the programme managers for NARCC and NATC are not yet included in the Budget Committee. The members of the Budget Committee have been receiving briefing and training from the Budget Bureau of the Ministry of Finance - on topics such as:

- thinking through the new strategic planning process linking the sectoral goal to national and sectoral poverty reduction goals, and defining the objectives and outputs which will fulfil the mission of MAFFS and enable it to contribute to achieving the sectoral goal
- preparing the annual budget for 2006 in the form of a 3-year rolling plan (with indicative budgets for 2007 and 2008 as part of the medium term expenditure

framework) based on the programmes and activities that will deliver the outputs identified in the strategic plan and the PRS

- ensuring that MAFFS's budget is disaggregated to the District level and includes specific allocations for funding the farm support services to be delivered by each District in accordance with the decentralisation timetable for devolving functions

The introduction of this major reform in the planning and budgeting process represents a big step forward for the Ministry and will provide a very timely opportunity to review outputs/functions and prepare future budgets to take account of Government's priorities, including the financial provision for the new decentralised structure.

7.32 However, we are concerned that the Ministry's manpower budget is still ring-fenced, and that there is no system in place for relating the number of posts to validated functions and defined workloads using techniques such as staff complementing, job inspections and systems analysis. There is no master plan for rationalising the bloated staffing levels, despite the recommendations in the review report of 2002. This means that since the District Offices of Agriculture are currently receiving only meagre funds from HQ, they are spending over 95% of their recurrent expenditure on salaries and wages and are therefore struggling to reach out to farmers to provide any support services. For example, in some cases fuel could not be purchased by the District Offices to distribute seeds to farmers.

7.33 At the time of the first review there were also concerns about the financial accountability of the Ministry, and the report recommended conducting an external audit and setting up an effective Internal Audit Unit. There had been no external audit since 1996, except for limited audits of donor-funded projects, and there was no existing Internal Audit function. This is being partially rectified – an external audit of the whole Ministry has been started, but has been hampered by the lack of basic documentation. An Internal Audit Unit has been set up, but it is not yet getting adequate support to be fully operational, and the current postholder lacks accounting and other relevant qualifications.

Current Management Arrangements

7.34 The current management arrangements of the Ministry include the regular meetings of these important committees/groups:

- The Senior Executive Committee (comprising the Minister, Deputy Ministers, DG, and the PS) which usually meets every Monday and Thursday
- The Budget Committee, which has recently been set up in compliance with the Government Budgetary and Accountability Act of April 2005 which stipulates that the PS should act as chairman, and that all programme managers should participate
- The Procurement Committee, which has been created in compliance with the Procurement Act of 2004 (minutes are kept and copied to the central procurement agency)
- The Decentralisation Committee set up to oversee the devolving of functions to Local Government
- The Agriculture Committee which meets periodically to consider technical matters, and is chaired by the DG and currently includes the Directors, NGOs and the research institutions as members (this committee is due to be given greater

prominence by becoming a sub-committee of the National Technical Committee to implement the SLPRS)

- The Meetings of District Directors at HQ at the end of each month, chaired by the DG

The setting up of these Committees/Groups has significantly strengthened the Ministry's internal management processes, and represents a major step forward since the first review of the Ministry in November 2002.

7.35 At the time of the first review in 2002 there were wide-spread concerns that decision-making was over-centralised at HQ - to the detriment of the District Offices, the farmers and the rural communities. But in response to the recommendations in the first report, the Ministry has implemented the following important measures to deconcentrate its activities from HQ and begin to strengthen management arrangements in the Districts:

- Provincial Offices have been closed and the Ministry HQ has improved direct links with the Districts by holding regular monthly meetings at HQ for the District Directors to report on local progress and share ideas
- District Directors have begun to produce District Agricultural Plans with proposals and targets for raising food production in their areas
- The annual budget has been disaggregated in 2005 to the Districts (MAFFS is the first Ministry to do this) and the District Directors are expected to sign the PETS forms even though there is no audit trail in place.
- A District Management Team consisting of the District Director and Unit Heads has been instituted

These measures prompted by the first review have greatly assisted the Ministry in preparing the way for devolving the Ministry's field operations to the elected District Councils. This will lead to more local accountability and a more customer-oriented approach whereby the elected councillors will feel pressured to improve local farm support services.

7.36 The Ministry has set up a special unit, with UNDP assistance, to implement decentralisation and this has greatly strengthened the Ministry's change management capacity. The unit, which is titled the Decentralisation Secretariat, has been playing a key role in sensitising the Local Councils and the Ministry's staff, and it is finalising roll-out plans for devolving functions to the Councils. These plans will inform the Local Government Finance Department (LGFD) of the Ministry of Finance on the size and structure of the budgets to be transferred to each Council, and when the transfers should be made.

7.37 In addition to the above improvements in line with the recommendations of the first review report and the requirements of the new Acts, the Ministry has also taken these bold steps to strengthen its top management team and its technical capacity:

- With assistance from the Commonwealth Secretariat, an experienced expatriate resource person has been appointed as the new DG, from September 2004 for an initial period of two years, to help rebuild the capacity of the Ministry and train a suitable successor
- The Ministry has also appointed 2 international consultants to the senior positions of project leader and financial controller to deliver the outputs of the very important \$28 million, Rehabilitation and Capacity Building Poverty Reduction Programme (RCPRP)

funded by the International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and the African Development Bank (ADB). These expatriate project personnel will train local staff in management and financial skills

- International agriculture experts, especially Chinese, have been brought in to strengthen the technical capacity of the Ministry

7.38 Prompted by IFAD, the Ministry has set up RCPRP as an innovative executive agency with the freedom to adopt modern management practices that are not yet part of MAFFS's own internal management culture (which is constrained by traditional Civil Service rules and practices). For example, the project is able to:

- Recruit project staff through open competition
- Pay the open market rate for the project jobs
- Subject staff to a professional performance appraisal process
- Maintain transparent project records, including financial records
- Make use of local NGOs to help deliver the project outputs

But in the interests of maintaining standards and ensuring a degree of consistency throughout the Public Service, it is envisaged that MAFFS and the RCPRP will liaise with the PSC, ESO, and the Ministry of Finance on cross-cutting issues (such as recruitment procedures, pay and conditions of service, staff performance appraisal, and codes of conduct etc) when setting up the new executive agency, or any subsequent agencies.

7.39 The executive agency will work through the District Councils and local NGOs and will report to the Ministry at the level of the DG and the Minister. The performance of the executive agency will be overseen by Steering Committees at the National level and in each of the 7 Districts in which the project will operate. The Steering Committees will include stakeholders external to the Ministry in order to promote participation and accountability to Civil Society.

7.40 The net result of setting up the RCPRP executive agency will be that more than half of the Ministry's agricultural development and poverty reduction efforts will be run on modern management lines by carefully selected and well qualified professionals, who are paid a competitive salary. This distancing of the Ministry from day to day implementation will enable MAFFS to stay focused on its key strategic functions of policy-making, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation. This approach is in line with other Commonwealth countries, including UK, who find it more effective and efficient to set up flexibly-managed executive agencies to deliver specific services, thus freeing up the politicians and senior civil servants to concentrate on defining public services rather than directly delivering them.

7.41 Meanwhile, we note that the Ministry is successfully negotiating major projects with other donors and investors, and it is predicted that over the next 2 years the Ministry will be attracting commitments of about \$150 million in additional external funds, spread over the anticipated project durations. If these projects can be set up on similar professional lines to the RCPRP, then a very high proportion of the Ministry's agriculture development and poverty reduction efforts is likely to be well organised and well executed. But this assumes that sufficient high calibre local and international staff can be recruited to manage the projects, and this may be difficult as the Ministry is short of professionals and may not be in a position to second more of its best staff to project execution activities. This presents a paradox because

MAFFS's ambitious new projects may be delayed due to non-availability of experienced agriculturists.

Procurement Procedures

7.41 The Ministry has recently implemented much needed improvements in its procurement arrangements, as recommended in the 2002 review report, and as required by the new Procurement Act of 2004. But it has been reported that there is a strong indictment of MAFFS in the last Public Expenditure Tracking report on the methods used by HQ to procure and distribute seeds to farmers in the Districts. Records of the procurement and distribution process were very inadequate and many bushels of seed went missing or were delivered after the planting season finished – to the detriment of the Government's food security policy.

7.42 A Procurement Committee has now been constituted and minutes of the meetings are kept and copied to the National Procurement Agency. A specialist Procurement Unit has also been established, with a carefully selected senior officer (a Deputy Secretary) in charge. However, given the anticipated upsurge in project activity, it is envisaged that the Procurement Unit will need 2 more competent support staff, even if the Unit uses the professional services of the international procurement agencies. It is encouraging to note that the UNDP has indicated a willingness to provide technical assistance to help build the capacity of the Procurement Unit, and the supporting financial systems.

Records Management

7.43 In examining MAFFS's records management systems we were joined by the specialist team that is leading the Records Management Improvement Programme, as part of Phase 2 of the Public Service Reforms. Staff at the Ministry expressed concern about the attitude of senior management to records, and it was noted that this is reflected in the absence of policies and procedures for assigning responsibilities for specific records functions for relevant grades of staff, as well as for records users. No records management procedure manuals or guidance notes are used to train and direct staff who deal with records, and the latter do not have a defined career progression.

7.44 The current classification system of MAFFS's records lacks coherence - subject files are not arranged in logical file series and personnel and financial records need much attention, particularly if they are to be easily reconciled with records at the Establishment Secretary's Office and the Accountant General's Department.

7.45 The systems for accessing records and tracking the movement of files have broken down. The main registry is incomplete and uncontrolled, and the registry superintendent himself keeps those files that he considers important on his desk because of problems with retrieving files. The old card index system is no longer in use. Line managers have lost confidence in the registry to track file movements and hence they tend to create their own files and keep them in their own offices.

7.46 When correspondence arrives in the Ministry it is rarely put on to a file and sent to an action officer because the relevant file cannot be easily found. Correspondence is usually sent separately to officers for action, but its movement is not tracked. Papers can thus go astray, leading to irritating delays in answering correspondence.

7.47 It was noted that at present the storage areas for subject files and personnel records are insecure and open to illegal tampering. The accounting records were more secure and the practice of creating back-up accounting vouchers has helped. However, serious problems with the recording processes between HQ, Districts, and the Chiefdoms were noted in the report on seed distribution done by the Public Expenditure Tracking team.

7.48 There are no records disposal policies or retention schedules in place, and too many inactive and dead files clutter the registry. Many inactive subject files need to be appraised.

Communications and Relationships with Stakeholders

7.49 The Ministry has an Agriculture Information and Communication Unit (AICU) which is expected to educate and inform the farmers and the public about agricultural matters, through regular TV and radio programmes, including the use of the new FM stations using local languages. However, the Unit reported that it has been operating at below full capacity due to funding constraints.

7.50 The Ministry has an NGO Coordinator whose job should be to liaise with donors, NGOs, and other stakeholders operating in the agriculture-related sectors. We noted that as donors such as USAID channel more funds through NGOs for agriculture-related activities, the NGOs have become increasingly important partners of the Ministry. Thus in order to maximise the potential opportunities, and avoid duplication of effort and resources in the field, the NGOs, donors, and other stakeholders acknowledge the need for closer collaborative arrangements with MAFFS, the elected District Councils and their Agriculture Committees, and the District Agriculture Offices.

7.51 In order to promote stakeholder participation and accountability to Civil Society, the Ministry is planning to include stakeholders and members of Civil Society on the Steering Committees which will guide and monitor the RCPRP, the large project funded by IFAD and ADB. Also represented on the Steering Committees will be those Ministries and Government Agencies whose operations are related to agriculture.

7.52 Each year MAFFS coordinates the World Food Day celebrations where awards are made to master farmers by the President, and this aims to demonstrate to farmers that agriculture is high on the Government's agenda.

Priority Equipment Needs

7.53 As a result of financial constraints over a long period, and the vandalism during the war, there is a dire shortage of equipment to enable staff to carry out their duties. For example, the veterinary clinics and the diagnostic laboratories are devoid of basic equipment. The research institutions lack microscopes. The District Offices rely on old manual typewriters, and should be using computers to produce and update their District Agriculture Plans, and other documents. The field extension workers lack transport and are operating at well below capacity because of their restricted mobility. The agriculture engineering workshops lack modern tools – the workshop at Kissy relies on 2 vintage lathes – one is over 40 years old and the other over 20 years old. The Registry does not have the requisite file covers and has no functioning typewriting or copying facilities.

7.54 We noted that regarding office space for essential equipment there should be more room available at HQ when the Ministry decentralises functions to the field.

Institutional Arrangements for Managing Change

7.55 The Ministry has set up a special unit to implement Decentralisation, but at present the Ministry does not have a special task force for the broader role of implementing administrative reform throughout the organisation. The new Director General has been pushing for administrative improvements, and has been following up the implementation of the recommendations in the first management review. His efforts have been buttressed by the timely new laws covering the reforms in the areas of Decentralisation, Government Budgeting, and Procurement, and despite pockets of resistance, significant progress has been made in implementing improvements. In Section 8 we make recommendations for strengthening the institutional arrangements for managing change.

8.0 ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 In this part of the report we examine the new functions and structures of MAFFS in the context of the Government's Programme for Decentralisation and the Reform of Local Government. We then review the following key aspects of the Ministry's present operations: HRM, staffing, and training; strategic planning, budgeting and accounting; management processes; procurement procedures, records systems, communications and relationships with stakeholders, priority equipment needs, and institutional arrangements for managing change.

8.2 At the outset it should be emphasised that the Ministry is poised to experience unprecedented change and restructuring as it complies with the Local Government Act 2004, and devolves its field operations to the Local Councils. The timetable for this is spread over the period 2005 to 2008, in accordance with the schedules set out in the Regulations dated 11 November 2004, see Appendix F for details. After three decades of centralising decisions in Freetown this change represents a big shift in the attitudes and the modus operandi for the Ministry's staff – and will require a revamping of HQ to ensure that it can deal with key national issues relating to future agriculture strategies and policies, and can provide Cabinet and the nation with appropriate reports on sector progress.

Statutory Framework

8.3 We recommended in the first review report, and **we again recommend**, that the initial ordinances and policies that define the broad powers and functions of MAFFS within the Agriculture sector should be reviewed and updated in the light of contemporary requirements in the increasingly important areas of environmental protection, environmental health, animal diseases, the import and export of animals/meat, biotechnology, and genetically modified foods. The latter may require consultation with other ECOWAS countries to deal with cross-border propagation of alien plants. The review would take account of the related legislation in public health.

8.4 During our discussions with the Director General and other senior staff, we noted that they see the need for MAFFS to put more emphasis on promoting commercial activities such as agri-business and private investment in agriculture, as well as promoting food production itself. **We therefore recommend** that the Ministry develops specific policies in this area, together with supporting legislation.

8.5 We understand that the Forestry legislation is being strengthened to help safeguard the forest from illegal depletion by rogue traders and hopefully this will be completed soon. But given the urgent need to improve Government finances **we recommend** that the existing policy and legislation in the Forestry sector is also strengthened in these important areas:

- Broadening revenue raising opportunities (e.g. water catchment charges)
- Upgrading revenue collection methods (only an estimated 25% is collected now) by using private collectors, and reviewing penalties for non-payment

8.6 Wildlife conservation is not a high priority for MAFFS and we noted that there has not been a well articulated wildlife conservation policy in Sierra Leone. **We therefore**

recommend that a wildlife policy be developed and incorporated into the forestry policy with supporting legislation. In some other countries there are special agencies for wildlife, with revenue raising opportunities, and a study should be conducted to assess the feasibility of this in Sierra Leone.

8.7 During the review the President announced that he is intending to create a new Commission for Forestry and the Environment, although the timescale for this is not yet specific. We believe that this greater prominence due to be given to Forestry reinforces our recommendations for strengthening policy and legislation in the forestry and environment sector – as well as in the agriculture sector. The interim policy statement developed by MAFFS in 2002 should be updated following the important policy inputs and changes arising from the recent Sierra Leone Poverty Reduction Strategy (SLPRS) and the Decentralisation process. If the Ministry feels that it needs some technical assistance to develop its policies and supporting legislation then we suggest that it approaches the FAO or other donors to help take this forward.

Functions

8.8 We reviewed the functions of MAFFS in terms of their continuing relevance under the new decentralised system, and in terms of any possible new functions which the Ministry should add to its responsibilities. We summarise our recommendations below.

8.9 The functions of MAFFS's Professional/Technical Directorates (Crops, Livestock, Land and Water Development, and Forestry) will still cover relevant subject areas, but under the Third Schedule of the Local Government Act, the Ministry is to devolve its executive authority for its various field operations to the Local Councils over the period 2005 to 2008, in line with the timetable in Appendix F. This means that the Professional/Technical Directorates will no longer deliver farm support services, but will instead focus on tasks such as these, within their respective areas of professional expertise:

- policy development and policy review
- national coordination
- strategic planning
- providing professional advice
- regulatory functions
- trouble-shooting
- reporting to Cabinet and the nation

8.10 Thus the traditional emphasis on top-down planning and implementation from HQ will change in favour of bottom-up planning and implementation from within the District Councils and their local communities. The farm support services can then be demand-driven by local needs as perceived by the local stakeholders. This is much more likely to generate local commitment to raise food production and deliver the necessary sustainability and local accountability that has been elusive in top-down projects driven by HQ.

8.11 In line with the Government's strategic policy of enhancing local accountability and transparency **we recommend** that a new function is instituted by the District Agriculture Office – the creation of a Farmers Services Unit to set, monitor, and progressively improve service delivery standards for the various support activities to farmers. These standards

should be published in an explanatory brochure specifying the quantity, quality, timeliness, and costs of farm support services which the Councils will deliver – and the brochures should be widely distributed to farmers, in local languages where appropriate. The brochures should also set out a mechanism for dealing with genuine complaints from farmers who do not receive the specified standards of farm support. In cases where the farmers are not satisfied with how their complaints are handled there should also be an independent appeals procedure to promote fair play, transparency, and local democracy. In view of the innovative nature of this new customer orientation, we suggest that the DG would oversee the setting up of this new function and would issue guidelines for its operation, including a monitoring and coordinating mechanism at HQ to compare service delivery performance between Districts.

8.12 Following a recommendation in the first management review, MAFFS has introduced an important new function at the District level - the preparation and implementation of District Agriculture Plans produced in conjunction with the local farmers and stakeholders. This provides greater clarity of purpose in the Districts, and gives a local sense of direction which is not possible with top-down plans designed at HQ. **We recommend** that the District Agriculture Plan (DAP) would be approved by the Local Council and would take account of the Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy and should, for example, include measures to promote local agri-business and local investment, as well as food production. **We recommend** that the HQ would provide technical assistance to the Local Councils on the design and implementation of the DAPs, and that this assistance should be locally driven to ensure sustainability.

8.13 Some examples of what **we recommend** the DAPs might cover are as follows: expected levels of production of various crops and livestock, fallow land that can be cultivated, infrastructure improvements such as storage facilities, allocation of inputs to areas of greatest need, control and integration of NGOs, and opportunities for income generation through food processing etc. A proposed format for the plan is at Appendix G. **We recommend** that the process of preparing District Agriculture Plans is continued, strengthened, and devolved to the District Councils as an integral part of the content of the compulsory/mandatory District Development Plans – which all Districts are required to produce under the Local Government Act 2004. Given that farming constitutes such a large part of a District's economic activity it is self-apparent that each District Development Plan (DDP) will need to include a comprehensive section on agricultural development. Thus, in effect, the production of a local DAP as a key component of the DDP will also be compulsory/mandatory under the law.

8.14 As regards other new functions (in addition to the DAPs, and the setting and monitoring of performance standards for farm support services) we noted above in para 7.7 that the existing functions of MAFFS do not make explicit reference to promoting agri-business, attracting investors into farming, ensuring the provision of adequate farm credit facilities, or lobbying for fairer trade policies for Sierra Leonean farmers. This suggests that the focus of the Ministry's officials has become too farm oriented and has tended to neglect crucial commercial aspects of modern farming. **We therefore recommend** that the Ministry becomes more business-oriented in its outlook, and sets up a small commercial unit at HQ (to work closely with the Ministry of Trade) and concentrate on functions such as:

- Promoting agri-business to add value to food production

- Liaising with foreign and domestic investors, aid donors, and NGOs, and attracting them into agricultural development, in conjunction with the Ministry of Trade
- Working with the banking system to ensure adequate credit facilities for farmers
- Lobbying for fairer international trade policies for Sierra Leonean farmers
- Improving the infrastructure and administration of local markets
- Other relevant commercial activities

It is envisaged that this new unit would work closely with the Director General, who would have a key representational role, with the Ministers, in meeting prospective investors, donors and other important clients/stakeholders.

8.15 The Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Statistics Directorate (PEMSD) would take on the function of promoting the District Agriculture Plans (DAPs), and **we recommend** that PEMS D posts an officer to each District Council to assist in producing the DAPs, as well as gathering local agriculture data for sending to HQ for policy and planning purposes. At HQ, **we recommend** that PEMS D takes on the function of examining, analysing, and reporting on the policy issues emerging from the DAPs. Given the different ecology in the 3 Regions, the PEMS D officers based in the Regional Capitals should also be given the extra responsibility (and corresponding seniority) for coordinating, harmonising, and reporting on the issues arising from the DAPs in their particular Region. They would report to the Provincial Coordinating Councils, as well as to the Local Council and the Ministry HQ. This bottom-up reporting system is central to the work of PEMS D, and it will facilitate the preparation of regular reports at the national level on the status, issues, and problems relating to agriculture and food production. Given MAFFS's fundamental duty and obligation to report to the Cabinet and the nation, **we recommend** that PEMS D puts high priority on a regular and formal reporting system, in addition to the production of the routine annual report.

8.16 In view of its central planning and coordinating role **we recommend** that PEMS D should also take on the function of coordinating and reporting on Food Security issues. We do not see the need for a separate Directorate to deal with Food Security as all parts of the Ministry are concerned with some aspect of Food Security. At the District level there are Food Security Coordinating Committees, and PEMS D at HQ expects to receive and collate the feedback from these Committees, along with other data from the Districts.

8.17 The work of the Land and Water Development Directorate is partly a research and consultancy function as well as an executive function of MAFFS, and in view of this we considered whether it should be aligned with the other research functions under the National Agriculture Research Coordinating Council (NARCC) as a subvented organisation. **We recommend** that if the priority is to improve the research capacity of LWDD then it should be converted into a research institute where the conditions of service are better than the Civil Service, and there is the possibility that good researchers can be recruited and retained. As a research institute LWDD could still ensure that it retains close links with the local farmers by sending staff into Districts.

8.18 During our interviews and discussions we noted that there was a sense that MAFFS has been putting more emphasis on the function of promoting arable crops rather than livestock and high value tree crops such as cocoa. For example, the Districts lack basic veterinary diagnostic equipment and clinic facilities for treating animals, and only 5

veterinary officers remain in the Ministry. Although the Ministry is operating under severe financial constraints, **we recommend** that the function of livestock support services is given greater prominence.

8.19 MAFFS no longer engages in the commercial function of growing food and competing with private farmers and it is not structured to run commercial farms. Nor does it have funds to invest in commercial farming. We therefore endorse the decision by MAFFS to contract out the management of the farm at Newton to a private company, while retaining a small area for rice research and seed production. The immediate priority is to get maximum output from the 500 acre farm and the management contract should include clauses which stipulate a requirement for sufficient investment to realise the full potential of the large and fertile site – otherwise the management contract should be revoked. When the farm is near its full potential and the land value reflects this, the Government should consider raising capital for development purposes by selling the lease.

8.20 The running of the Horticulture Units in Freetown and Bo is a function which dates back to the colonial era when they did the landscaping of Government properties. Today there are private growers and landscapers and it is no longer necessary or appropriate for MAFFS to engage in this activity. **We recommend** that the units should be devolved to the appropriate Local Council for them to decide on their continuing relevance in the local context.

8.21 The support function of Engineering Services has over the years fulfilled a useful role in making farm tools, repairing tractors and farm equipment, supplying spare parts and training farmers in repair techniques etc. However, there are now more private sector suppliers of these services and farmers have more choice of providers. The question for MAFFS is whether in these times of scarce resources it is still necessary and cost-effective to fund these services to farmers. Our view is that the private sector is not yet sufficiently developed in the Districts to replace the function of Engineering Services. We therefore concluded that this activity should continue as a semi-commercial function - but **we recommend** that it should also be devolved to the District Councils, and MAFFS try to ensure that all Districts have at least one qualified mechanic/fitter, and adequate tools and equipment. The function at HQ would be to deal with policy issues, national coordination, technical matters, and trouble shooting.

New Structure of the Ministry

8.22 Our analysis of MAFFS's organisational structures focused on the above changes in functions, and the need to adjust the structures and reporting relationships to fit the revised functions at HQ and in the Districts under the Local Councils. Our analysis of the structures also takes account of the anticipated changes arising from the implementation of the findings of the Presidential Commission on Restructuring the Senior Civil Service. Our proposed new organogram for the Ministry is shown at Appendix B, and the existing structure is shown in Appendix C.

New Structure at HQ

8.23 When we interviewed the Heads of the Professional/Technical Directorates for Crops, Livestock, Land and Water, and Forestry they acknowledged that, with the loss of their executive authority over their large nationwide vertical structures, their organisational arrangements would be fundamentally changed. The Heads of these Directorates are therefore currently examining the structure of the new organisational units required at HQ to carry out the revised functions and professional/technical advisory duties summarised in para 8.9 above. **We recommend** that these new organisational units are compact in size and that the number, grades, and workloads of the posts in each unit should be carefully assessed by the DG and the Deputy Secretary for HRM, who previously worked on similar establishment matters at the ESO. Their assessment should subsequently be validated through an independent job inspection/evaluation exercise conducted by the ESO/HRMO when it has the capacity to do this. **We also recommend** that the DG proposes suitable titles for each of the new units, (e.g. Crops Advisory Unit etc) and oversees the preparation of detailed job descriptions/job titles for the posts in each unit so that the individual duties are clearly defined and reflect the functions listed in para 8.9 above. In cases where some professional and technical staff are no longer needed in HQ, **we recommend** that they are transferred to District Councils, or possibly posted to PEMSD to ensure that this key Directorate has sufficient high calibre staff.

8.24 In recognition of the key policy development, monitoring, and evaluating role of PEMSD across the whole of the agriculture sector, **we recommend** that this Directorate retains its current status and structure as a full Directorate, and works closely with the DG and the Minister. In order to operate effectively it needs to gather accurate data from the Districts, and we noted in para 8.15 above that to carry out this function it should adopt a structure which retains a professional officer attached to each Council. This officer would have a dual reporting role - to the HQ, as well as to the Local Council (and to the Provincial Coordinating Council in the case of the officers in the Regional capitals).

8.25 We noted that since the President has moved agriculture to the top of the political agenda, it is appropriate that the Agriculture Information Unit (AIU) should have direct access to the Minister to work closely with him on publicity and information dissemination to the public as well as to the farmers. Given that PEMSD is the central point for information on agriculture, and is positioned close to the Minister, **we recommend** that the AIU should be placed under PEMSD, rather than under the narrower technical function of Crops as at present. **We also recommend** that the National Agriculture Documentation Centre (NADOC), which contains a large quantity of reference material and statistics, would fit well under PEMSD, along with the AIU.

8.26 Given that PEMSD would retain its status as a full Directorate, and would have broader and more strategic responsibilities than the proposed new smaller Professional/Technical Advisory Units envisaged in para 8.23 above, **we recommend** that PEMSD would be positioned at a higher level than these Units in the revised organisational hierarchy, see proposed organogram in Appendix B. **We also recommend** that the name of PEMSD is revisited to ensure that its title fully reflects the proposed new emphasis which MAFFS needs to put on the commercial and economic aspects of modern farming. For example, we have proposed a new title for PEMSD – Economic and Planning Directorate.

8.27 In view of the importance of the extension service **we recommend** raising the status of the National Extension Coordinating Unit (currently under the Division for Crops) by making it a separate Technical Services Unit with its own budget line at HQ. The function of the Unit will be to take overall responsibility for the extension services in terms of policy work, national coordination, strategic issues, technical matters and evaluating whether the farmers are adopting the messages conveyed by the field workers. The daily management of the field extension workers will be the responsibility of the Agriculture Departments of Local Councils. **We also recommend** that the Unit for Women in Agriculture and Nutrition (WIAN) at HQ, which focuses on extension services to women farmers, and is currently under the Crops Division, should now be realigned under the Unit for Extension Services. The 28 WIAN field staff should be transferred to the District Councils, but should retain a functional link with the WIAN Unit at HQ. In order to increase the number of female extension workers, MAFFS has reduced the entry requirement for women, and **we recommend** that, given the large number of female farmers, WIAN encourages the Districts to recruit more female extension staff.

8.28 We noted that agriculture engineering is currently under the Crops Directorate, but given its sector-wide responsibilities **we recommend** that in the proposed new structure it is given the broader status of a Professional/Technical Advisory Unit in its own right, see organogram in Appendix B.

8.29 We proposed in para 8.14 above that a new function should be introduced to help the Ministry become more commercial in its approach to farming. **We recommend** that this new function is the responsibility of a new Unit for Investment, Donor, and NGO Coordination, and is given the same prominence in the structure as the Professional/Technical Advisory Units, see Appendix B. In paras 8.71 and 8.72 below under management arrangements we give more details about the envisaged operations of this new Unit.

8.30 Until now the Staff Development Unit has had responsibility for organising the training and retraining of extension staff across the whole country. However, with the devolution process it is envisaged that the District Directors of Agriculture under the Local Councils should take on local responsibility for identifying the training needs of their staff and organising their training opportunities. Hence **we recommend** that the central staff development unit should be discontinued under decentralisation, and that it should transfer its residual training activities for HQ staff to the Deputy Secretary for HRM who would work closely with the National Agriculture Training Centre, and other training providers, on reviewing and updating the content of relevant training courses.

8.31 We **recommend** that the Rice Unit under Crops should undergo a change of name to the Individual Crops Services Unit in order to reflect a broader role covering all crops, not just rice.

8.32 In the existing administrative structure there are 4 posts of Deputy Secretary reporting to the Permanent Secretary. We noted that, following the recommendations in the first review report, the key support functions of HRM and Procurement have been strengthened by putting Deputy Secretaries in charge of them. A third Deputy Secretary is in charge of finance and other support services. The fourth Deputy Secretary is nominally responsible for transport but by his own admission he is seriously under-utilised. In view of this spare capacity, and the expected reduction in administrative workload at HQ following

devolvement of the field operations, **we recommend** that there should be a maximum of 3 posts of Deputy Secretary at the Ministry's HQ. In 2008, after implementation of decentralisation, the workload should be reviewed again to check that 3 Deputy Secretary posts are still needed.

8.33 We noted that an internal auditor had been appointed and an office had been allocated for the postholder. However, we realised that to be effective he should receive the support and encouragement of the senior management team and at present he appears to have too little contact with them. But in order to ensure that the internal auditor maintains the necessary degree of independence from the senior managers **we recommend** that he reports directly to the Minister, see the proposed organogram at Appendix B.

8.34 At present the HQ structure does not include a post for an Information Technology Officer to provide technical advice, training, trouble-shooting and liaison with the hardware and software suppliers of PCs and related office equipment. However, we concluded that at present the workload does not justify a fulltime post, but there would be a case for MAFFS to hire contractors to provide IT services at HQ and the District Agriculture Offices when the need arises. We suggest that the head of the Procurement Unit looks into this matter.

Presidential Commission on Restructuring the Senior Civil Service

8.35 In examining the existing senior management structure we are mindful of the findings of the 2004 Presidential Commission on the restructuring of the Senior Civil Service. The Commission noted that at the top of Ministries such as Agriculture there tends to be a mixture of administrative, professional, and technical officers whose interrelationships are somewhat unclear, and are often fraught with tension as each group vies for the attention of the Minister and therefore control of the Ministry. This can lead to conflict, lack of sustained cooperation, and suspicion, which ultimately impacts negatively on the Ministry.

8.36 The Commission has therefore recommended eliminating the dual hierarchy between administrative officers and professional officers by integrating all senior management posts within a Ministry into one management pyramid, with divisions and sections organised in accordance with the Ministry's mission statement and the objectives to be achieved. We endorse this recommendation in the case of MAFFS, and we note that this would be implemented if the Government pushes ahead with the creation of the Senior Executive Service (SES). Any officer with the requisite leadership and competence would be eligible to apply for and fill the top and senior positions in the SES. (We noted that at the level of the District Director in MAFFS, the postholder is a professional officer and he is in charge of both professional and administrative staff in the District Agriculture Office.)

8.37 In anticipation of the implementation of the SES, **we recommend** that the proposed organogram in Appendix B depicts a new simplified senior management structure for MAFFS with a new post of Director General as the bureaucratic head and vote controller, supported by two Deputy Director Generals – with one in charge of the professional functions, and one in charge of the administrative functions. This unified senior structure eliminates the ambiguities inherent in the dual hierarchy between the Administrative structure and the Professional structure and simplifies the existing reporting relationships, including the process of authorising expenditure and accounting for it. The Minister should find it simpler to work with one top official responsible for both the Administrative and

Professional functions of the Ministry, rather than working separately with the heads of the 2 different cadres. A key point is that the job competencies for the top and senior positions in the Ministry would be clearly defined, and these would put due emphasis on the managerial competencies needed for the work, such as skills in planning, organising, motivating, and controlling. Staff from both the professional and administrative cadres may feel that they have the required competencies, and would be free to apply for the positions of the DG and the two Deputy DGs, as well as the other senior posts classified as belonging to the SES. The selection process would assess the candidates' existing competencies for a particular post against those specified for the post by the new unit in charge of implementing the SES. The launch of the SES would also include guidelines on the grading of top and senior positions, and MAFFS would thus make use of these guidelines to agree on the grading of its senior management structure. We must emphasise here that our support for the SES **should not be interpreted as reflecting any shortcomings in the existing top postholders in MAFFS** – it is merely that we would prefer to see a simplified structure which would make it easier for postholders to perform their duties effectively.

8.38 The key process of authorising expenditure and accounting for it would also be clarified under the SES arrangements. At present there is sometimes a degree of uncertainty about the respective roles of the Minister and the Permanent Secretary in giving direction on spending. It is envisaged that the SES arrangements would explicitly state that it is the constitutional responsibility of the bureaucratic head of a Ministry (i.e. the proposed new post of DG in MAFFS) to act as the vote controller and accounting officer. The Minister would retain his power to give overall direction on expenditures, but if the DG as vote controller believes that particular expenditures are not consistent with MAFFS's mission and approved budget, the DG would have the explicit authority to protect himself against accusations of the misuse of public money by writing formally to the Auditor General giving reasons why he thinks the particular expenditure cannot be justified. In this situation the Minister would be required to explain to the Auditor General and, if necessary, the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament why the expenditure was needed. In practice when the Minister and the DG are clear about these procedures they would nearly always avoid putting themselves in this awkward position, and they would tend to focus jointly on ensuring value for money for MAFFS's spending of public money.

New Structure under the Local Councils

8.39 The District Offices of Agriculture (DAOs) are due to be transferred to the elected Councils and empowered by providing a devolved budget for local agriculture development. It is envisaged that the main structure under the Local Council will consist of the District Director and the Unit Heads for the main professional/technical areas such as Crops, Livestock, Forestry, Produce Inspection, Crop Protection, and Engineering Services. The structure would also include a Farmers Services Unit which will be responsible for setting, monitoring, and progressively improving service delivery standards for the farm support activities, and the handling of complaints from farmers, see this new function recommended above in para 8.11. There also needs to be a compact Administrative Unit for handling the support functions of budgeting and accounting, HRM, procurement, stores, and records management. **We recommend** that the structure of each DAO incorporates these Units listed above. In view of the importance of the DAO for promoting local agriculture development, it will be necessary to ensure that MAFFS's staff transferred to the Local

Councils to promote agriculture development are amongst the most capable within the Ministry.

8.40 The District Agriculture Office would become a key Department of the Local Council, and it would report to the Local Council through the local Agriculture Committee. But during the transitional period from 2005 to 2008 the District Office would also retain a direct management arrangement with the Ministry HQ in order to handle those functions that have not yet been devolved. Thus the transitional period envisages a dual reporting arrangement for the District Director – to the Local Council and to the Ministry. After full devolvement, the relationship with HQ would be a functional and technical link rather than a direct management arrangement. If the Local Councils show that they have the capacity to manage local agriculture development effectively, then it would be desirable for MAFFS to accelerate the transfer of functions and budgets to the Councils, and complete the process before 2008.

8.41 A key factor in the size and organisation structure of the District Office is the size and structure of the Extension Service itself – the predominant activity of the District Office. In the past, the livestock and crops extension staff have been operating as separate vertical structures with some coordination in the field - although before the rebel war MAFFS piloted a unified extension service in Bo and Makeni. This integrated structure was gaining support, but the advent of the war brought extension services to a halt, and since then the scarcity of resources has severely curtailed the efforts to provide traditional extension services to farmers.

8.42 Since 2003 the FAO, MAFFS, and selected NGOs have been promoting a new and much more compact and affordable structure whereby the extension worker trains a group of master farmers representing different communities who are then expected to propagate the message to other farmers, i.e. the Farmers Field School (FFS). This approach requires significantly fewer frontline staff but its success will ultimately depend on whether all stakeholders in Sierra Leone are responsive enough to make it work. The initial indications are that the FFS approach is successful (except for the non-delivery of expected farm inputs) and it has thus been adopted by CORAD, the major NGO grouping led by Care. **We therefore recommend** that MAFFS formally assesses the FFS approach with a view to adopting it in all Districts across the country. This would mean that uniform structures for extension services could then be adopted in all Districts and the number of extension workers needed in each District can be logically derived from this. For example, when we spoke to the District Directors they suggested that, under the FFS approach, one extension worker would be adequate for each Ward in a District.

HRM, Staffing and Training

8.43 In para 7.23 above we summarised some of the existing problems with HRM in MAFFS, and we noted that the cumulative effect of these problems has seriously undermined the capacity of the Ministry. Under the new decentralised system it is envisaged these HRM problems will be addressed at 2 levels:

- At HQ by the Deputy Secretary for HRM with support from the top management, in consultation with the ESO

- At the District level by the District Director and his staff, in consultation with the Council and the Local Government Service Commission

HRM at HQ

8.44 Fortunately, the Ministry has brought in an experienced Deputy Secretary, (who worked on HRM at the Office of the Establishment Secretary) to take charge of the HRM function. He has begun to address the problems – especially the urgent matter of a lack of staff data and the need to rationalise the staffing arrangements as an integral part of the decentralisation process.

8.45 The staff lists of the Ministry are not complete, so the overall distribution of the estimated 3058 staff in MAFFS (excluding Forestry staff) was derived from the payroll data rather than from staff lists, see Appendix D. While this gives an accurate picture of who is paid, and where they receive their pay, it does not necessarily tell us who is actually at post in a particular location. During our review it was not possible to visit every part of MAFFS but the units we were able to meet and interview had more staff on the payroll than on the staff lists.

8.46 MAFFS has launched a survey in the Districts to verify the existing staffing levels, but unfortunately the survey was halted after completing only 2 Districts, due to lack of funds – but is due to restart soon. The results of the survey so far indicate that some ghost workers remain on the payroll, that a large number of staff only turn up to the office on payday, and that many of the surplus staff are close to retirement or over the retirement age. It was reported that staff who only come on payday share their pay with the accounts staff, and other MAFFS supervisory staff, in order to avoid being removed from the payroll. **We recommend** that this situation is investigated, and that MAFFS obtains funds to restart the field surveys of staff.

8.47 Analysis of the existing staffing data in para 7.25 shows that there is still a nucleus of 70 professionals left at MAFFS despite the poor conditions of service and high levels of attrition. However, the data also shows that a very large proportion of employees are the equivalent of clerical grades or lower. Of these, there are over 220 (6%) who are classified as daily wage and work service employees – categories of workers who, according to directives from the Establishment Secretary's Office, should be removed from the payroll, as noted in the first review report. **We again recommend** that action is taken to remove remaining daily wage and work service employees from the payroll. There are also over 120 employees classified as Temporary Clerical Assistants who are not permanent civil servants because they have not passed the Civil Service entrance examination consisting of basic English and arithmetic, as noted in the first review report. **We again recommend** that this situation is rationalised by setting a deadline for staff to take the examination in cases where the post is needed.

8.48 When we visited the District Offices we were told that there was a low level of paperwork and hence the presence of over 390 clerks on the payroll appears very high. The figures for over 1380 labourers and other junior non-technical staff appear very high when MAFFS is no longer directly producing food itself, and this suggests that there is considerable overstaffing at the bottom of the organisation. For example, in Bo District there

are about 400 names on the staff list but the District Director indicated that less than half these would be needed for the new Local Council Agriculture Department.

8.49 The largest group of staff in MAFFS is the extension workers and under the new FFS system it is possible to calculate how many are needed in each District – and it is suggested by District Directors that one extension worker is adequate for each Ward. This can be extrapolated to give the number of extension workers needed in each District, and thus across the country as a whole, and this extrapolated figure can then be compared with the current number of extension workers.

8.50 If each District Council opts for the FFSs and chooses only those MAFFS staff which it wants to employ, and if the HQ focuses on policy work and becomes much more compact, it is estimated that at least half of the Ministry's total staff of about 3200 will be surplus to requirements. **We therefore recommend** that the Ministry takes the following practical steps to rationalise its staffing arrangements:

- Guidelines should be issued, in consultation with the ESO, to District Directors and to the Local Councils on the use of FFSs and on how to determine the number of extension workers, and other staff, needed in each Ward and District, and on how to select the staff who are to be transferred from MAFFS to the Councils. These guidelines should require each District to take into account the presence of NGOs who are already providing, or plan to provide, extension services in parts of their District, so as to avoid unnecessary duplication of staff and resources
- Guidelines should be issued to District Directors and Local Councils on introducing formal memoranda of understanding for working jointly with the NGOs who are providing local extension services in their Districts – this will promote a spirit of mutual cooperation. If an NGO is programmed to leave a particular area after 2 or 3 years then the District Director should be aware of this and plan in advance how to provide sustainable extension services in that area – preferably with a CBO or another NGO, rather than deploying more public servants
- Guidelines should be issued to District Directors on what to do with local staff not transferred to the Councils. Those in the less controversial categories can be dealt with first, subject to cash flow constraints (e.g. those over the retirement age; those who volunteer for early retirement or redundancy; those that have exhausted their sick leave arrangements; those who are daily wagers, work service employees, or temporary clerical assistants) An explanatory leaflet should be prepared and passed to staff so they know the procedures for claiming their entitlements.
- Job inspection exercises should be conducted by the ESO/HRMO, when it has the capacity, at HQ and in the District Agriculture Offices to validate staff arrangements before and after the full implementation of decentralisation

8.51 This staff rationalisation process is a major undertaking and the Deputy Secretary for Human Resources will need the support of the Permanent Secretary and the Director General. He should also liaise with the ESO about getting guidance and hopefully support from the DFID-supported HRMO Project - e.g. for the job inspection exercise. **We recommend** that he prepares a financial plan showing the cost of phasing out the surplus staff and paying their benefits during the transitional period for implementing decentralisation. This financial plan should be used to negotiate funding to achieve the phasing out. Given that the overstaffing problem is wide spread across many Ministries we

suggest that a central Redeployment Management Committee is set up by the ESO and Ministry of Finance to handle this problem in an orderly manner.

8.52 During our interviews and discussions the backlog of promotions was a recurrent theme among the professional and technical staff, who have formed an impression that their career progression prospects have been neglected by senior managers, who are often seen as remote figures at HQ. But the lack of staff data has made it difficult to assess the exact scale of the problem. **We therefore recommend** that the Deputy Secretary for HRM, with help from the District Directors, puts priority on collecting data on the promotion issue. But only appropriately qualified candidates fitted for promotion should be given promotion opportunities, and only then when vacant positions exist and there is still an operational requirement for the position. This rational approach to the promotion backlog should help to improve staff morale.

8.53 Linked to the above we noted that management succession planning also needs attention. This will be especially important in planning for an eventual successor to the expatriate DG. At present MAFFS is content to continue with the external funding of the current postholder, especially during the forthcoming period of major change confronting the Ministry over the next 3 years. But in due course it would be appropriate to replace him with a Sierra Leonean if a suitable high calibre candidate can be found. **We recommend** that the DG should be able to groom his successor, and thus effort should go into identifying possible successors well before he departs.

8.54 During our interviews it emerged that professional and technical staff in the Forestry Division are doing work of similar importance and job weight to their professional and technical colleagues in the Crops and Livestock Divisions, but the equivalent Forestry jobs are graded at a lower level. In order to resolve this anomaly **we recommend** that the Deputy Secretary for HRM arranges for a review of the MAFFS's schemes of service and grading structure for its professional and technical staff, and liases with the ESO/HRMO on this matter.

8.55 Regarding training activity we noted in par 8.30 above that, under the decentralised structure, the Staff Development Unit could be discontinued and its residual functions merged into the proposed training function under the Deputy Secretary for HRM. We also noted that the National Agriculture Training Centre is working closely with the Ministry (by regularly updating its course content and offering about 40 places a year to MAFFS's staff) but there should be more transparency in the selection of trainees to attend courses at the Centre, and elsewhere. **We thus recommend** that MAFFS sets up a more formal selection panel with external representation to provide advice and support the decision making.

8.56 Management training has tended to be a neglected area, but **we recommend** that the District Directors of Agriculture should become a priority target group for this type of training. Under the new structure, they are expected to play a much more proactive leadership and management role in promoting local agriculture. Other senior and middle level staff should also be scheduled for management training after the District Directors have been given first priority

HRM for Staff Transferred to the Local Councils

8.57 At present the District Director does not have control over the posting, hiring and firing of the staff who work in the District – but with the transfer of staff to the Councils this will change, and the District Director will have much more managerial freedom to control staff and finances under the overall supervision of the Council and its Agriculture Committee, and the Local Government Service Commission. The first priority is to ensure that there is an accurate staff list and more comprehensive personnel records for staff in the District. The District Agriculture Office would retain a functional link with HQ on national agriculture policy and technical matters.

8.58 **In** order to strengthen control and supervision of local staff **we recommend** that MAFFS moves towards a more open system of staff reporting and seeks advice from the ESO/HRMO on its design. Staff would agree specific targets for the year ahead with their supervisors, and at the end of the year their performance would be assessed against achievement of the targets. This will provide an opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses in staff and recommend training where necessary, and will enable the District Directors to take the initiative in recommending staff for promotions based on their work performance.

8.59 After the transfer of staff to the Local Council **we recommend** that each District Director, together with his senior staff, prepares a training plan covering all staff under their control. For example, some extension workers may need retraining on the FFS approach. The budget for the District Agriculture Office should include provision for delivering the required training over a phased period.

Strategic Planning, Budgeting, and Accounting

8.60 Following the recommendations in the first review report, the Ministry became one of the first to disaggregate its budget structure to the District level - as from 2005. After 3 decades of over-centralisation in Freetown, this provision of a District budget for local agriculture development represents a major change in thinking. It will give the District Office a new sense of purpose and greatly facilitate implementation of activities proposed in the new District Agriculture Plans (DAPs). It is envisaged that the DAP would be a 3 year rolling plan with the first year containing specific and costed targets to facilitate budget preparation. However, as at June 2005, the Districts have only received very small sums this year from the HQ, and this means they are spending over 95% of their recurrent expenditure on their bloated payrolls, and are therefore struggling to provide services to farmers. For example, in some Districts there is no fuel to deliver the available seed inputs to the farmers.

8.61 Meanwhile, the Ministry is currently grappling with the preparation of its 2006 budget using the new strategic planning and budgeting processes as required by the recent Government Budgeting and Accountability Act of April 2005, see paras 7.30 to 7.33 above. But during our interviews we noted that the new Budget Committee does not yet include two important stakeholders, the NACCR and the NATC, and **we recommend** that programme managers from these entities are asked to join the Committee as soon as possible.

8.62 We noted earlier that the manpower budget of MAFFS has been traditionally ring-fenced, and there has been no system for relating the number of posts to validated functions and to defined workloads. This has burdened the agriculture sector with wasteful expenditure on large numbers of surplus staff - expenditure which in the national interest could be better used on farm support services, or better staff salaries, to help raise food production. **We therefore recommend** that MAFFS uses the new strategic planning and budgeting system to reorientate its expenditure priorities towards the national interest of raising food production, and away from the wasteful practice of ring-fencing its manpower budget.

8.63 We also noted that at present the budget structure does not yet include a separate head for the Minister's and the DG's daily operational expenses, and **we recommend** that this is rectified for 2006 so that their time is not wasted on searching for simple items such as paper.

8.64 With the improvements and changes in the structure of the 2006 Budget, we noted that the format of the accounts will need to follow this new structure, and in the interests of transparency and accountability **we recommend** that this should be an urgent priority. If the Ministry's existing complement of 43 accounts staff (**we recommend** these posts need to be job inspected) have difficulty with the technical aspects of this work, then **we recommend** that it could be contracted out to a professional accounting firm.

8.65 When we spoke to the auditors from the Auditor General's Office they reported that the financial records and documentation in MAFFS have historically been inadequate for audit purposes. **We therefore recommend** that the senior management should therefore seek to ensure that this is rectified from now on. We also noted that although an internal auditor has been recently appointed he does not appear to be getting sufficient support and cooperation to be effective. **We recommend** therefore that senior management collaborates with him closely and provides more guidance on his operations – so as to help protect senior management from fraudulent behaviour by subordinates. If the present incumbent has difficulty in establishing adequate internal controls to reduce payroll fraud and other possible irregularities, then **we recommend** that this work could be contracted out to a professional audit firm.

Management Arrangements

8.66 We noted some significant strengthening in the Ministry's management arrangements over the last 12 months, see paras 7.34 to 7.41 above. But by implementing the improvements in the organisation structure as set out in our recommendations above, we believe that the management arrangements can be further strengthened.

8.67 For example, the overall management of the Ministry would be simplified and communications channels significantly improved if the top and senior structure of the Ministry is streamlined as recommended by the Presidential Commission on Restructuring the Senior Civil Service. This would remove the ambiguities inherent in the system of dual hierarchy, see paras 8.35 to 8.38 above.

8.68 Other examples of how the revised structure should facilitate better management and supervision include the repositioning of the Units for the Extension Services, the WIAN, the Engineering Services, the AIU, NADOC, and Staff Development.

8.69 As noted in paras 7.38 to 7.41 we fully endorse MAFFS's decision to introduce modern management practices to implement the \$28m RCPRP, and the creation of a special executive agency, outside the Ministry's main structure, to deliver the important poverty reduction goals in the RCPRP. **We thus recommend** that a similar approach is adopted for organising and managing the estimated \$150m worth of projects currently in the pipeline, subject to the necessary consultations with the PSC, ESO/HRMO and the Ministry of Finance to safeguard public service standards and ensure consistent policies on recruitment and pay etc. The net result of using this approach is that a very high proportion of MAFFS's agriculture development and poverty reduction efforts will be delivered by well qualified and properly paid managers and agriculture professionals, recruited through open competition.

8.70 But hitherto, the Ministry has been an important recruiting source for projects and this situation is now changing because of MAFFS's own shortage of experienced professional staff. Thus **we recommend** that in order to avoid delays in MAFFS's important forthcoming projects there will be the need to cast the net wide to find suitable staff, and this is likely to require overseas recruitment in some cases. Otherwise the Government's key strategic policy of food for all Sierra Leoneans by 2007 will be put at risk.

8.71 In order to maximise the benefits from the actual and potential resources deployed in the agriculture and agriculture-related sectors by the NGOs **we recommend** that MAFFS gives a higher profile to managing the NGOs, donors, and other stakeholders. We noted that the SLPRS emphasises the central role of agriculture in reducing poverty, and thus donors see a key role for NGOs operating in the agriculture-related sectors to help deliver poverty reduction goals. For example, CORAD has an \$8 million project over an initial 3 year period to work in needy Districts, and one of the main components of the project is to improve extension services to farmers. This major input of services is extremely helpful to MAFFS, but it will require a proactive management approach from MAFFS to get the best results from CORAD and other NGOs.

8.72 For example, we noted that CORAD has a rigorous reporting system to USAID (which provides most of its funds) in terms of achieving service delivery targets to farmers, but these need to be integrated with MAFFS's own targets for its farm support services - which should be developed by the proposed new Farmer Services Units. Although CORAD sends copies to MAFFS of its reports to USAID, it does not yet appear to get an adequate response from the Ministry. This contrasts with the Health sector in SL where there is a more proactive approach from the Ministry in managing its relationships with NGOs. **We thus recommend** that MAFFS introduces formal memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with CORAD and other NGOs – both at the national level and District level. If these MOUs had been in place when the ABU (Agriculture Business Unit) initiative was launched by the UNDP and the Irish Government's Aid Agency it would have improved the linkage with the Ministry – and avoided a situation whereby some Ministry officials reported that they felt the ABUs were not well coordinated with the Ministry's own efforts.

8.73 At the District level we also noted that there is a need for the District Management Team to work closely with its local Farmers' Association to minimise misunderstandings and promote good working relations with its key stakeholders. **We thus recommend** that the management arrangements would include a formal Memorandum of Understanding specifying the respective roles of the District Agriculture Office and the local Farmers' Association.

8.74 In view of the vital role of the District Director in delivering the outputs in the District Agriculture Plan (DAP) **we recommend** that he should agree and sign a performance agreement with the Local Agriculture Committee - to be endorsed by the Chairman of the Council. The contract would set out the specific outputs expected from the District Director over the year ahead and would be related to targets in the DAP. The contract would also specify the resources which would be made available to the District Director, so that in the event of non-performance he would be protected from invalid criticism arising from the lack of resources to carry out his functions.

8.75 In order to help motivate the District Directors and demonstrate the Government's top level support **we recommend** that the District Directors meet the President and the Vice-President at least once a year to review progress with increasing food production in their respective Districts. They could also meet the Parliamentary Committee for Agriculture, and MPs interested in the sector.

Procurement Procedures

8.76 Following the recommendations in the first review report and the passage of the Procurement Act 2004, we noted the recent improvements made by MAFFS in its procurement procedures, see para 7.42 above. However, there are areas where these improvements can be reinforced, see below.

8.77 The centralised purchasing in Freetown of seeds, and other farm inputs, has often created problems in the Districts such as late delivery of seeds after the planting season has finished, and the wrong type of seeds being purchased for the local ecology. **We therefore recommend** that the authority for purchasing seeds, and other farm inputs, is devolved to the Local Councils as soon as possible. This should help to ensure that the local farmers obtain the right types of seeds in time for their local planting schedules. Indeed, under the new system of local democracy and local accountability, the local councillors would find themselves in difficulty if the wrong type of seeds were purchased and sent to their local farmers at the wrong time.

8.78 It was reported that the present system of purchasing fuel for MAFFS vehicles is open to abuse - and given the increasingly high cost of fuel as part of MAFFS's recurrent budget, it is important to address this loophole. For example, under the existing system the Divisional Directors purchase fuel separately and there is no central disbursement ledger for expenditure on fuel and no effective audit trail on where the fuel has gone. This can result in the unexpected non-availability of fuel to make important up-country visits to farming areas, and the non-availability of fuel for District Directors and their staff to travel within their Districts, and to deliver seeds to needy farmers. **We thus recommend** that authority for fuel purchase is placed centrally in the Procurement Unit, and that proper records are kept of how the fuel is used. Also, it is important to ensure that fuel allocations

are guaranteed to the Districts to enable them to deliver seeds to farmers and to travel to farming communities.

8.79 **We also recommend** that authority for purchasing other recurrent items such as stationery are centralised at the Procurement Unit, and proper records maintained of these purchases - with periodic stock reconciliations.

8.80 We noted that at present the various bidding documents are not yet standardised, and in the interests of efficiency and simplicity **we recommend** that attention should be given to this. Also, we understand that the Procurement Unit is likely to become involved in procuring services, as well as goods, e.g. contracts to outsource work to NGOs, as under the RCPRP. The documentation for this will require special preparation, and training should be provided if necessary. Meanwhile, it was not possible to trace the documentation relating to the contracting out of the Newton Farm Station, and the Procurement Unit should try to obtain copies of this.

8.81 For large procurement contracts, especially those involving international bidding and professional expertise, **we recommend** that MAFFS uses the services of the various professional procurement firms to assist them to get optimal terms and best prices.

8.82 At present the accommodation for the Procurement Unit in the Youyi Building is rather restricted. Given the importance of the work and the need to maintain proper records, as well as receive visitors, **we recommend** that it is allocated 3 rooms rather than just one.

Records Management

8.83 The problems with records management in MAFFS have been summarised in paras 7.42 to 7.47, and it is evident that much attention is needed in this neglected area. Fortunately, with the inclusion of MAFFS as an early priority in the DFID-supported Records Management Improvement Programme (RMIP) it is envisaged that work will start in July 2005 on reforming and upgrading the existing systems. But it is very important that senior management takes ownership of the records system in MAFFS and **we recommend** that this responsibility is placed under the Deputy Secretary for HRM who also has a special interest in the personnel records.

8.84 It will also help if the Permanent Secretary and the DG begin to regularly show their faces in the registries for a minute or two as they walk past – experience elsewhere shows that this symbolic gesture is a very cheap and effective way of raising the morale and work ethic of registry staff.

Communications and Relationships with Stakeholders

8.85 During our field work we had various interviews and discussions with farmers, the key stakeholders for the Ministry. We also had a formal meeting with the National Executive Committee of the National Farmers Association, and at this meeting we asked them to give their perceptions collectively about the Ministry's current capacity to deliver basic farm support services. They were asked to rate the effectiveness of the farm support services on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 being at the top of the scale and 1 at the bottom), and their collective perception is indicated in the table below:

Assessment of the Effectiveness of Farm Support Services

Research Activities	4
Extension Services	2
Timely Provision of seeds	1
Availability of Tractors	0.5
Livestock Services	1
Veterinary Services	1
Engineering Services	2
Crop Protection	0.5
Produce Inspection	3

The picture which emerges from the key stakeholders reaffirms the impression that the capacity of the Ministry has been seriously undermined by the war, the loss of able staff, and the lack of funding.

8.86 Although the Farmers Association is keen to dialogue with the Ministry, it appears that there is some defensiveness on the part of the Ministry – seemingly arising from the Association’s vocal criticisms of the Ministry’s performance, and the Ministry’s suspicions of the Association’s motives for wanting to purchase and distribute farm inputs. This potential friction between the Ministry and its key stakeholders is unfortunate, but we earlier recommended, in para 8.73 under managements arrangements, that in each District the 2 parties sign a formal memorandum of understanding to define their respective roles and minimise possible areas of disagreement and misunderstanding.

8.87 After the farmers, we noted that the aid donors and the NGOs are other key stakeholders, and the Ministry is to be congratulated on successfully negotiating the recent substantial investments from IFAD, ADB, JICA, the Chinese Government, and others. We earlier recommended in para 8.72 above that in the Districts the Ministry should work more closely with CORAD, and other well-funded NGOs, and that MOUs should be signed with them in order to promote good relationships, and avoid unnecessary duplication of effort. Hopefully, by working closely with the NGOs, the Ministry will be able to extend the NGOs’ increasingly valuable contributions more widely across all the Districts.

8.88 As noted in para 7.51, the Ministry is planning to involve stakeholders and Civil Society on the Steering Committees to guide and monitor the RCPRP, a project which is due to deliver over half of all the Ministry’s agriculture development and poverty reduction efforts. If this involvement operates as expected, and if the local Councillors progressively extend their interest in local agriculture, then there will be a much greater involvement of Civil Society than ever before in overseeing MAFFS’s activities in the agriculture sector.

Priority Equipment Needs

8.89 During our visits to the Districts we saw that the lack of basic office equipment seriously hampers the production of priority documents (such as DAPs, budgets, staff lists, and monthly reports etc) and the collection and processing of local agricultural data. Fortunately, we understand that the UNDP is planning to provide computers for all the District Offices and this will be very timely.

8.90 We noted another area of priority need at NARCC, which needs modern office equipment and an internet link to liaise with other agriculture research institutions in West Africa and beyond. A computer, printer, scanner, and photocopier for NACCR would help them with the processing of agriculture statistics and improving the presentation of their research papers – especially the graphs and charts. Other areas where we noted priority needs for equipment are: the office of the Deputy Secretary for HRM who is collating important data on staff and needs a computer, printer, scanner, and photocopier to help with this task; and the District Agriculture Offices in Koinadugu and Bo who lack effective radio communication equipment to keep in contact with HQ. **We recommend** that the above items are costed, and then MAFFS should put a formal request in writing to justify and prioritise the expenditure, in line with the GRS guidelines.

Institutional Arrangements for Managing Change

8.91 At present there is no change management team in MAFFS, except for the team working on the implementation of Decentralisation. Given that the Ministry is poised for fundamental changes in its traditional operations **we recommend** that this is rectified and that the DG leads a team of reformed-minded staff who would oversee all MAFFS changes and performance improvements, including the work on decentralisation. The team should, if possible, receive training in change management techniques and processes. In addition the DFID and PAI consultants can be contacted through the Governance Reform Secretariat, and whenever possible, they would assist MAFFS with ongoing advice on implementation issues.

8.92 The next step is for the Ministry to widely circulate this report and facilitate, through the proposed change management team, a collective response to the report's recommendations. The Ministry is asked to then prepare a position paper for submission to the Governance Reform Secretariat. The Steering Committee on Good Governance will then be convened to consider the Ministry's response, and agree with MAFFS on amendment and final approval of recommendations to go forward to Cabinet for ratification for implementation. Section 9 sets out a suggested timetable of priorities to assist the MAFFS in developing an action plan.

9.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING PRIORITIES

Recommendations that can be implemented in the short term	Approximate timescale	Responsibility
Initial ordinances and policies of MAFFS within the Agriculture sector should be reviewed and updated. (recom. 6)	Immediate	MAFFS
Existing Forestry legislation and policy is to be strengthened. (recom. 8)	Immediate	MAFFS
Wildlife policy be developed and incorporated into the Forestry policy and supporting legislation (recom. 9)	Immediate	MAFFS
District Agriculture Office to create a Farmers Service Unit to set, monitor and improve service delivery standards (recom.10)	Immediate	MAFFS
PEMSD to take on the function of coordinating and reporting on Food Security issues. (recom 19)	Immediate	MAFFS
Professional/ technical directorates are to be renamed and restructured with new staffing and management arrangements, in line with the decentralisation process. (recom.25)	Immediate	MAFFS/ ESO/ HRMO
The AIU be placed under PEMSD. (recom. 28)	Immediate	MAFFS
NADOC also be placed under PEMSD. (recom.29)	Immediate	MAFFS
The name of PEMSD is revisited. E.g.: Economic and Planning Directorate. (recom. 31)	Immediate	MAFFS
Raise the status of NEC Unit by making it a separate Technical Service Unit with its own budget line. (recom. 32)	Immediate	MAFFS
WAIN to be realigned under NEC Unit. (recom. 33)	Immediate	MAFFS
Create a new Unit for Investment, Donor and NGO Coordination. (recom. 35)	Immediate	MAFFS
Strengthen and support the Office of the Internal Auditor, who is to report directly to the Minister. (recom.39)	Immediate	MAFFS
Introduce a new and simplified senior management structure – the DG as bureaucratic head and vote controller, supported by two deputy DGs. (recom. 40)	Immediate	MAFFS/ ESO/ PCRSES
MAFFS formally assess the FFS approach with a view to adopting it in all Districts across the country. (recom. 42)	Immediate	MAFFS/CORAD

MAFFS obtains funds to restart the field verification survey of its staff. (recom. 48*)	Immediate	MAFFS
MAFFS analyse the existing staffing data so as to take immediate action to remove the remaining daily wage and work service employees from the payroll. (recom.*)	Immediate	MAFFS/ ESO
Guidelines should be issued to District Directors and Local Councils to sign formal MOU with NGOs to foster a spirit of mutual cooperation (recom. *)	Immediate	MAFFS/ NGOs
Deputy Secretary HRM with District directors look into the back log of promotions and make suitable recommendations (recom. 48)	Immediate	MAFFS/ ESO/ HRMO
The DG is to identify a successor for grooming. (recom. 49)	Immediate	MAFFS
The Deputy Secretary HRM arranges for a review of the schemes of service and grading structure, particularly to address the anomaly in grading between Forestry and Agriculture professionals. (recom. 50)	Immediate	MAFFS/ ESO/ HRMO
Budget committee to include representatives from NACCR and NATC. (recom.55)	Immediate	MAFFS
DG to have a budget to cover daily operational expenses. (recom. 57)	Immediate	MAFFS
Management arrangement at District level should include a formal MOU with local Farmers' Association (recom. 64)	Immediate	MAFFS
Authority of fuel purchase is placed centrally in the Procurement Unit (recom. 69)	Immediate	MAFFS
Purchasing of recurrent items (e.g. Stationery) are centralised at the Procurement Unit. (recom. 70)	Immediate	MAFFS
MAFFS uses the services of professional procurement firms for contracts involving international bidding and professional expertise. (recom. 72)	Immediate	MAFFS
Procurement Unit is allocated more office space (3 rooms). (recom. 73)	Immediate	MAFFS
Priority equipment are costed and formally requested in writing by MAFFS. (recom. 75)	Immediate	MAFFS

This table highlights those recommendations which can take more immediate effect within the Ministry after consideration and agreement a more comprehensive implementation plan should be devised.