

## ARTICLE 2

### **CONSULTATIVE AND AWARENESS RAISING MEETING ON THE RESPONSE TO EAST AFRICAN CASSAVA MOSAIC – UGANDA OUTBREAK IN SIERRA LEONE**

#### **CONSULTATIVE MEETING**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2024, a consultative and awareness raising meeting instigated by WAVE was held in Freetown, Sierra Leone at the Ministry of Agriculture conference room on the EACMV-Ug outbreak and its implications for the country's food security.

Several (around thirty) ministries, agencies and organizations working in the agricultural sector, addressed the following key points:

- The importance of government involvement in the rapid response to the virus
- Collaborative efforts across multiple sectors, including agriculture, public health, and international donors
- The necessity of awareness campaigns to alert the public and involved the farmers in the prevention measures against the virus
- Emergency actions that need to be taken to avoid the movement of infected planting materials from outside Sierra Leone and from infected to uninfected locations within the country.

During this meeting, Prof. Justin PITA, WAVE Executive Director, highlighted Sierra Leone's position to spearhead the One Health initiatives, particularly with regards to plant health. He reiterated the urgency of stopping the spread of EACMV-Ug through a comprehensive, multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral collective action.

#### **AWARENESS CAMPAIGN**

The second day, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2024, the WAVE team appeared on national television and radio stations to raise public awareness about EACMV-Ug and the necessity of a coordinated action to prevent its spread. The audience was informed on:

- The threats posed by EACMV-Ug and Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD)
- The impact on food security and Livelihoods
- The urgency of action with a One Health Approach
- The preventive measures for farmers and the public
- The role of the Government and the international Partners
- A call for public and stakeholder Engagement

## **CONCLUSION**

The consultative meeting and stakeholder engagements were highly successful in raising awareness about the East African Cassava Mosaic Virus Ugandan strain and gaining commitments from key institutions in Sierra Leone. The collaborative efforts initiated during the WAVE visit mark an important step towards a coordinated regional response to this urging agricultural crisis.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- Upholding stakeholder engagement, particularly with the Ministry of Agriculture, to facilitate the release of essential Njala University WAVE lab equipment from custom.
- Maintaining collaboration with SLARI (Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute), FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization), SLeSCA (Sierra Leone Seed Certification Agency), NPHA (National Public Health Agency, and other key stakeholders, to implement awareness campaigns and preventive measures against the spread of EACMV-Ug.
- Pursuing exploration of funding opportunities, including potential support from the AfDB (African Development Bank), to strengthen the response efforts.
- Conduct a technical meeting to be funded by the Sierra Leone Ministry of Agriculture through the FSRP (Food System Resilience Program) project.