



FAO supports Ethiopia's agro-industrial development



Message from FAO Representative

Dear Reader,

Welcome to **October – December 2020** Issue of the FAO Ethiopia Newsletter.

As you may be aware, Ethiopia is experiencing a myriad of disasters that have affected agricultural production and the food security and livelihoods of the population. Among these are the desert locust invasion, climate-related shocks; COVID-19 pandemic; and conflict-induced displacement. In this Issue, we have highlighted what FAO is doing to safeguard agricultural livelihoods and support the affected population to recover and build back better.

In light of COVID-19 travel restrictions and prevention guidelines, FAO Ethiopia collaborated with Farm Radio International to implement remote monitoring of our humanitarian interventions. Find details about this innovative and cost-effective strategy in this Issue.

In 2009, the Government of Ethiopia adopted the agro-industrial strategy to transform the agricultural sector and boost the economy. Find out how FAO is supporting the Government of Ethiopia to advance agro-industrial development in this Issue.

According to a 2017 study conducted by FAO in Ethiopia, post-harvest loss of maize, wheat, haricot bean, and sorghum is 15, 14, 21, and 27 percent, respectively. Losses occur between production at the farm level through to storage. Most farmers store grains in pits or structures made from mud. The grain is often affected by fungus and damaged by pests, rodents, and animals. In this Issue, we have highlighted FAO's efforts to reduce post-harvest losses in grains in the country.

Happy reading.

Fatouma Seid

FAO Representative in Ethiopia

New projects target agro-industrial parks

In 2009, the Government of Ethiopia adopted the agro-industrial strategy to transform the agricultural sector and boost the economy. A high-level consultative process led to the identification of 17 growth corridors in the country and selection of four pilot agro industrial parks in Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' (SNNP) regions.

Agro industrial parks are integrated infrastructures composed of required facilities for investors to settle – warehouses, processing facilities, water, electricity, business registration services, among others. In addition, complementary facilities including Rural Transformation Centers, aggregation and primary processing centers for farmers to bring their supply, en-route to the parks are developed alongside the Parks.

In support to this process, FAO provided technical support to the Ministry of Agriculture to conduct an in-depth strategic value chains analysis on 12 agricultural commodities in the four pilot Integrated Agro-Industrial Parks.

In 2019, following the publication of the studies, FAO and the European Union (EU) supported the Government to develop investment plans for the growth and transformation of Agro-Commodity Procurement Zones (ACPZ) - delineated territories surrounding and supplying the parks with raw materials. The ACPZ investment plans include a set of interventions package and budget program aimed at improving production, productivity, and the supply chain, as well as strengthening the institutional capacities.

Concerned about the slow pace of achieving the outcomes of the investment plans, the Government requested FAO for technical assistance to speed up the ACPZs development programs.

New Hand-in-Hand initiative project

In response, FAO has launched a three-year (2020 – 2023) USD 500 000 Technical Cooperation Project that is in line with the Organization's Hand-in-Hand initiative.

Hand-in-Hand is FAO's evidence-based, country-led and country-owned initiative to accelerate agricultural transformation and sustainable rural development to eradicate poverty (SDG 1) and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition (SDG2). The initiative prioritizes countries where national capacities and international support are the most limited or where operational challenges, including natural- or man-made crises, are the greatest.

The new Project targets the poorest while proposing differentiated strategies for the ACPZ; identifying bottlenecks in implementation and promoting policy coherence; mapping out technical assistance, and bringing stakeholders together. The specific objective of the Project is to increase ACPZ development implementation efficiency to increase productivity and supply of raw materials through the attainment of the following two outputs:

1. Bottlenecks inhibiting enhanced productivity and production of raw materials identified and addressed.
2. Institutional setting for ACPZ development strengthened and implementation, coordination and monitoring plans/tools developed.

Speaking at the Africa Regional Conference on 27 October 2020, Ethiopia's Minister of Agriculture, Ato Oumer Hussien, said Hand-in-Hand fitted in with one of his country's priorities: "the development of integrated agro-industries to enhance market-orientated agricultural production, create employment opportunities and ensure inclusive development".

The expected outcome of the Project is "a clear coordination framework, action plans, recommendations and lessons learned on ACPZ implementation to allow for easy replication of the planning methodology for the development of other ACPZ".

"The adoption of the Hand-in-Hand approach at FAO's corporate level happened at an opportune time for FAO in Ethiopia when the Government, FAO and the United Nations are developing new development plans. All the plans demonstrate the Government of Ethiopia and partners' commitment to ending hunger and reducing

poverty - key objectives of the Hand-in-Hand initiative”, said Fatouma Seid, the FAO Representative in Ethiopia.

“Inclusive and Sustainable Value Chain Development in Oromia and SNNP regions”

As contribution to the agro industrial development programme, FAO Ethiopia with financial support from the Italian Government also developed the project “Technical Assistance to Inclusive and Sustainable Value Chain Development in Oromia and SNNP regions”. It provides technical support to the Ministry of Agriculture to implement a bilateral soft loan amounting 30 million Euros.

The project aims to enhance productivity and address bottlenecks inhibiting the development of wheat, tomato, and avocado, and pineapple in two ACPZ in Oromia and SNNPR and Sidama regions.



FAO is supporting the government to improve the production of raw materials.

Restoring livelihoods of communities affected by desert locusts and COVID-19

Amina Seyid, 45, residing in Kombolcha, Amhara region in Ethiopia, was devastated when locusts destroyed her two-acre maize and teff field.

As if it was not enough, Amina’s husband, Ahmed Nure, a casual labourer, was laid off when the construction

site where he worked shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The grain that we had in store could barely take us for two months,” she said.

Although Amina wanted to re-plant crops, she did not have any seed.

She was therefore relieved when she received assorted crop and vegetable seeds for the next season’s planting.

Amina’s family is one of the over 70 000 households in Ethiopia (Afar, Amhara, Somali, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP), Tigray and Oromia regions) that have received agricultural inputs, cash transfers, training, and extension support from FAO.

The interventions are part of FAO’s livelihood response to communities affected by the double effects of desert locusts and COVID-19.

Over 500 MT of wheat, maize, mung bean, teff, and vegetable (cabbage, carrot, onion, and tomato) seeds, fertilizers, and an assortment of hand tools, Multi-Nutrient Blocks, irrigation equipment and cash transfers have been distributed to the targeted households since July 2020.

“The interventions will assist the targeted households to cope with the impacts of the desert locust damage on crops, livestock, as well as the current economic hardships resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic”, said Fatouma Seid, the FAO Representative in Ethiopia.

Despite ongoing ground and aerial operations, desert locusts continue to devour crops, pasture, and vegetation cover, leaving many farmers and pastoralists in despair.

Ethiopia is also one of the countries heavily impacted by COVID-19. Some of the control measures that the government has implemented to slow the spread of the virus, including closing borders, limiting domestic transportation services, and banning public gatherings, culminated in declining labor activities, a key income source for poor households across Ethiopia. Furthermore, COVID 19 has resulted in reduced incomes from livestock sales and local employment opportunities as well as market activity in the midst of economic



The targeted households were affected by desert locusts and COVID-19 pandemic

instability characterized by high inflation and food price hikes (IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis July 2020 – June 2021 - September 2020).

FAO's Desert Locust control operations and livelihoods response Programme in Ethiopia are funded by the following donors: Africa Solidarity Trust Fund; Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation; European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations; European Commission's Directorate-General International Cooperation and Development; Louis Dreyfus Company; MasterCard Foundation; and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Others are UN Central Emergency Response Fund; United Kingdom's Department for International Development; United States Agency for International Development; and the governments of Belgium, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Russia, and Saudi Arabia through the Commission for Controlling the Desert Locust in the Central Region.

FAO Ethiopia adopts remote monitoring in light of COVID-19 restrictions

In response to the changing work modalities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, FAO Ethiopia partnered with Farm Radio International to undertake remote monitoring of its ongoing humanitarian interventions.

"The presence of FAO staff in the field to monitor project activities is now limited, hence the need to use Farm Radio International's computer-assisted telephone interviews approach to complement FAO's monitoring efforts," said Fatouma Seid, the FAO Representative in Ethiopia.

Farm Radio International verifies beneficiary authenticity, monitors their access to and utilization of cash and agricultural inputs and will evaluate the interventions.

Currently, FAO is assisting over 70000 households affected by the desert locust invasion and COVID-19 pandemic with agricultural inputs, cash transfers, and training and extension support. FAO is implementing the interventions in Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, Somali and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' regional states.

"Despite the wide geographical spread of the interventions, remote monitoring has enabled us to get data and information in real-time. We know if the interventions are on track or need modification," noted Ms. Seid.

The remote monitoring initiative is being implemented under the framework of the European Union-funded FAO project - "Global Network Against Food Crises Partnership Programme - Management and crosscutting support." The Project aims to enhance resilience to food crises.



FAO is undertaking remote monitoring of ongoing humanitarian interventions.

Enhancing food security through post-harvest technology

Amarech Heliso, a farmer in Southern Ethiopia, reminisces the challenges she used to face when storing her grain. "I had to apply pesticides to my grains at least three times a year," she said. Even with the pesticide, Amarech said it was not a guarantee that pests such as weevils would not affect the grain.

"Sometimes, I would sell my grain right after harvest, when prices are low, to avoid bigger losses during storage," she added.

According to a 2017 study conducted by FAO in Ethiopia, post-harvest loss of maize, wheat, haricot bean, and sorghum is 15, 14, 21, and 27 percent, respectively. Losses occur between production at the farm level through to storage. Most farmers store grains in pits or structures made from mud. The grain is often affected by fungus and damaged by pests, rodents, and animals.

"Wheat and maize grains stored in traditional structures do not last more than three months without being attacked by weevils," said Amarech.

Adoption of post-harvest handling technologies

With funding from the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), FAO supports over 10 000 farmers including Amarech to access improved post-harvest technologies for maize, wheat, and sorghum haricot bean. The targeted regions are Amhara, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities, Peoples', and Tigray regions.

The project organized, trained, and provided the youth artisans with equipment to produce and sell metal silos to local farmers in the project areas. Metal silos are cylinder shape containers manufactured with galvanized sheets for storing grain.

In addition to metal silos, the project has introduced hermetic storage bags, which are air gas-tight and help in locking the freshness and the aroma of the grains. The bags hermetically seal the products, preventing exchange with external moisture and gases. Biological respiration within the bags creates an environment that

is unsuitable for insect development and fungal growth

The adoption of post-harvest storage technologies has extended food storage time for up to six months, which the farmers otherwise could lose to spoilage. Traditional grain stores are mainly constructed by women, which requires considerable work in assembling the sticks and mud. Moreover, they require maintenance and do not last long. Metal silos and hermetic bags have made this job more manageable. With the improved grain storage facilities, there is no need to apply pesticides to the grain. The risks and monetary expenses associated with the chemicals have thus been reduced.

"Farmers are highly motivated to acquire and use improved post-harvest technologies. The fabrication of metal silos is a good business for youth. It is also boosting the local economy," said Mohamed, Head of Maira Artisans Youth group in Gidole town in Derashe wereda.

Scaling up

Seeing the benefits of the technologies farmers that were not targeted by the project have also adopted the technologies and recommended post-harvest handling practices. Tseganesh Matheos was pleased with the metal silos and hermetic bags that she purchased to store her teff grain.

"My grains last longer and I now sell my surplus teff for a fair price whenever I want," she said.



A farmer inspects grain stored in a metal silo.

FAO provides cash to households affected by desert locusts and COVID-19

In October 2020, FAO launched a cash transfer programme benefiting over 73 000 households affected by desert locusts, COVID-19, and chronic food insecurity. The beneficiaries were drawn from the most affected regions of Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' (SNNP) and Tigray.

Each beneficiary household received about 80 USD transfers to meet their immediate needs and invest in productive activities.

"The cash will provide immediate relief to vulnerable households while also contributing to strengthening the resilience of the livelihoods to future shocks and increasing agricultural production, thus improving food security and nutrition", said Fatouma Seid, the FAO Representative in Ethiopia.

The cash transfer programme was implemented in collaboration with the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia and Non-Governmental Organizations – Care International, Caritas Switzerland, Mothers and Children Multisectoral Development Organization; Plan International, Save the Children International, Trócaire, Veterinaries Sans Frontières Germany and Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Suisse.

It was funded by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, European Commission's Directorate-General International Cooperation and Development, European Commission, Louis Dreyfus Company, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, and the governments of Germany, France and Norway.

About FAO's cash-based programme

FAO's cash-based programmes support smallholder farmers and other vulnerable men and women, who are particularly exposed to the impacts of climate change, natural hazards, economic shocks, conflict,

and protracted crises. They support the transition from humanitarian assistance to development, including through enhanced linkages with social protection systems that can be leveraged to respond to shocks and crises. The programmes allow recipients to choose for themselves, enabling farmers and pastoralists to purchase the goods and services they need most in local markets.



A beneficiary counts money at a distribution centre in the Somali region.

World Food Day marked with a call for cooperation in building sustainable food systems

On 16 October 2020, stakeholders in Ethiopia joined the rest of the world to mark World Food Day, which was also the 75th anniversary of the founding of FAO. Ethiopia is one of the oldest Member Nations of FAO, having joined the Organization in 1948. In 1981, FAO opened a Representation Office in Addis Ababa, which also hosts the Organization's Subregional Office for Eastern Africa.

The theme for this year's World Food Day was - "Grow, nourish, sustain. Together. Our actions are our future."

The theme called for global cooperation and solidarity to help all populations, including the most vulnerable, recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. It also called for building back better, by making food systems more resilient and robust.

In her message, the FAO Representative in Ethiopia, Fatouma Seid noted that Ethiopia was commemorating World Food Day during a very exceptional time as countries, in particular, Ethiopia were dealing with the widespread effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and battling the worst Desert Locust invasion in 25 years. Climate-related shocks including floods and drought also continue to affect the agriculture sector - a livelihood for millions of people in the country.

"As the world and Ethiopia continue to face multiple challenges in the food and agriculture sector, cooperation and solidarity is imperative, to help the most vulnerable to recover from the crises and build more resilient food systems," she said.



The FAO Representative talking to a journalist about World Food Day.

A new generation of desert locusts, flooding and COVID-19 threaten food security in Ethiopia

Mohammed Ali, 30, a pastoralist, is visibly tired, but relentlessly searching for pasture for his cattle under scorching sunshine. He leads over 400 head of cattle from Ewa to Asayta Woreda in the Afar region. Although pastoralists like Mohammed are accustomed to making the annual 200 km trek in January when the rains stop, they were compelled to make the journey in October – three months early.

"Desert locusts destroyed all the natural pasture including green vegetation cover. Our livestock would

starve to death if we did not move," he said. According to Ayalew Shumet, the Afar region's coordinator of desert locust operations, about 10 million head of livestock in the region are currently affected by the scarcity of natural pasture. Because pastoralists rely on the weather and environment to secure feed for their livestock, they are heavily impacted by the damage desert locusts have caused on pasture.

Desert locusts have also destroyed entire crop fields leaving farmers, and local authorities worried. Hussein Hundolpe vividly remembers the day locusts invaded his six-hectare maize field in Afambo Woreda with sadness.

"My family and I worked hard to clear the field. I bought an irrigation pump and fuel and ensured that my maize crop received enough water. When the plants were about one meter tall, locusts devoured everything in a few hours", he said.

Recounting the incident, Ahmed's neighbor, Fatouma, said a large swarm covered their village's sky.

"We threw objects at them, but nothing helped. Although the government moved swiftly to spray the swarm, the damage was already done. Every single farmer in our village lost all their maize and sorghum crop", she said.

The Afar region has faced an unprecedented locust invasion since August this year. Despite ongoing control efforts, numerous hopper bands have caused immense damage in 33 out of 34 Woredas of the region.

"Farmers need urgent support to re-plant their crops and pastoralists require emergency feed supply otherwise, the food security in the region is at risk," said Wogris Hafa, the Head of the Livestock, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Office of Chifra Woreda.

Ethiopia has been battling locusts since June 2019. Up to October 21, 2020, over 670 000 hectares of land had been sprayed through aerial and ground operations. Despite these efforts, the desert locust threat prevails due to cross-border movements and prevailing conducive breeding conditions in the country.

Floods exacerbate the risk

Between June and September 2020, heavy and prolonged rains led to flooding in the Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Gambella, Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples (SNNP), Sidama, and Somali regions, affecting over one million people, with about 350 000 displaced.

In Aysaqita Woreda in the Afar region, Medina Solea recounts how floodwaters overflowing from the Awash River washed away all her household property, livestock, and crops.

"We ran to the mountains from where we were rescued by a helicopter."

Now living in an Internally Displaced Persons Camp with her family of 10, Madina says, "We have nothing to start with."



A farmer wades through a flooded homestead in the Afar region.

Although the Awash River frequently floods in August/September following heavy rains in the eastern highland and escarpment areas, this year's flooding is unmatched, according to Aydahis Yasin, the Early Warning and Emergency Response Director, Afar Region.

"Over 46 000 hectares of cropland and 26 000 hectares of pasture in Afar were destroyed by floods," he said.

Food security at stake

The new wave of desert locusts, exacerbated by economic hardships resulting from COVID-19 restrictions, and flooding will likely amplify food insecurity unless urgent action is taken, to assist the affected communities.

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