

MPs Commended the Works of the ATA

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MPs Commended the Works of the ATA

Members of Agriculture, Pastoralist and Environmental Protection Standing Committee of the House of People's Representatives commended the works of ATA and urge to strengthen its supports in transforming the Ethiopian agriculture. Members of the committee conducted a consultative meeting with the Senior Management Team (SMT) of the ATA and visited the Tef Research Laboratory in Bishoftu and Agricultural Commercial Cluster (ACC) avocado farms in Lume woreda of Oromia region, 6-7 April 2019.

On the occasion, ATA briefed members of the standing committee about its mandate

areas, projects undertaken and its current performances. Ato Khalid Bomba, CEO of ATA, presented the general overview of the agency. Senior Directors of different verticals briefed members of the committee on the works of Production & Productivity, Agribusiness & Markets, and ACC. Following the presentations, ATA Senior Directors as well as the CEO responded to questions raised from the members of the standing committee.

"Such sessions will help the committee gain firsthand knowledge, and help us understand what the Agency is working on," The Chairperson of the Standing Committee H.E. W/ro Almaz Messele expressed her

appreciation to the works of the ATA. She further emphasized the importance of the consultation meeting and the visit to helping the members understand better the works of ATA. "The visit and the discussion have helped us understand the situation on the ground, and shape our focus areas regarding ATA," she added.

Likewise, Hon. Ato Aklilu Getachew, members of the committee, called upon ATA to further strengthen its efforts in transforming the Ethiopian agriculture. While expressing his appreciation to the works of ATA in changing the landscape of the Ethiopian agriculture he said: "what we saw here today is beyond my expectation and it has opened my eyes

to help me understand what ATA is doing and the impacts it is bringing on the lives of smallholder farmers".

Members of the Standing Committee also visited the largest Tef laboratory in the world where Tef related researches will be conducted once the center is operational in the coming two months. Also, they visited selected avocado cluster farms in Lume woreda at the outskirts of Mojo town and spoke with the farmers. The Avocado farms are part of the ATA efforts to expand cluster farming in which smallholder farmers cultivate selected high value crops in a cluster farming approach.



Women selling tomatoes they produce through small-scale irrigation, SNNPR

A woman pumping out water from Shallow Ground Water Well in SNNPR



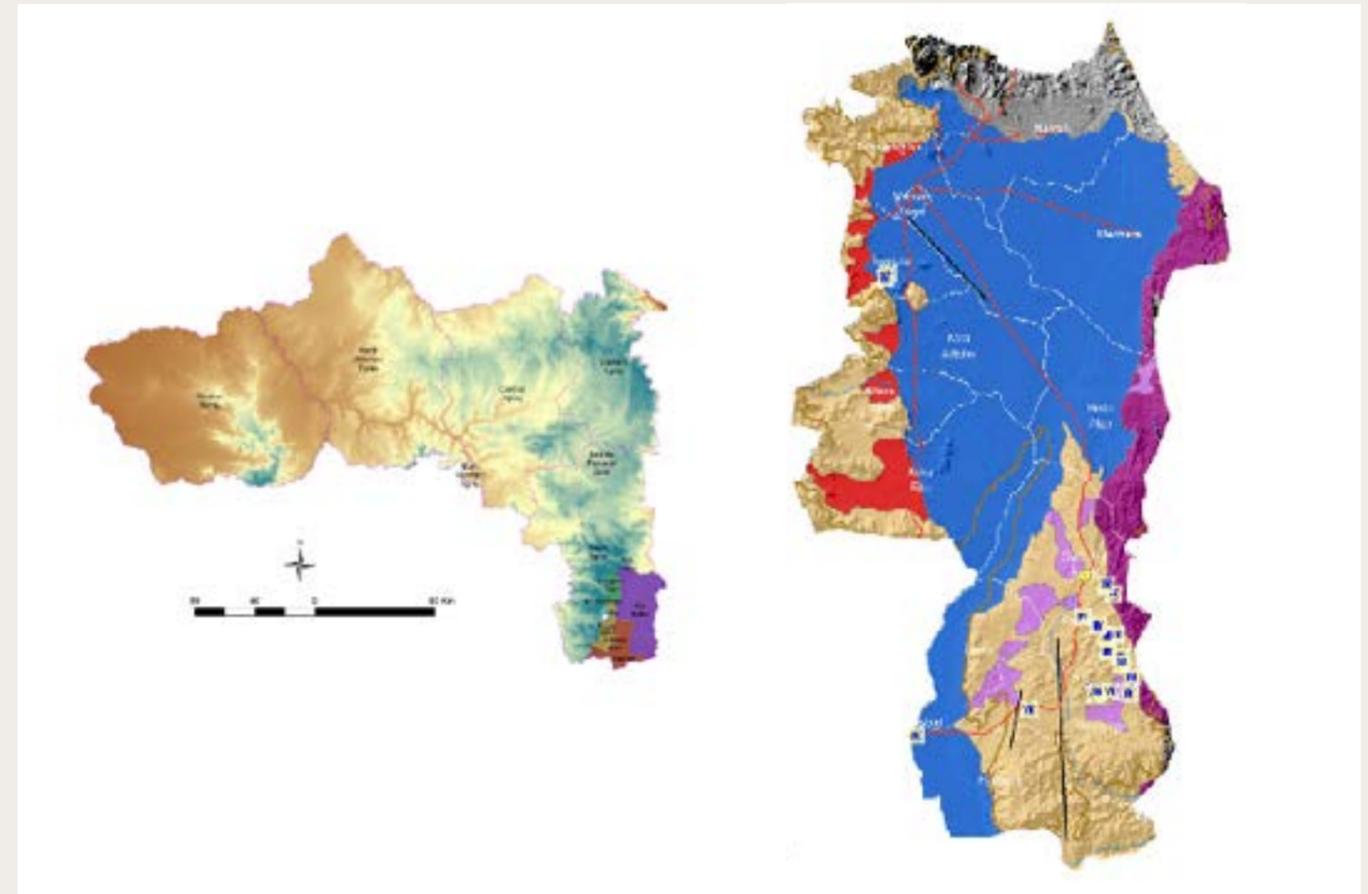
ATA Hands Over Shallow GroundWater Maps to Amhara and Tigray Regions

ATA developed and handed over Shallow Groundwater Atlas maps to Amhara and Tigray Regions on 21 February 2019 in Bahir Dar and on 19 February 2019 in Mekelle respectively. It has also provided Navigational Tools on which hydrogeological information on potential areas for groundwater irrigation is installed.

The maps for the Amhara region were handed over to the regions Bureau of Agriculture. It included 44 woredas which are enclosed in the Tana-Beles and Maychew - Tarmaber

Shallow GroundWater Mapping (SGWM) study areas.

The occasion took place at the backdrop of a workshop that deliberated on Integrated Shallow GroundWater Irrigation Development (ISGWID) project and a summary of shallow groundwater mapping status in Amhara region. The workshop revealed that more than 4,300 million meters cubic water is available at a depth of less than 30 meters in the region. "This can irrigate 136,352 hectares



of land benefiting 272,705 smallholder households," said Kassahun Teka, Irrigation and Drainage project Team Leader at the ATA. Senior officials including Deputy Head of Amhara Region Bureau of Agriculture Ato Markos Wende, ATA Amhara region Senior Director Dr. Teshome Wale, Directors and Senior Technical Staffs of different sectors attended the handover event.

Similarly, the ATA has handed over 23 published Atlas maps and two navigational tools to Raya Alamata and Raya Azebo woredas of the Tigray region. Raya Alamata and Raya Azebo woredas are under Maychew - Tarmaber shallow GroundWater Mapping (SGWM). In Addition to this, nine navigational tools for potential shallow groundwater woredas were provided to the Tigray Region Water Resource Bureau. Senior officials including Head of Tigray Region Bureau of Water Resource Ato Tedros Gebregziabher, and ATA Tigray region staff attended the handover event.

On the occasion, Integrated Shallow GroundWater Irrigation Development (ISGWID) project and a summary of shallow groundwater mapping status in Tigray region were presented. The presentation noted that the Tigray region has nearly 113.12 million meters cubic water available at a depth of less than 30meters that can irrigate 3587 hectares of land benefiting 7,174 smallholder households.

SGWM for small-scale irrigation is one of the important components ATA is undertaking in Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, and Tigray regions. With this project, ATA does a number of capacity building initiatives such as providing shallow groundwater Atlas maps and Navigational Tools installed with the hydrogeological map. ATA has also been giving training on SGW investigation methods, data handling system using navigational tools and some application software in order to speed up the implementation capacity of regional experts to develop shallow groundwater for household irrigation.



ATA Briefs Progress to Development Partners

ATA hosted mid-year performance evaluation meeting for development partners on 4 January 2019, in Addis Ababa. Primary donors drawn from UNDP, EU, AGRA, BMGF, USAID, and OCP have attended the meeting.

The briefing explained the performance made in four mandated areas namely, project execution, implementation support, analytical studies, and linkage and coordination to partners.

Mr. Khalid Bomba, ATA CEO, made a high-level presentation on each mandated area key achievements from project inception up to the closure, with the inclusion of each project track record status. On the occasion, he highlighted the main challenges and the mitigation measures taken for delayed projects.

Following the presentation, representative of donor institutions asked a number of questions including project synergy for effectiveness and efficiency, the role of the delivery unit to transform the sector and the linkage between ACC and agro-industrial parks.

ATA Marks International Women's Day

ATA Staff and leadership marked the International Women's Day under the theme "Better for Balance" on 8 March 2019 with remarks, panel discussion, and a question and answer session, not to mention fundraising. The ATA CEO, Khalid Bomba, made a remark representing the entire ATA team. In his remarks, Khalid said "everyone has a part to play, all the time – everywhere" stressing the importance of an inclusive approach to tackling gender issues. "In ATA gender mainstreaming is something we don't compromise. This occasion, therefore, is just a refrain to remind us to keep the momentum," he underscored.

The occasion involved invited speaker as well as a question and answer session that served as edutainment.

ATA promotes gender equality in the workplace. To facilitate the working women, the gender working committee has introduced Women Mentorship Program in ATA HQ in a bid to drive gender parity. The ATA plans to extend such facility to its provincial offices also.



Khalid Bomba CEO of ATA signing the MoU with W/ro Lensa Mekonnen, CEO of Tourism Ethiopia



Ethiopia: Taste of Origins Agricultural Commodities Brand Launched

Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Tourism Ethiopia to brand agricultural commodities as Ethiopia: Taste of Origins, on 8 February 2019 in Addis Ababa. The brand is derived from the national brand – Ethiopia: Land of Origins. Ato Khalid Bomba, CEO of ATA and W/ro Lensa Mekonnen CEO of Tourism Ethiopia signed the MoU in the presence of Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI) officials, upcoming Gulfoods Trade show participants. On the occasion, Mr. Khalid noted that ATA in collaboration with Tourism Ethiopia and MoTI has been working in developing and testing the brand in the past three years. "Taste of Origins is a well-recognized brand now," Khalid said. "What we need is to consistently brand all our agricultural commodities to have a better market and benefit our smallholder farmers."

W/ro Lensa Mekonnen, CEO of Tourism Ethiopia, on her part, asserted that her office strongly believes that promoting Ethiopia cuts across sectors and taste is one of the factors for the national brand Ethiopia: Land

of Origins. "By promoting Ethiopia with a brand consistency across our different sectors – whether we are promoting agricultural commodities, investment in our industrial parks, enhancement of foreign diplomacy or visits to our historical sites and national parks – we send a unified message that our country offers a colorful and eclectic menu of things to see and do".

Promoting the export of agricultural commodities has the power to positively reinforce the Ethiopia brand. "By commercializing our agriculture and linking our smallholder farmers to local and global supply chains, we send a message to the world that Ethiopia's growth and transformation is as much about improving the livelihoods of our people as it is about repairing the image of our country," Ato Khalid underscored. It was noted that the MoTI and ATA have tested the brand in international trade shows. Promotional materials have been widely disseminated via print and a dedicated website (www.tasteoforigins.info).



ATA and Save the Children Sign MoU to use 8028 Farmers Hotline

The Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) and Save the Children in Ethiopia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to use 8028 Farmers' Hotline. The MoU was signed by Mr. Khalid Bomba, CEO of ATA and Mr. Ekin Ogutogullari, Country Director of Save the Children in Ethiopia on 31 January 2019 at the Hilton Hotel in Addis Ababa with the presence of local media and senior staffs from both organizations.

"The information smallholder farmers getting through the 8028 Farmer' Hotline platform is helping them to improve production and productivity," said Ato. Khalid Bomba CEO of ATA speaking at the ceremony. "The integration of nutrition-sensitive agriculture

messages will, therefore, enhance their health and nutritional status" he underscored. Mr. Ekin Ogutogullari, Country Director of Save the Children in Ethiopia, on his part, said: "8028 is a smart and timely information dissemination tool and our partnership with ATA to use this platform will be useful to deliver nutrition-sensitive agriculture messages at scale through mobile Nutrition (m-Nutrition) approach." Mr. Ogutogullari concludes "This will contribute to the dietary consumption behavior improvement of farmers."

After the signing of the MoU, Elias Nure, Project team leader, ICT for Agricultural Services at ATA said that the use of ICT to expand information is a huge opportunity

to support smallholder farmers. "I hope we will do our best to convey the necessary information to the target audience." He concluded.

Daniel Abbot Chief of Party of Growth Through Nutrition at Save the Children acknowledged the importance of nutrition and Development Agents (DAs) play an important role in delivering the information. "We also hope our experience in previous projects will help us to excel in this partnership"

The hotline will be of use to deliver nutrition-sensitive agricultural messages in addition to its existing agricultural information dissemination.

The 8028 Farmers' Hotline is an Interactive Voice Response/Short Message Service (IVR/ SMS) system. It is a mobile platform ATA uses to provide smallholder farmers with information on a wide range of agricultural issues. This agreement, therefore, is to provide access to Save the Children to the 8028 platforms. Hereafter, Save the Children will use the platform to provide Development Agents (DAs) with targeted information and advice on nutrition-sensitive agriculture. This development is expected to arm DAs with updated information that they can timely deliver to farmers. Furthermore, the DAs will be able to have access to a variety of resources to equip themselves with.



ATA Partners with EIAR to Create Seasoned and Youth Agricultural Researchers Linkage

The Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) signed a subgrant agreement with the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), which will enable seasoned agricultural researchers to share knowledge to young researchers. The agreement signed on 6 March 2019 at ATA head office in Addis Ababa, will help to inject up to 50 senior agricultural scientists into Ethiopia agricultural research system on short-term contracts.

The agreement is the second phase of the project “Enhancing the Capacity of the Next Generation of Agricultural Research

Workforce of Ethiopia by Engaging Seasoned Researchers”. The project aims at building the leadership capacities of EIAR’s youth researchers so that they will be able to deliver agricultural technologies, information, and knowledge that are relevant, effective and sustainable in the context of Ethiopia’s agricultural growth and development agenda. Ato Khalid Bomba, CEO ATA and Dr. Mandefro Nigussie, Director General of EIAR signed the agreement in the presence of Senior Directors of ATA and officials of EIAR.

On the occasion, Ato Khalid noted that the ATA is creating an institutional relationship

with EIAR to help bring change and make a difference in the agriculture sector. “This agreement will be the beginning of good things to come,” Khalid. “We have a working relationship with EIAR and this strong relationship will overcome any limitations by open dialogue and communications,” he added.

Dr. Mandefro Nigussie on his part said: “This partnership is a perfect opportunity to use the support of ATA to achieve success in the sector”. This partnership agreement will enable to transfer immense knowledge from seasoned agricultural scientists to youth

researchers,” Dr. Mandefro. Researchers who will be injected in the sector through this partnership will be important for Ethiopian Agriculture and the only way to ensure the success is through continued support from both parties.

The project will focus on consolidating the achievements of the first phase of the project and further refinement and scaling of the results. It will work to achieve the long-term objective of building technical and leadership capacity of EIAR’s youth human resources, which represents a majority of the workforce engaged in agricultural research.

ATA Spearheads the Transformation of the Seed Sector

Since its establishment in 2011 the ATA has been working with all stakeholder to devise a system in which smallholder farmers access high quality inputs such as improved seed, fertilizers and agro-chemicals at a convenient place and right time, through multiple channels as well as with competitive prices. The production and distribution of improved seeds in particular has been at the forefront of ATA's input initiatives.

To this end the agency catalyzes the development of new seed law, regulation strategy and different directives that will enable the sector to spearhead the seed sector transformation. The country's compressive seed policy is endorsed by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and now sent to the Council of Ministers for review and to be acted by the Parliament. Recently, a Seed Marketing Guideline and the Certificate of Competence for the One Stop Shop Directives were approved by the MoA.

"The ATA has played the leading role to facilitate stakeholder consultations and align on the major challenges, bottlenecks and appropriate intervention in the seed sector," says Dr. Yitbarek Semeane, Input Director at the ATA. "Some of the interventions are policy, operation, capacity, harmonization that is critical for seed system to effectively act as a catalyst of agricultural transformation."

According to the prioritized transformation agenda, the efforts in the seed sector aim to develop a vibrant and competitive seed sector by creating enabling environment and incentivizing investments across the entire seed supply chain. They also strengthen federal and regional regulatory capacity, undertaking structural reforms and legal frameworks to meet international standards and address climate change adaptation.

Smallholder farmers scrutinizing at the seeds they want to buy at a nearby Farmers' Cooperative Union



To catalyze the process, the ATA has launched projects such as the Cooperative Based Seed Production (CBSP), Direct Seed Marketing (DSM) and Agricultural One Stop Shopping (AOSS) services among others. While the CBSP build capacity of Farmers' Cooperatives and Unions as well as member smallholder farmers to enable them to be engaged in seed production and marketing; the DSM and AOSS projects create market access for seed and all type of inputs to smallholder farmers, respectively.

The DSM aims to create an efficient seed supply system that ensures access of smallholder farmers to improved seeds through multiple channels (public and private) and thereby enhance their production and productivity, and ultimately their income. The project targets about 250 woredas across four regions (Oromia, Amhara, SNNPR and Tigray) and reaching an estimated 1.5 million farmers, out of which 450,000 will be female. By the end of 2018 DSM has reached 228 woredas. The learning from the project has also contributed to draft and endorse a seed marketing guideline for the country.

"The DSM has dramatically improved smallholders' access to quality input such as improved seed with competitive price, at the right time through multiple channels, which in turn will highly contribute to increase production and productivity," says Dr. Yitbarek. Moreover, the system contributed to reduce seed carry over significantly as low as 2% compared to 30-40% carry over by the conventional system as well as government budget by billions of ETB and staff time. In 2018, DSM covers 63% of seed supply in the four major agricultural regions (45% in Amhara and SNNPR; 56% in Tigray and 74% in Oromia)

On the other hand the AOSS, aims to scale up the farm service centers in four regions by establishing nearly 200 one-stop input centers and close to 500 retail shops, and thereby enhance access of smallholder farmers to agricultural inputs and advisory services. The one-stop input centers and the retail shops aim to deliver high quality agricultural inputs and advisory services to over 300,000 smallholder farmers, to train over 100,000 smallholder farmers on improved agricultural technologies, and create nearly 500 new jobs.

"A few years back the number of institutions that produce seed for example, were only two," Dr. Yitbarek remembers. "Now more than 60 producers are registered in the country to produce and market seed and consequently production of improved seed goes to as high as two million quintals in favorable years."

Through the CBSP, the ATA aims to contribute to the transformation of the intermediate seed sector with a focus on creating 14 model Unions in four regions. The volume of seed produced and distributed by CBSPs is expected to ultimately reach about 22,000 tons of various crops, benefiting an estimated 1.3 million farmers of which 30% are women.

"Before the project started a diagnostic study was conducted to understand the bottlenecks, operating model, opportunities and key interventions," says Mersha Tesfa, Project Team leader of CBSP at the ATA. "The CBSP works by building capacity of Unions so as they can provide their member farmers the necessary support, follow up as well as monitoring and controlling of the quality of seed production process,"

The ATA through the CBSP project has provide capacity building and trainings for more than 13,000 smallholder farmers and 500 agricultural experts at different tiers of the government administration. Seed production through the CBSP project now covers 44 woredas and involving 14 unions, 196 cooperatives and 16,640 member smallholder farmers.

All in all, the ATA's efforts in improving the seed system in the country has registered an encouraging result so far. Interventions on seed production and marketing systems have improved smallholder farmers' access to quality seed with competitive price at convenient places. They have also eased government's financial burden of more than a billion birr that would have been otherwise used as guarantee for the seed distribution.



ATA and EIAR Conduct Lowland Wheat National Field Day

ATA in collaboration with the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) conducted a Lowland Wheat National Field Day in Amibara and Fentale woredas of Afar and Oromia regions from February 8- 10, 2019. The objective of the field day was to evaluate the lowland wheat performance and scaling up the experience to other potential areas.

Officials and stakeholders from the two regions, Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), research centers, Members of Parliament, policymakers, investors, NGOs, and local farmers participated in the field day.

Participants of the field day visited three-demonstration lowland wheat grown on 3,502 hectares of land. The demonstrations were on pre-basic and basic seed production and certified seed production on a research center, smallholders' farms as well as commercial farms.

On the occasion, participants discussed with the farmers and the stakeholders. Ato Sani

Redi, State Minister for MoA, suggested to harvest the wheat with combine harvesters, link the produced wheat to market and develop next year plan to intensify and scale up the lowland wheat production to other potential lowland areas in the country.

MoA developed a one-year implementation plan to increase wheat production by organizing the national lowland wheat team from ATA, EIAR, and Ethiopian Agricultural Research Council Secretariat (EARCS). The plan aims to introduce and scale up lowland wheat in Awash, Wabishebele, and Omo basins through irrigation.

Ethiopia is the third largest wheat producer in Africa with a total annual production of 4.8 million tons on 1.8 million hectares of land in the highlands of Ethiopia. The annual wheat consumption in Ethiopia is around 6.85 million tons per annum. The government imports wheat annually with 600 million USD expense to fill the gap in the demand.