The Electronic Voucher (E-Voucher) system scaled up in 11 woredas of Tigray and 10 Woredas of Oromia regions in the first quarter of the current Ethiopian Fiscal Year (EFY) 2011.

The E-voucher system is an upgrading of the Input Voucher Sales (IVS) System formulated in 2014 that allows easier access to finance and transaction of agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and improved seeds.

It is done with the coordination of local Micro Finance Institutions (MFIs) and Rural Saving and Credit Associations (RUSACOs). The MFIs and RuSACCOs qualify farmers for loans and the system issues cash or credit vouchers that can be used to redeem inputs at nearby cooperative stores.

“During the first quarter of the current Ethiopian fiscal year (2011) alone, the IVS system has enabled close to five million smallholder farmers to purchasing more than eight million quintals of fertilizers, seed and chemicals worth close to 11 billion ETB in Oromia, Amhara, SNNP, and Tigray regions,” said Hailemelekot Teklegiorgis, Director for the Rural Financial Services (RFS) at the ATA.

The IVS was rolled out using paper-based triplicate vouchers which have to be aggregated and reconciled by Cooperative Unions and MFIs. “The rationale behind the automation is to ease reconciliation of the accounts maintained by each user and preparation of reports done manually which is open to both human error and fraud. Moreover, tracking transactions could not be tracked easily, and the data is not real-time,” Hailemelekot noted.

The automation not only benefited financial institutions and cooperatives in reducing transaction costs and timely reconciliation of transactions, but also it is concurrent with the government policy in going green. To this end, ATA automated the IVS system that brought forth the E-Voucher that uses an application of electronic format using centralized, web-based platforms with the standard interface using Smart Phones and tags.

The E-voucher system is designed to automate enrollment, issuance, redemption, reconciliation, loan collection, and reporting processes over all the IVS system. This will make recording, accessing, and tracking important data easy for both the supply and demand of inputs as well as the payment of loans.

Since its operation, the E-voucher system has streamlined the process of input purchases and has completed two hundred thousand transactions enabling more than 142 thousand smallholder farmers to purchasing more than eight million quintals of fertilizers, seed and chemicals worth close to 11 billion ETB in Oromia, Amhara, SNNP, and Tigray regions,” said Hailemelekot Teklegiorgis, Director for the Rural Financial Services (RFS) at the ATA.
Experience Sharing and International Networks

01 September 2018, Addis Ababa – ATA delegation, headed by Mao Yohannes, Junior Project Office, ICT for Agriculture attended the ICT Agriculture Value Chain Development seminar in Feldafing, Germany 21-30 August 2018. Organized by the GIZ, the seminar brought together experts from 11 African countries during which participants exchanged their respective experiences in the use of ICT in Agriculture. The Seminar was accompanied by field visits of the Bavarian State Research Center for Agriculture where innovative use of technology to increase agricultural productivity is championed. The 8028 Farmer Hotline was selected as one of the six best examples of ICT in African agriculture, and was presented by ATA.

In a related development, the ATA Trade and Investment Team along with the SNNPR’s officials, Regional Director as well as experts, visit Kakuzi, a commercial avocado farm in Kenya. On the occasion discussion was made on cluster approaches. Camellia PLC, a UK-based multi-million-dollar company, owns the Kakuzi Farm. The company has interest to invest USD 10 million in Ethiopia for a similar avocado farm. According to Dr. Yifru Tafesse, Director, Private Sector Development in Agriculture at ATA, the visit has helped them to better understand the scale of Camellia’s avocado operations, its backward and forward linkages and draw lessons thereby to identify Camellia’s requirements and support the company to invest in Ethiopia. Furthermore, the delegates visited dairy farms and mango processing plants to better understand agro-processing methods and equipment used in Kenya.

A Field Day at a Sesame Commodity

17 September 2018, Gondar – ATA Amhara Regional Office in collaboration with Gondar Research Center and Sesame Business Network (SBN) visited the Tach Armachiho and Tegede woredas in Central Gondar Zone. Dr. Eyasu Abreha, State Minister for MoALR, Head and Deputy Heads of the Amhara region BOALR, Directors of the Oromia and SNPP Research Institutions, experts and officials at regional, zonal and Woreda level, representatives of research institutions, universities, non-governmental organizations, commercial farmers and model smallholder farmers took part in the field visit.

Having appreciated the vegetative and seed setting performance for utilizing technologies such as fertilizers and row planting, participants observed there is need to scale up the best practice for farmers in the woreda.

Farmers have also raised voiced concerns regarding facilitation of concerned bodies to increase access to input finance, improved seed, mechanizations, and better extension services. In this field day, the State Minister promised to deliver two Sesame harvester machines to Gondar research center.

Sesame is one of the ACC commodities implemented in six woredas of Central Gondar, West Gondar, and Awi Zones of the Amhara region. Within the clusters, sesame is mainly grown for export, and in 2010/11 cropping season, a total of 253,004 hectares of land was planted by 86,949 farmers.
Direct Seed Marketing Successful

09 August 2018, Addis Ababa – ATA announced the success of Direct Seed Marketing (DSM) at a press conference. DSM makes it possible for regional seed producers to sell seed directly to farmers through their own marketing agents, addressing the critical challenges of the public seed allocation and distribution system. The press release quoted Mr. Khalid Bomba, the CEO of ATA, as saying “370,000 quintals of seeds were supplied for sale to 228 woredas in four regional states through the project in 2017/8”.

According to Mr. Bomba, goal of DSM is to set up a robust seed marketing system that creates incentives for seed producers to deliver seed to farmers effectively through multiple channels. “Since the inception of the project, many seed multipliers, including cooperatives, public and private channels have been doing better jobs in supplying quality seed to farmers,” he added.

Dr. Eyasu Abreha, State Minister for Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Resources said “efforts are being invigorated to establish a seed marketing system that enhances productivity.” “Emphasis will be given to establishing a system that would help scale up DSM to further increase access to improved quality seeds that boost productivity,” he noted.

On the occasion, Dr. Yitbarek Semeane, Director for Inputs and Crop Protection at ATA, presented the performance and impact of DSM. Equally, representatives of Regional Bureaus of Agriculture and Livestock Resources, marketing agents and farmers provided the basics of regional DSM implementation and its impact on their lives.

ATA Awards Transformer of the Year

06 September 2018, Addis Ababa – The ATA’s annual “Transformer of the Year” award that recognizes staff members who have shown a high degree of excellence, professionalism, integrity, and proven willingness to support their colleagues took place on the side of All Staff Offsite that deliberated the year 2011 Annual Plan. Eshetayehu Tefera, Abiyot Endalew, Biniyam Yigletu, Nuredin Mohammed, Tadesse Teweldebrhan, Dereje Biruk, Elias Nure, Dagmawi Kebede, Gashaw Mengistu and Marco Antonio Quinones were recognized for their unprecedented effort in not only doing what they are tasked to do, but also for inspiring the staff to live by ATA’s values and contribute further to the development of Ethiopia.

During the All Staff Offsite, Khalid Bomba the CEO of ATA, presented the final draft of the ATAs organizational strategy for the remaining two years of GTP II on which staff deliberated on. Improving linkages between HQ and regions and how to further empower the regions in a bid to make an impact on the lives of smallholder farmers took place. The retreat also raised the issue of the code of conduct at the ATA that it does not tolerate inappropriate behavior and will take the appropriate measures with those who exhibit such behavior. Staff Members who experience harassment or witnessed misconduct are encouraged to take the matter up with their supervisor or HR. They can also alert the Senior Directors or even bring it to the CEO office.