ATA Supported Agricultural One-Stop Shops Inaugurated

ATA supported Agricultural One Stop Shops (A OSS) that will provide smallholder farmers access to agricultural inputs inaugurated in Oromia, Amhara, SNNP and Tigray regions.

The centers are owned by private business and aim to increase smallholder farmers’ productivity, ensure food security and improve incomes through expanding access to agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, agrochemicals, veterinary drugs and farm tools. They will also provide counseling and trainings services to smallholder farmers on agronomy practices and agricultural technology uses. Each center provides services to more than 10,000 smallholder farmers in the surrounding area.

The inauguration ceremonies were attended by various delegates from the regional bureaus, representatives from the woreda and

The ATA Signed USD 50 Million Grants Agreement with the Netherlands

The ATA signed a five years USD 50 million grants agreement with the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation of the Netherlands to support the Agricultural Commercialization cluster (ACC).

The agreement was signed by the CEO of ATA, Khalid Bomba, and Thijs Woudstra, Charge d’Affairs at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Addis Ababa, on July 3, 2019.

ATA Staff Plant Seedlings, Visit Avocado Farms

The ATA head office staff in collaboration with the ATA Oromia Regional Office launched a campaign to plant 10,000 Avocado seedlings in the Oromia region.

The first round of planting of the avocado seedlings was conducted in Lume Ada’a woreda of the Oromia region with the presence of zonal and woreda agriculture officials and experts.

The seedlings were planted in the farms of smallholder farmers who have prepared their lands for the planting with supports by the ATA and agricultural experts.

Khalid Bomba, the CEO of ATA after planting avocado seedlings in the farms of smallholder farmers noted that the campaign is a follow up to the initiative of Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed to plant four billion trees in the current rainy season.
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The inauguration ceremonies were attended by various delegates from the regional bureaus, representatives from the woreda and zonal agricultural offices, community members and invited guests.

With the support of the ATA and its key partners 20 AOSS have been operational in the last quarter of the 2011 EFY. This makes the total number of AOSS opened in the four regions to 40 and project envisages to make over 200 centers operational in the coming few years.

Dr. Yitbarek Semeane Director for Inputs at ATA says such centers will serve as catalysts in the long journey of transforming Ethiopian Agriculture. “Similar centers will also be opened across the country in the next few years to help farmers gain access to agricultural inputs and training” he added.

The ATA with its partners the Ministry of Agriculture and regional bureaus facilitate and support the private sector to be engaged in the agricultural investment. The AOSS is one of these models that enables expansion of the privately-owned business enterprises to supply smallholder farmers with agricultural inputs and counseling services and training as well as create job opportunity at rural areas.
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The agreement is an extension of a previous signing of an MoU between the FDRE Ministry of Finance and the government of the Netherlands to support the ACC which is implemented by the ATA. Ato Khalid Bomba, the CEO of ATA, after the signing of the agreement, said the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has been a key partner since the establishment of the ATA and the commitment has grown strong since then.

Ato Khalid also noted the ACC is a proven model and it has been very successful in increasing production and productivity of smallholder farmers during the piloting.

“The partnership in this agreement will be instrumental in implementing the ACC at scale to transform the agricultural sector of Ethiopia and to be self-sufficient,” adds Khalid.

“Smallholder farmers in Ethiopia can come together with the same way the Dutch smallholder farmers consolidated using the cooperative approach after World War II,” he added.

Mr. Thijs Woudstra, Charge d’Affairs at the Embassy on his part noted this agreement is the continuation of the commitments of the Netherlands in supporting the ATA initiatives.

“The ACC initiative will prove wrong those who have doubts on previous initiatives tried in Ethiopia,” Mr. Woudstra said. “The ACC approach has and will prove that smallholder farmers can be successful if consolidated and provided the necessary supports,” he added. The ACC is an initiative through which geographically-targeted interventions are integrated to ensure rapid, sustained, and inclusive development of priority agricultural commodity value chains.

The approach intends to commercialize smallholder agriculture through an inclusive and environmentally sustainable approach. It targets to increase incomes of smallholder farmers. It also aims improved access to domestic and international markets, increased agro-processing and value-addition, and the creation of off-farm employment opportunities.

The program will be implemented by the ATA from July 2019 through July 2023. It is to be recalled that the ATA has signed a USD 53 million grants agreement with Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ of Denmark for a similar purpose.
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“On the one hand planting seedling will help us achieve the green legacy of planting trees, and on the other hand the avocado trees will benefiting smallholder farmers to improve their income and help the country earn the much needed foreign currency by boosting the export of agricultural commodities,” Khalid added.

Head of the East Shewa Zone Agriculture Department, Ahmed Seid, on his part said that the ATA has been helping to transform the agricultural sector through providing support across the agricultural value chains. “[ATA’s] support in introducing and implementing the Agricultural Commercialization Cluster approach on Wheat and Tef have benefited smallholder farmers,” Ahmed said. “The Agricultural One-Stop Centers and Direct Seed Market projects are also improving the lives of smallholder farmers through improving access to inputs,” he added.

The recent works in expanding the avocado cluster farm in the area are also very hopeful to improve the lives of smallholder incomes, according to Ahmed. “This planting of improved avocado seedling also targets two things the green development to fight climate change and supporting smallholder farmers to improve their income,”

Abebe Diriba, Senior Director for ATA Oromia Region Office said the ATA has been supporting smallholder farmers to plant avocado in their farms recently. “So far the ATA has helped smallholder farmers to cover 31 hectares of land with an improved avocado variety in Oromia” Abebe confirmed.

“The seedlings are an improved variety called ‘Hass’ which gives production in two-three years’ time, give better yields and it is highly demanded in several avocado importing countries,” says Abebe. The ATA has established seedling nursery sites that produce improved variety and hybrid seedling of fruits and vegetables.

The ATA has established six seedling nurseries in Oromia, Amhara, SNNP and Tigray regions which produce more than 100,000 grafted seedling annually. Other ATA regional Offices are also preparing to plant seedlings in their respective regions.

The ATA staff have also visited avocado farms of smallholder farmers the ATA supported in the past year.
The CEO of ATA, Khalid Bomba, delivered a public lecture on “innovations to transform Ethiopia’s agriculture sector” to Mekelle University academia and students. The public lecture covered two major themes where the first one focused on business process and capabilities that the ATA is building to support in transforming the agricultural sector.

In this part, Khalid focused on giving an overall explanation on how business processes are related to the Transformation Agenda and the integration of solutions in the Agricultural Commercialization Cluster (ACC) initiative to bring interventions to the ground level.

The second part of the speech concentrated on the implementation of innovative solutions in the field, mainly covering EthioSIS, Integrated Shallow Ground Water Irrigation Development 8028 Farmer’s Hotline, Input Voucher System and Farmer Production Cluster projects.

Following the completion of the panel discussion, a series of question and answer sessions followed where a question regarding the Ethiopian Agriculture, ATA focus areas and the way forward were raised. Khalid assured the participants that ATA is willing to work with academia on ways to improve the Ethiopian agriculture.

Furthermore, during his visit, Mr. Khalid also met with the President of Mekelle University Professor Kindaya G/Hiwot. During the meeting, possible collaborations in the Agricultural Commercialization Cluster and transformation projects and on ways to conduct joint research were discussed.

ICT Expo Ethiopia 2019

ICT Expo Ethiopia 2019 in which the Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) took part was held from 6 June until 10 June 2019 At the Millennium Hall. The expo was inaugurated by Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen and Minister for Innovation and Technology Dr. Engineer Getahun Mekuria with other dignitaries.

The Ministry of Innovation and Technology organized the five-day event with a focus on building network and partnerships with technology service vendors, private and public sector decision-makers, integrators, and users of ICT technology for the various sector. ATA took part in this unique expo and displayed some of its works that involve the application of ICT in agriculture on specifies ICT projects at the booth.

On the event, ATA showcased the use and employment of ICT and innovative technologies and ICT implementation of ICT in the Agriculture with projects such as EthioSIS, National Market Information Centers, Integrated Shallow Groundwater Mapping, Agricultural Investment Mapping, 8028 and successfully promoted the potentials in the role of ICT for the Agricultural sector. Visitors also had the opportunity to discuss with project lead and have a better understanding of ATA projects.

The Expo combined unrivaled conference content with a major exhibition and well-crafted networking opportunities and served as a catalyst for collaboration and cooperation between foreign and local technology companies and a multitude of partners in the ICT ecosystem.

The largest and extensive ICT exhibition, conference and summit, the expo encompassed Technology Week to host Star up Ethiopia, Innovation Africa Digital Summit (IAD) STEM Award and Paperless day initiative. Additionally, there were Business to Business meetings, Business to Customer meetings, Government to Government meetings, and Government to Business meetings.
The Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) officially handed over Soil Fertility Status and Fertilizer Recommendations Atlas to the Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz Regional Governments at their respective capitals Gambella and Assosa towns. The Atlases (maps) show the soil fertility status of the regions at kebele and woreda level with the corresponding fertilizer recommendations.

The Atlases were produced by the Ethiopian Soil Information Systems (EthioSIS) project, a joint effort of the ATA and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). This groundbreaking initiative was launched in 2012 to resolve the impediments to access updated information about soil fertility status and the fertilizer recommendations, hence increasing farmers’ use of appropriate and customized fertilizers in the right amounts.

To date, the project had handover Soil Fertility Status and Fertilizer Recommendations Atlases for Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, SNNP, Harari, regional governments, and Dire Dawa city administrations. In the next coming few months, Somali and Afar will be receiving the atlas maps. The national soil map which will indicate the soil fertility status of the country and fertilizer recommendation for each soil will be completed in October.

EthioSIS project prepared this atlas to lay the foundation and help understand the soil fertility and soil resources potential to increase the regional state productivity.

ATA Rolled Out a National Market Information System

The ATA, in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade & Industry, has rolled out a new National Market Information System (NMIS) that collects, processes and disseminates timely, accurate and relevant market information on agricultural commodities. The ATA designed and implemented the system in partnership with the Ministry of Trade & Industry, the Federal Cooperative Agency and Trade Bureaus of Oromia, Amhara, SNNP and Tigray Regions.

The system is intended to help primarily smallholder farmers and other market actors make informed market decisions related to where, when, and through which channels to sell and buy agricultural commodities. It will also inform the public about policies and guidelines. The NMIS disseminates market information via Interactive Voice Response (IVR) and Short Message Service (SMS) on 6077 hotlines system in the Amharic language, and it will shortly start in Afan Oromo and Tigrigna. The system will expand to increase geographical coverage and agricultural commodities.

Currently, the system is transmitting market data on five agricultural commodities - Wheat, Maize, Tef, Sesame and Haricot Beans from 31 selected pilot markets. The information is disseminated using the 6077 hotlines (IVR/SMS system) in the Amharic language, and it will shortly start in Afan Oromo and Tigrigna. The system will expand to increase geographical coverage and agricultural commodities.

In Ethiopia, a number of semi or fully automated agricultural Market Information Systems exist at federal and regional levels. The existing market information systems suffer from several challenges that include poor data quality, incompleteness, inaccuracy and lack of timeliness. In order to solve this problem, the ATA in collaboration with its partners conducted a diagnostic study and detail assessment on the existing and international MIS cases before the introduction of the new system. The NMIS project is supported by one of the Ministry of Agriculture flagship programs (i.e. Agricultural Growth Program) and financed by the World Bank and other Development Partners.
OCP Ethiopia Fertilizer Manufacturing PLC, the subsidiary of the Moroccan fertilizer manufacturer company, OCP S.A, inked an agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and Farmers’ Cooperative Unions (FCUs) to manufacture and market blended fertilizers in Ethiopia. The ATA, meanwhile will provide the required technical support, solve the current and long term storage issues, and identify possible solutions to the already stored fertilizers.

According to the agreement the fertilizer manufacturer shall have the right of first priority in supplying to MoA the Products manufactured in the Blending Facilities, up to one hundred percent (100%) of the production/capacity of the Blending Facilities. while the ministry will aggregate demands of fertilizers from regions and make a purchase order to OCP.

H.E Dr. Kaba Urgesa State Minister of Agriculture on the occasion stressed that the different components of this initiative were not and will not be smooth and easy. “We are building a new solution together as a family,” he said. “We will continue to support beyond the blending units such as in the fertilizer storage and distribution systems because the blending units will not be effective if these units are not functional,” he added.

The fertilizer giant has also made an agreement with five FCUs to lease the fertilizer blending facilities already built by the FCUs. The lease agreement stays for 15 years and the parties have also agreed that the OCP will take all the workforce of the FCUs at the blending facilities.

OCP would use the five fertilizer blending facilities for Blended Fertilizers’ Manufacturing in Ethiopia and produce blended fertilizers by importing its own inputs. It will produce the requested type and amount of fertilizers, support the storage and distribution infrastructures development and build the capacity of the FCUs. MOA has agreed to facilitate foreign currency and letter of credit access to the fertilizer manufacturer.

Chairperson of the Agriculture Standing Committee of the House of Peoples’ Representatives, W/ro Almaz Mesele, and three state ministers of MoA H.E Dr. Kaba Urgessa, H.E Ato Sani Redi and H.E W/ro Aynalem Nigussie, representatives from FCA, regional CAs and BoAs, FCU board members attended the signing ceremony.

Ethiopia imports fertilizers paying hundreds of millions of hard currencies every year. In the current year alone, Ethiopia has purchased over 1.2 million tons of fertilizer which is higher than the previous year by 100,000 tons. The country spends more than 500,000 million USD for the purchase of fertilizers.
The Ministry of Finance (MoF) has approved the imports of agricultural mechanization, irrigation and animal feed technologies, and equipment to be duty-free. The ATA in close collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) initiated the tax reform policy by conducting a cost-benefit analysis and identified and listed the equipment to be imported duty-free. Based on the study recommendation by ATA, the Agricultural Transformation Council provide direction to facilitate farmers’ access to agricultural technologies which will ensure food security at the household level and national nutrition development, the MoA formally submitted the tax waiving request in December 2018.

This tax reform is aimed at enhancing the agriculture sector by removing duty and taxes on imports of farming machinery, irrigation and drainage equipment as well as animal feed ingredients and technologies; providing incentives to invest in the importation and local production of these technologies.

The MoF wrote the letter of approval to the Customs Commission with a list of technologies and equipment to be imported tax-free.

The Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to partner with the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI) to support selected public and private enterprises to establish and upgrade Quality Testing Laboratories for honey. The CEO of ATA, Khalid Bomba and State Minister for MoTI Ato Eshete Asfaw signed the MoU. The agreement will provide a partnership framework for ATA and MoTI to provide financial and technical support to selected private and public enterprises to establish and upgrade internationally accredited quality testing laboratories for honey.

The CEO of ATA Khalid Bomba, after the signing of the MoU, said that the ATA and MoTI have been collaborating and working together on a number of projects. This particular partnership will help to establish internationally recognized honey quality testing labs in the country. This, in turn, will positively impact markets as well as the production and productivity of honey processors in the country through creating convenience to the export market. “The support for quality testing laboratories will also have a direct effect on smallholder farmers engaged in beekeeping, as an increase in the volume of export will, in turn, increase their income and overall livelihoods.” State Minister for MoTI H.E Ato Eshete Asfaw on his part said that capacitating the quality testing labs through helping them to acquire the right technology and getting their services accredited will play an important role in order to build a sustainable value chain in the export of honey from Ethiopia. “The labs will be capable of providing accredited and globally recognized tests in an accurate, timely and cost-competitive manner for national honey exporters.”

Previously honey exporters in Ethiopia have been sending samples of their processed honey to Germany and other countries for quality testing and assurance. During this process, they face challenges related to foreign currency and the inconvenience of sending samples overseas.

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The Ethiopian Agribusiness Acceleration Platform (EAAP), through its ecosystem track, has launched a program to capacitate quality testing labs based in Addis Ababa. The main objective of this program is to support internationally recognized labs in order to achieve international accreditation in honey quality testing by 2020.

Public and Private enterprises that have quality testing labs have been selected through a set of criteria to be provided with the necessary technical and financial support to upgrade their quality testing labs to international standards.
Ethiopian ATA supported Guna Union Seed Facility in Debre Tabor Town of the Amhara Regional State has been inaugurated. Delegates from the House of People’s Representatives Agriculture, Pastoralist and Environmental Protection Standing Committee, Head of Amhara regional State Agricultural Office H.E W/ro Bosena Tsegaye, the Zonal Deputy Administrator Aweke Zemene and other representatives from Zonal, federal and regional offices attended the inauguration ceremony. Delegates, as well as participants, attended a discussion forum where presentations on the performance of Guna Union and the challenges faced in the sector. The delegates from the standing committee also presented their opinions and questions afterward concluding the discussion forum.

Guna Union Seed Facility rests on a total area of 1.2 hectares and provides job opportunities for 7 permanent staff and 11 temporary employees. It has a fully equipped machinery and warehouse, laboratory, and other facilities to help the facility run effectively. Following the ribbon cutting ceremony, the delegates visited the facility.

“Agriculture is an ongoing process, and centers like the one we are inaugurating today will play a key role in helping transform the Ethiopian agriculture,” H.E Aweke Zemene, explained the importance seeds play in enhancing agriculture product and productivity. “in three years since its establishment Guna Union has proven to be one of the best in the area amassing more than 20-million-birr capital. This success is a perfect example that demonstrates unions can bring change in the Ethiopian agriculture Ethiopian ATA initiated cooperative based seed production (CBSP) project in a bid to address the weak institutional capacity of cooperatives, poor governance, and leadership, soft skills, physical facilities, access to early generation seed (EGS) and output financing. It currently operates in the four regions with 176 primary seed producer cooperatives in a move to establish 8 seed specific unions and to restructure 5 existing multipurpose unions.