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The Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) has signed a grant agreement amounting to more than 6.7 Million ETB between 8 modern beehive makers through its Ethiopian Agribusiness Acceleration Platform (EAAP) Project on 3 March 2021. The sub grant agreement aims to create the selected beehive makers from Oromia and SNNP region to purchase wood machines.

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On 15 January 2021, Prime Minister Dr. Abiy Ahmed appointed Dr. Mandefro Nigussie and Dr. Yifru Tafesse as Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA), respectively.

Prior to joining the ATA, Dr Mandefro served as a State Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture and led the Agriculture Development Sub-sector of the Ministry. The Sub-sector consisted of Crop Production, Agricultural TVET, Agricultural Extension, Mechanization, Regulatory and Mega Projects such as the Agricultural Growth Program. He has been leading the Agriculture Sector Policy Reform of Ethiopia. Before his appointment as the State Minister, Dr Mandefro served as the Director General of the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), Country Manager of AGRA, and Deputy Regional Director of Oxfam America.

Dr Mandefro has led the development of several agricultural policies, programs in the areas of advocacy, relief, development, climate change, and agricultural extension performance management systems. He also published various articles, journals, proceedings, and research reports in the areas of crop sciences, marketing and entrepreneurship, and biotechnology & biosafety.

He has taught and supervised postgraduate students in different universities, and he is also a fellow member of the Ethiopian Academy of Science and was a member of the Independent Science for Development Council (ISDC) of CGIAR. He has also served as Board chair, and board members of various institutions. He holds BSc, MSc and PhD in Plant Sciences, Agronomy and Genetics and Plant Breeding, respectively and he also had an MBA degree.
New CEO and Deputy CEO

Dr Yifru Tafesse, has joined the ATA as Director for Private Sector Development in Agriculture in April 2017. He led and coordinated studies on investment incentives, attracted and converted investment opportunities in agro-processing. Later on, he was promoted as Senior Director to the CEO Office vertical in September 2018 where he was providing oversight to the Agricultural Commercial Clusters (ACC) program, Partnership and Resource mobilization, Internal Audit, Planning and Reporting, and Communication teams.

Prior to joining the ATA, Dr Yifru had assumed many managerial positions in agro-processing companies, and served as academics, and consultant in a number of government and private organizations. Moreover, he has been serving as board member in financial institutions, and a Chairperson of the Program Advisory Committee (PAC), representing Ethiopia from 2017-2021 at BioInnovate Africa, International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe), which operates in six East African Countries i.e., Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Dr Yifru earned his doctoral degree from the Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL), the University of South Africa (UNISA) in 2018. He had a Postgraduate Diploma in Marketing and Physical Distribution at the Maastricht School of Management in the Netherlands, in 1994, a BA degree in Management in 1990 and an MBA in 2007 both from the Addis Ababa University.
ATA Supported Seed Facility Inaugurated in Jimma

Ethiopian ATA supported Jimma Union Seed Facility in Jimma Town of the Oromia Regional State was inaugurated on 18 February 2021. The inauguration ceremony was attended by H.E Dr Girma Amente, Rural Development Sector Coordinator with the title of Deputy President of the Oromia Region, Jimma Zone Administrator Ato Abdulhakim Mulu, Dr. Yifru Tafesse, Deputy CEO of the ATA, Dawit Phillipos, Acting Senior Director of Operations of the ATA, representatives of banks, government offices and other dignitaries.

Jimma Union Seed Facility has the capacity of processing 400 quintals of seed per day and took 3 years to complete. The facility can aggregate, process & stock 20,000 quintals of seed in a season. Moreover, the aggregation capacity of the Union has increased from 3,000 to 11,000 quintals. The Union is distributing seed across maize clusters of Oromia. The cost of the center amounts to 22 million birr out of which 14 million was covered by the ATA.

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.
ATA Conducted Awareness creation on financial inclusion Workshop

The ATA run AgriHub team conducted an awareness creation workshop focusing on financial inclusion of agricultural MSMEs on 25 February 2021. The workshop was attended by representatives of the ATA, ten commercial bank representatives, and other stakeholders. (PHD), Deputy Director General of Ethiopian ATA and 10 commercial banks representatives in Addis Ababa.

The workshop commenced with the opening remarks from Dr. Yifru Tafesse Deputy Director General of Ethiopian ATA. During his remarks Dr. Yifru emphasized the challenges faced by agribusinesses and AgriHub’s interventions and the need for financial inclusion of the Agricultural MSMEs’. He has also noted that, even though Agriculture has contributed 90% of export of the country and foreign currency generated, the sector is excluded from financial services.

AgriHub is currently working towards helping SMEs become bankable through training, accounting mentorship, provision of integrated accounting, inventory, and customer relationship management software, and business advisory service along with the access to finance service. Following the opening remarks, presentations on the background of ATA ACC, and AgriHub project along with its access to finance component were given to the participants. The presentation also covered briefings about the Euriz guarantee scheme, the financial solution AgriHub has in partnership with the French Development Agency (AFD) group and the technical assistance that is being provided.

Following the presentations, an interactive discussion was held to address the questions and concerns raised by the experts who attended the workshop on behalf of the financial institutions. AgriHub is a project that works on the development of the private sector in agriculture by focusing on scaling and improving operational capacity of ATA supported MSMEs. Access to finance is one of the three components of Agrihub in collaboration with the AFD group.
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The grant agreement was signed between representatives from the eight beehive makers and Ato Dawit Phillipos, A/ Senior Director, Operations at the ATA Head Office Dr. Yifru Tafese, ATA Deputy CEO who emphasized the importance of apiculture in Ethiopia and the untapped potential of the sector. “However due to the lack of access to modern beekeeping inputs the quality of honey among beekeepers is low. The ATA with its EAAP project is working on capacity building with companies that are linked with the incubation and acceleration track including providing technical support, facilitating linkages, and providing subgrant supports like today”. Dr. Yifru concluded his remarks by assuring the participants that the ATA will continue in providing the necessary support to the beehive makers to ensure the growth.

Commercial agricultural enterprises that are so essential to make value chains competitive are largely missing in Ethiopia, particularly across the downstream end of the value chain. Several challenges have contributed to the absence of sufficient number of agriculture enterprises in Ethiopia, chief among them an under-developed business ecosystem “building blocks” such as access to financial services, talent, reliable input supply, management, sector expertise, and markets. There is thus a need for targeted support to spur the growth of agribusinesses that can address this gap. In many other countries, well-designed and well-financed agribusiness incubators and accelerators have shown the ability to fill such gap through comprehensive business development services and funding for start-ups and growth agro-enterprises.

Based primarily on these learnings, the ATA has established the Ethiopian Agribusiness Accelerator Platform (EAAP) to test and validate the agribusiness incubator and accelerator concept for Ethiopia. The EAAP is a demand-driven, value chain focused business incubator and accelerator that helps high-potential agribusinesses to professionalize and scale. The platform works with both early stage and mature enterprises to engage players across the value chain. In doing so, it identifies and addresses company-specific and systemic challenges, and aims to build a high-quality, sustainable supply chain for partners across the value chain and create a market-driven, business-building model for participant entrepreneurs.
The ATA Agribusiness team joined the Ethiopian business delegation drawn from both the private sector and government offices at the 26th edition of Gulfood, a mega exhibition held in Dubai from 21-25 February 2021. This successful participation was a result of a meticulous preparation and collaboration the ATA and Ministry of Trade and Industry Ethiopia (MOTI). MOTI covered the floor space rent and took the lead in organizing sector associations, while ATA covered the booth construction, marketing and utilities costs of the Ethiopian Pavilion and the Consulate of Ethiopia in Dubai for its part gave facilitation service for the success of the event. The ATA participated for the fourth time in this exhibition, and it created a forum to discuss trade, investment, and market information, and to connect buyers, sellers, investors, and countries.

Albeit the COVID-19 situation and accompanied strict medical protocols, the event managed to attract more than 5,000 exhibitors and 98,000 professional visitors. Ethiopia was represented through a national pavilion show casing exporters from Oilseed, Pulses, Coffee, Meat, Live Animals, Honey, Tahini and Teff Flex products. The Ethiopian Pavilion was officially opened by H.E Ambassador Misganu Arga, State Minister of Ministry of Trade and Industry and H.E Ambassador Eyerusalem Amdemariam, Consul General in Dubai.

At the five-day event, the Ethiopia pavilion served as a platform for Ethiopian participants to successfully promote the country’s potential in agro-processing, manufacturing, agriculture, and export of commodities. Private exporters seized the opportunity and had business-to-business (B2B) meetings with various buyers at the Ethiopian pavilion to promote their products and sign contractual agreements for export of sesame, pulses, spices, coffee, meat, and live animals.