

AgroBIG Newsletter

Programme for Agri-Business
Induced Economic Growth in
Amhara Region

Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

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Finnish MPs familiarizing with AgroBIG

On the 7th of April, a delegation of Finnish Members of the Parliament accompanied by high level officials from the MFA Finland and the Finnish Embassy in Addis Abeba, visited Bahir Dar to familiarize with Finnish support in the Amhara Region. In addition to **AgroBIG**, the Gov. of Finland is funding CoWASH and REILA programmes in the land and natural resources sector, as well as GEQUIP in the education sector.

After brief introductions to the four projects in the morning, the group departed to a field trip towards Mecha woreda. As a first

stop we saw how access to water and sanitation can improve family's living conditions with Community Managed Project (CMP) approach of CoWASH.

On the **AgroBIG** site we witnessed how grants have supported youth groups to make business in maize threshing and feed chopping and how this simultaneously saves farmers manual workload.

During the stop at the Ambo Mesk elementary school, warmly welcomed by cheering children, the group had the chance to visit pre-school and laboratory facilities and participate in an on-going Amharic lesson.

After lunch at the Bikolo Abbay Horticulture Center, spiced with some traditional music and dancing, it was REILA project's



Member of the Parliament, Mr Pauli Kiuru, learning to dance like an Ethiopian.

LATEST NEWS

Update on the grant applications

Altogether 103 grant applications were received for the 3rd **AgroBIG** call for proposals for Value Chain, IDRf and Matching Grant Funds. Grant proposal evaluation is on-going and expected to be completed by the end of June.

AgroBIG II planning on-going

From the 27th June onwards, a multinational team is meeting stakeholders and planning the second phase of **AgroBIG** in Bahir Dar and surroundings. Programme Document is expected by the end of August.

turn to present the achievements within land administration. When farmers have jointly agreed on the borders of their

parcels and finally got a certification, *the green card*, disputes over land decrease remarkably.

The visit was successful and reinforced the strong relations between Ethiopia and Finland.

Potato crisps from Bahir Dar – also available in the supermarket

Potato chips and crisps are an emerging business in Bahir Dar. You may spot the little frying machines by the streets all around the town.

Twenty six potato chips processors, 24 females, have lately been supported by **AgroBIG** with advisory services on marketing, accounting and saving as well as creating crucial linkages with input suppliers and markets. Nineteen of the processors who are organized in two cooperatives, have also received a pushcart earlier the year. Meanwhile 7 women still work independently, but a third cooperative is in the process of being legalized. Facilitator **Ms Meron Worku** explains that cooperative membership eases the access to inputs and raw materials such as potatoes and government subsidized cooking oil when oil price can be 15 birr lower per liter. Potatoes are so far bought from the market, but negotiations with ETFRUIT are on-going to weekly provide coops with potatoes.

Processors have received training

on various issues but packaging would still need attention. Candle light sealing of the small plastic bags is a common practice, and there is resistance among processors towards mechanizing this practice. It could, however, bring some advantages, as the story of Sintayehu, owner of *Sente Chips*, proves.



Ms Sintayehu, a mother of 3 children, is frying samubusas (local fried lentil or vege pastry) and potato crisps in Hospital Road in kebele 13. She has been involved in the business already for 4 years, but is not part of any cooperative yet. Before she had a hair salon, but due to land access issues she gave up on that,

bought a frying machine and decided to try it out with potatoes instead.

Recently Sintayehu received support and advice from **AgroBIG** in accounting and in creating linkage with a supermarket in Bahir Dar. She convinced the *Tigist supermarket* to take her crisps for sale and is now providing the supermarket with packaged crisps on a regular basis.

Ms Tigist, owner of the *Tigist supermarket*, explains having tried other suppliers but they have not been reliable with offering a constant supply. Also Sintayehu's quality is supreme. Crisps are not oily, not too salty and what is the best: they taste good. Packaging is firm and does not unintentionally open as the candle sealed bags often do. Every 3 days Tigist receives crisps to sell averagely 150 bags per week. *"Everybody is buying, even the foreigners"* is the reply when asked about the customer base.

Sintayehu recognizes that good quality and proper packaging

with contact details was crucial for this advancement. After buying a packaging machine 3 months ago, she can now reach additional markets. Another super market has already shown interest to take her crisps for sale as well.

This linkage has increased Sintayehu's monthly revenue for

about 1000 birr. She explains that the packaged crisps are more profitable than the freshly sold paper wrapped chips, which are time consuming to prepare and sell as they are not storable. She has a savings account where she deposits frequently.

In the future Sintayehu wishes to buy more machinery, adding two

frying machines to the already existing two, and buy a bajaj (a 3-wheel vehicle) for distributing the products around town. Very soon a signpost will lead customers to her small shop. Meanwhile she would welcome any further support from **AgroBIG** in the form of training or materials, such as pushcarts.

Water drilling activities leading to realize the dreams of the youth

Terakegn, 25 and **Moges** 23, are both married young men from Shina and Kuhar Abo villages from Fogera. They belong to a cluster organized by WoTVED, to provide manual well drilling services and water pump maintenance, which they have been serving for about 2 years and are making a good living now.

During dry season access to water in rural Ethiopia is challenging. With a simple technique it is possible to drill up to 33 meters deep. Wells serve both for irrigation and household consumption needs and understandably the demand for manual well drilling is increasing.

Drilling season starts after December when the environment gets dry. So far the group has altogether drilled 14 wells. It takes 8 - 10 people and eight days

to drill one. Normally they are 3 people from the group, and for the rest they hire additional labourers. They charge 9000 birr for one well, and after costs the remaining is shared among the involved group members. Additional income the group generates from maintenance of



motor pumps used for irrigation.

AgroBIG has supported the group with training, tools, office construction and office materials.

The group has also got a **Value Chain grant** for motor pump spare parts for which that they saved 1000 birr each. Otherwise they save individually. Terakegn has already bought an oxen, a cow and a heifer and has rented land from which reaped an onion seed yield of 60 kg. He has also saved some 6000 birr. Moges has saved 8000 birr of which with half he rented land for rice cultivation. He has also started animal fattening business with a cow of 8000 birr expecting to sell it later on for a higher price.

In the future they both want to invest in income generating activities. Terakegn wishes to buy a bajaj and serve his kebele. Moges plans to buy land and sell it again with an appreciated price.

Certification training

Establishing a formal certified seed system for onion is one of the big achievements that **AgroBIG** has been strongly contributing to. Number of onion seed farmers has increased year by year, and now in Mecha, there are 42 certified seed producers.



Trainings and agronomic manuals on good agricultural practices have already been produced and provided, but in order to address remaining knowledge and skill gaps among farmers, a refresher training on standard certified seed production and quality control was organized on the **27 April**. Fifty farmers, extension agronomists and focal persons attended the practical training in the Kudmi seed cooperative premises and surrounding field.

In the classroom, expert form the Bahir Dar Quarantine Authority branch office clarified the rules, regulations and procedures regarding seed certification, including requirements for production sites, pest and disease control and sample collection.

At the field level it was practically demonstrated when and how to harvest as well as how to properly dry, thresh and clean the onion heads and seeds.

Training was very much

appreciated by the trainees. Still a lot is expected form the farmers as regards to quality. Form the administration side, creation of stronger market linkages is expected to combat illegal brokers.

Illegal production is another issue to be tackled. Seed production should be only be accepted by licensed producers.

Potato Field Day

Fertilizer application is not as simple as it may sound. Different crops have differing requirements under varying conditions. At the same time one should take care of the organic matter content of the soil.

In 2015, Bahir Dar University (BDU) was granted for an **AgroBIG IDRF grant** of 212 600 birr, with own contribution of 110 020 birr, for conducting a research to draw recommendations on the right amount and combination of inorganic fertilizers and manure on potato. On two sites in Mecha, adjacent plots were exposed on different combinations of DAP, urea and composted manure to find the combination resulting in best potato performance.



To demonstrate the results, a farmer field day was organized for model farmers in Kudmi on the **22 April**. The differences were visible with bare eyes. Some plots were

very green and rich with vegetative growth, whereas others were lighter in colour and with less vegetative matter, an issue that also indicates poor tuber growth.

Now it is the task of the BDU to propose and produce locally suitable recommendations for appropriate fertilizer and compost use for wider dissemination.

Monastery Maize Store

Nada Monastery is about to finalize a maize store of 200 m², constructed with the support of **AgroBIG VC grant** of 141 360 birr, with 29 840 birr own contribution. Monastery located in the beautiful Dil Betgil kebele, having 100 ha of own land, will be soon generating income in maize trading: buying from the surrounding farmers and markets and selling again when the price is higher.



Contact us

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