

Onion Value Chain Study/Executive summary

The Amhara region is regarded as one of the major onion producing areas in Ethiopia and has seen an up-going trend in average agricultural productivity. Although there are indications that there is a good potential for the onion VC, in practice this is not yet realized. The fact that there is still a huge disparity between the different producers illustrates the potential for improvement. This is one of the reasons of the selection of this particular Value Chain (VC) by the AgroBIG programme.

Farmers mention the difficulty of getting quality seed as one of the main bottlenecks. Although seed may be available, it is not always affordable and the quality often does not meet the minimum requirements. A new seed proclamation has just been adopted and the impact (positive and/or negative) will become clear in the future.

Another issue for the farmers are the labour constraints in peak periods, e.g. when weeding has to be done. This may result in production losses as onion is a crop that does not compete well with weeds.

Furthermore, there are reports on substantial post-harvest losses. Although these could not yet be quantified in detail, mere observations and conversations with key people in the sector confirm this finding. This also because of the fact that there are, amongst others, limited storage facilities, no proper packaging for the onions during transport and no processing facilities.

In any case, and this at all levels involved, from the farmer up to the bureaus at regional level, the marketing aspects are still receiving little attention. Many of the actors in the VC have heard about VC but are not yet fully familiarized with the concept. This is quite logic but needs (and will get) due attention of the AgroBIG programme.

Most of the farmers have been and / or still are subsistence farmers and are not geared towards commercial production. For the supporting services the same applies, they have been working mainly with subsistence farmers and are not yet familiar with all the requirements for commercial farming.