

QUARTERLY REPORT JANUARY-MARCH 2015

SUMMARY

The Agro-business-Induced Economic Growth (Agro-BIG) Programme is an Agricultural Development programme using the Value Chain Development Approach as a strategy to strengthen selected agricultural value chains in Amhara National Regional State (ANRS), more specifically in Mecha and Fogera *Woredas*.

This report covers the period from January to March 2015 (the first quarter of year three). Unlike the previous quarters there were no so much planned activities accomplished in the reporting quarter. This is mainly due to the late submission and release of the third year program budget. There are, however, carryover activities and preparation works which does not incur cost that have been carried by implementing partners and the Program Support Unit (PSU) in the quarter.

Excluding the executive summary, the report is organized into five sections. Following this summary and introduction section, programme accomplishments have been discussed by component in the first section. The second section focuses on programme management and outlines financial accomplishments of the programme. This section also describes the major M&E activities performed at all levels. Updates on the constraints and opportunities are bullet pointed in the third section while fourth section draws conclusions and recommendations. The budget follow-up and report from the technical advisers' services are annexed in the last section.

Linking farmers with big buyers: After lengthy discussions and preparations, Agro-BIG has now piloted a contract farming scheme between onion producers and Efruit. Agreement was also signed between Ras Dashen Consumer Cooperative in Gondar and cluster of farmers producing onion in Fogera and Mecha *Woredas*.

Annual report: In this quarter, a lot of time was consumed for preparing the annual report. A report tracker which shows the schedule, flow of sub-part of reports and responsible persons for compiling each section of the reports were prepared well in advance by M&E team and shared with the concerned staff. To make the process participatory, a daylong (half day in some cases) meetings were organized among the technical committees and component advisors. Presentations were made and the report was indorsed by the Supervisory Board (SBV).

Third year plan: During the reporting period the annual plan for 2015 was prepared in a participatory way. The implementing partners with support from the Agro-BIG technical advisors drafted their individual office plan; the Technical Committees presented the draft to the Steering Committees and obtained approval; the plan was compiled by PSU M&E team

and further analysis was done on the distribution of funds, feasibility of implementing the activities; and the contribution of the activities in achieving program objectives. The plan was approved by the Supervisory Board on a meeting held on February 25, 2015.

Besides the old value chains (onion and potato) this year plan includes strategically selected activities to address some of the constraints identified during the two new value chains (maize and rice) initial assessments.

Field day: A field day with the topics of onion seed and bulb production, including post-harvest handling and marketing for a total of 200 participants has been organized.

Studies of new value chain commodities completed: As Agro-BIG is beginning activities with new value chains maize and rice in 2015,

Access to Finance and Financial Services: Two awareness campaigns were organized at *Woreda* and regional levels to publicize the second call for proposal. A total of 140 participants (128 male and 12 female) attended the fund promotion workshops. Publicity posters, flyers were developed and printed in English and Amharic languages and newspaper advertisements made for the awareness campaign to inform the potential applicants of the funding opportunities. The status of the first and second round grants is discussed by type in the relevant section of this report.

Mid-Term Review: During this quarter, the mid-term evaluation for Agro-BIG was undertaken and completed. For this purpose, a team of three evaluators spent just over 2 weeks in Bahir Dar and in the field. As a preparation for the mid-term review, Agro-BIG completed a self-evaluation in the form of a staff survey some weeks before the review team arrived, although this information was not used by the reviewers.

Visits of Finnish delegations: Agro-BIG received many guests from Finland. In early January, a high-level delegation, including the Finnish Minister for International Development Mrs. Sirpa Paatero, visited the Amhara National Regional State and familiarized themselves with Finnish funded development projects in the region. In March, a large delegation of nearly 20 journalists visited the region as well. The delegation has spent 2.5 days in Bahir Dar and Finnish government assisted programs sites in Amhara Region. Agro-BIG coordinated both of the VIP visits.

