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## RAISE-FS: supporting food system transformation endeavours in Ethiopia

### About this newsletter

The purpose of the RAISE-FS newsletter is to provide relevant information on the latest developments and current issues in the Ethiopian food system and the project support activities.

In this issue we highlight the major activities that have been taken place between January and July 2022.

Resilient Agriculture for Inclusive and Sustainable Ethiopian Food Systems (RAISE-FS) is a four-year project (2021-2025) funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Addis Ababa and hosted by Stichting Wageningen Research Ethiopia, which is an international NGO based in Addis Ababa. With the vision of having a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems, the project strives to support efforts being undertaken to transform the Ethiopian food system.

### Theory of Change

RAISE-FS adopts the food system approach as a Theory of Change, which helps in analysing the drivers and food system

activities that contribute to the transformation of the food system by addressing leverage points, resulting in increased productivity, enhanced value chain performance, and improved human nutrition for food security while minimizing environmental impact and ensuring social inclusion.

The project aims to leverage transformation in Ethiopian food systems, covering the spectrum from food-insecure households and regions, to better-off households that are food-secure and can realize production surpluses, towards commodity commercialization efforts that contribute to rural and urban consumption demands and export.

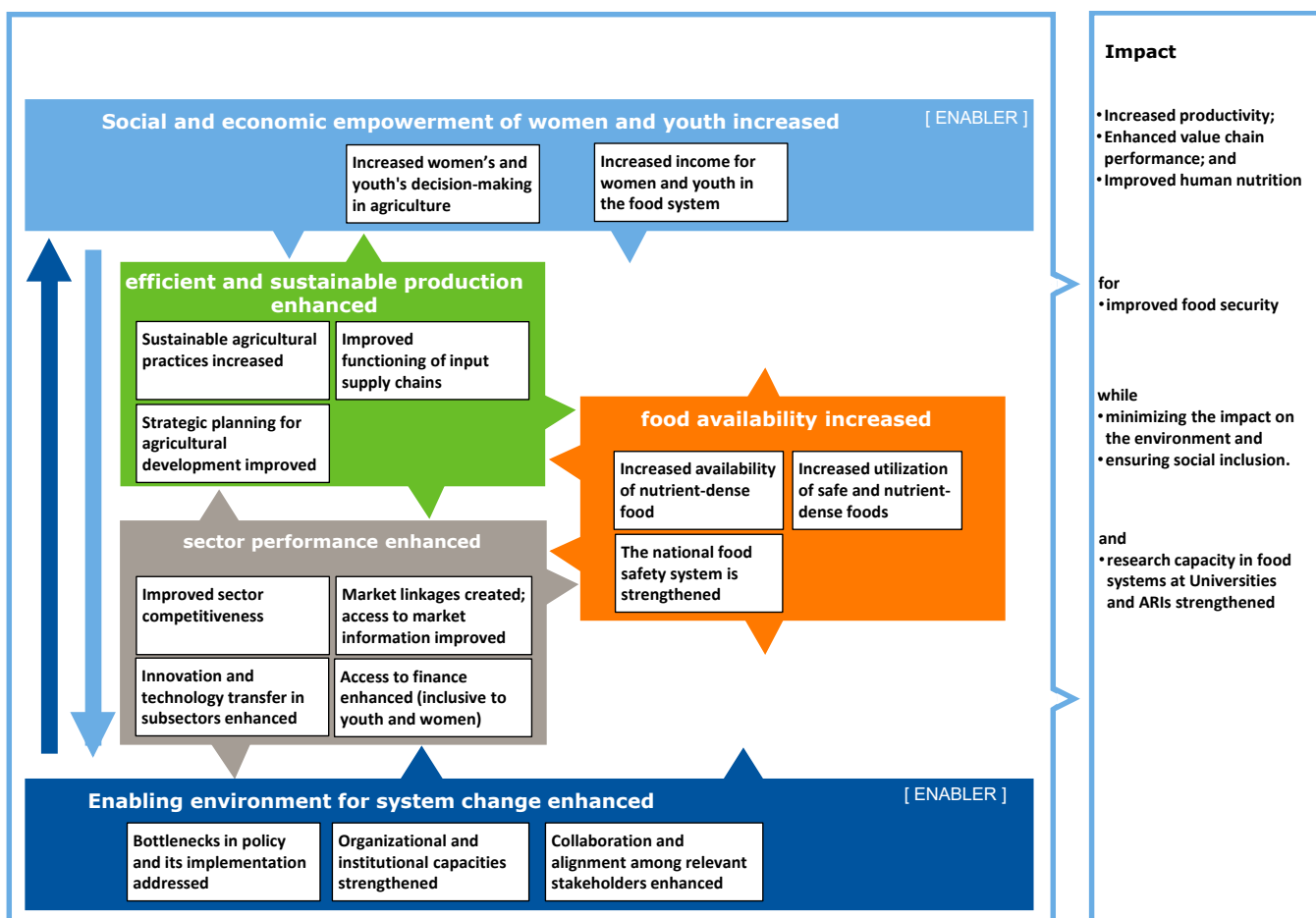
### Inside this issue

RAISE-FS: supporting food system transformation.....	01
Mapping gender and youth focused initiatives .....	03
Soaring fertilizer costs threatening food and nutrition security.....	04
Spices private sector validation workshops.....	05
SWR Ethiopia signs collaboration partners.....	05
Highlights from a nutrition scoping study.....	06
RAISE-FS facilitated 2022 planning and validation workshops.....	07



*"Agriculture is high-tech, innovative spirit is important to move forward" HE EKN in Addis Ambassador Henk Jan Bakker*

At present, the project is up and running by focusing on three food systems in Ethiopia: low potential or food-insecure (non-commercial), high potential or moderately food-secure (semi-commercial), and commercial orientation. The areas chosen are representative of different environments, ranging from very low land areas below 600 meters to that of very highland elevations that reach over 3,500 meters above sea level.



Primary and intermediary outcome of RAISE-FS project

### Outcome areas

The project specifically works to achieve five specific interrelated outcomes. The outcomes are:

- i) Social and economic empowerment of women and youth in food systems
- ii) Efficient and environmentally sustainable production increased
- iii) Sector performance and value chains enhanced
- iv) Availability of safe and nutritious foods increased
- v) Enabling environment for system change enhanced

The project is in alignment with the Ethiopian government food system roadmap and the Dutch government's development assistance strat-

egy - aid and trade policy. The pathways of influence of RAISE-FS are linked to the role of Wageningen University Research (WUR) and its implementing partners as knowledge institutes that foster social and institutional innovations and contribute to the knowledge agenda, targeting Research for Food System Transformation (R4FST), which is oriented to:

- i) identifying testable innovations in policy, practices, and institutions
- ii) testing and validation of relevant innovations together with local implementing partners
- iii) demonstration of evidence of innovation,

- iv) engage with collaborating and scaling partners for institutionalization and mainstreaming, and
- v) documenting lessons to contribute to science.

Building on the success of BENEFIT, RAISE-FS will also follow a commodity approach. Accordingly, spices and herbs, oilseeds, potato, pulses, poultry and food security crops have all been identified through a robust process and with the inclusion of a variety of stakeholders.

### Partnership in RAISE-FS

RAISE-FS is currently working with Bahir Dar, Haramaya and Hawassa universities, and four research institutes. Also,

(continue on page 06)

## Mapping gender and youth focused initiatives in the agriculture sector: a scoping study

Several governmental and non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, international organizations, civil society and research organizations are currently engaged in addressing gender and social inclusion issues in Ethiopia's agriculture sector. However, there is still limited coordination and collaboration between these stakeholders, which results in duplication of effort, fragmentation of resources, and the use of various approaches and methodologies. In the light of this, RAISE-FS conducted a scoping study to map good practices, platforms and approaches that can be applied to the agricultural sector.

### Gender

The study found a number of innovative practices, approaches, tools and platforms that the different organizations have put in place to ensure gender-responsive interventions in the agriculture sector. Some of the gender and social inclusion mainstreaming tools include gender and social inclusion policy, gender mainstreaming strategy, gender equality framework and gender analysis. These gender and social inclusion (GESI) tools provide guidance on how to adequately mainstream gender and social inclusion at the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of programming. On the other hand, several organizations make use of different participatory household methodologies that focus on transforming gender relations. Some of these methodologies include the rapid care analysis, social analysis and action tool, asset-based community development tool and transformative household methodology. The organizations reiterated that the approaches

have brought inspiring changes in gender mainstreaming as well as transforming gender relations. However, there is inadequate evidence base that demonstrates the effectiveness, scalability and impact of these tools.

### Youth

The Ethiopian government is encouraging youth-focused programming in order to reduce the youth unemployment. Due to this, the issues of youth empowerment have gained increasing attention. The study identified a range of initiatives focusing on the social and economic empowerment of youth. Some of these include, enterprise development and credit provision, skill building, ensuring youth participation and representation. The study also found that most of the youth focused interventions failed to be context-fit and demand driven, and did not address the root causes for the problem of youth unemployment.

In summary, the lessons that were distilled from the past activities of other stakeholders to inform future actions and interventions include:

- Addressing the issues of women and youth requires

coherence of interventions at many levels and across many sectors.

- Sociocultural constraints on women and youth are strong and thus it is necessary to work on shifting gender-based power relations to meet required goals.
- A demand-led approach is essential to enhance ownership by responding to the real needs of women and youth.
- Institutionalization of gender and social inclusion is a mainstay for organizational transformation towards gender equality.

Lessons drawn from this study provide insights in identifying potential entry points further highlighting RAISE-FS commitment to ensuring the inclusion of women, youth and other marginalized social groups in working across sectors to enhance all outcomes of food systems.

Going forward, lessons drawn from this study provide insights in identifying potential entry points further highlighting SWR-Ethiopia's commitment to ensure the inclusion of women, youth and other marginalized social groups in working across sectors to enhance all outcomes of food systems.



Community mapping exercise Dabal Kebele, Amhara region

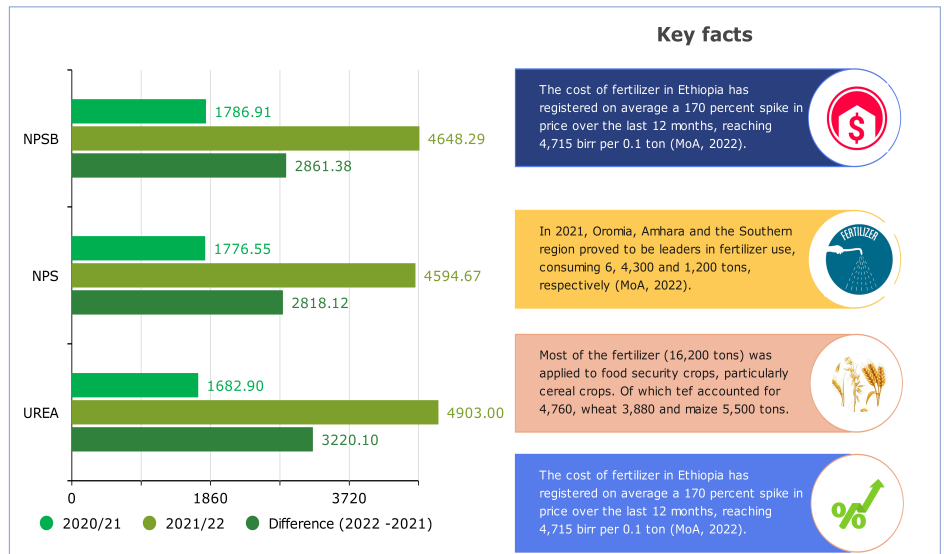
# Soaring fertilizer costs threatening food and nutrition security in Ethiopia

Shortage and untimely distribution of fertilizer in high potential food system may affect farmers and lead to a significant fall in crop production.

Global developments are causing a chain of spin-off effects that influence the food chain at an international and local scale. The ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia has resulted in price increases for natural gas which is needed to produce ammonia and then nitrogen, key elements of fertilizers, as well as increased fertilizer transportation costs. The ongoing conflict has also exacerbated the fertilizer market disruption by forcing certain countries to prohibit fertilizer exports. These have aggravated the fertilizer crisis, resulting in a 20% decrease in global trade of key ingredients for fertilizer manufacturing. Furthermore, COVID-19 related supply chain disruptions and fertilizer export restrictions enforced by producing countries are adding to exponentially rising agricultural input costs.

In Ethiopia's food system, inorganic fertilizer is a critical input for enhancing agricultural productivity. However, it is not produced locally hence there is a heavy reliance on imported fertilizers, making the country extremely vulnerable to global price shocks. These global drivers may have a negative impact on Ethiopia's food security if they are not addressed adequately. The negative impact on grain production, such as maize, teff and wheat, is likely to raise the prices of these staple foods, making them less accessible and affordable for vulnerable households.

The soaring fertilizer cost may constrain farmers from using fertilizer, with negative repercussions on production and food prices. Studies have shown that in the absence

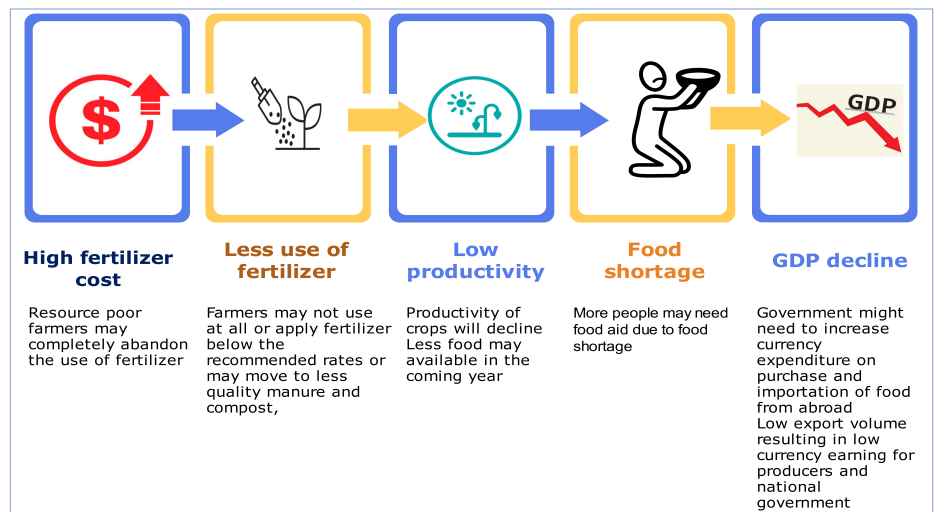


Fertilizer prices (in birr) of 2020/21 and 2021/22 production season (Source: MoA, 2022)

of fertilizer application, the productivity of maize, wheat and teff would decrease by 73, 59 and 56%, respectively. In line with high demand and use of fertilizers, the highest cereal production decrease in 2022 is expected in Ethiopia (21.1%) (WFP, 2022). Cereal prices have already witnessed sharp increases throughout 2021 and 2022, which will only continue rising if adequate measures are not undertaken.

Farmers in high potential food

systems, who use the major share of fertilizer to produce cereal and staple crops, will be affected by the increased cost. In addition, households in low potential and commercial food systems as well as urban community will also be affected, either directly or indirectly as food prices could increase in the wake of lower availability of staple foods. This is because the high potential food system is the major supplier of agricultural outputs to other food system typologies.



The likely effect of soaring fertilizer cost on food systems (Source: own)

## Spices private sector validation workshop

The Ethiopian Spices Aromatic and Herbs Growers and Processors Association (ESAHG-PA) and RAISE FS agreed to collaborate in future platform meetings which would also help the association identify potential new members as well as enhance the engagement of existing members aside from discussing major sector challenges with other stakeholders.

ESAHGPA held its general assembly on July 11, 2022 at Azzeman Hotel in collaboration with RAISE-FS. One of the objectives of the meeting was to report on the association's performed activities, elect its new Board and plan for the coming year. The association has been serving over 60 of its members in providing information on market, policy and other opportunities. However, due to COVID-19 and capacity challenges, the association was

not able to have its general assembly for the last three years. The members present during the event discussed on the need to revamp the association and its engagement with other stakeholders.

The second objective of the meeting was to introduce RAISE-FS and its intervention agendas as a whole as well as on spices in specific. Therefore, RAISE-FS was introduced to the association members as a new project working on food system transformation. The leverage points identified by the project for spices were validated by participants include:

- 1) production level: low and traditional production and post-harvest handling system, underdeveloped input supply system, low extension coverage and lack of access to finance and technologies
- 2) processing level: limited

value addition/product development, under capacity Performance, lack of availability, affordability and quality of some spices/herbs/aromatics and lack of affordable technologies for processing and packaging

3) marketing level: lack of structure (pricing, bulking, contract system...), lack of quality standards, lack of marketing information system and linkage with value chain actors.

The spices, aromatic and herbs sub-sector is an emerging sector within agriculture. ESAHG-PA established in 2021 has been lobbying for changes in the spices sub-sector with the help of various development partners. However, this progress in the sub-sector has slowed down in the past couple of years due to various internal and external factors.

## SWR Ethiopia signs collaboration agreement with implementing partners

Stichting Wageningen Research (SWR) Ethiopia signed collaboration agreements with regional implementing partners for its project Resilient Agriculture for Inclusive and Sustainable Ethiopian Food System (RAISE-FS) on the 29th of April 2022 at Bellevue Hotel in Addis Ababa. The signing ceremony took place between RAISE-FS and three regional universities- Bahir Dar, Hawassa, and Haramaya, and two Agricultural Research Institutions (ARI)- Amhara ARI, and Southern ARI.

At the event, Dr. Dawit Alemu, country representative of SWR Ethiopia and manager of RAISE-FS gave a brief overview of SWR Ethiopia and the RAISE-FS project, its implementation modalities, and next steps. In his presentation Dr. Dawit



*Dr. Friew, Dr. Dawit and Dr. Tilaye (left to right) while signing collaboration agreements*

emphasised the importance of regional-level joint planning and aligned engagement of ARIs and universities in ensuring the attainment of expected outcomes. Following the presentation, a brief discussion was held focusing on the practicalities of project

*(continue on page 08)*

# Highlights from a nutrition scoping study

*Despite many nutrition sensitive and specific interventions, Ethiopia still faces challenges in production, post harvest management and limited collaboration and coordination between actors working on nutrition*

Malnutrition is a serious problem among the poor population of developing countries including Ethiopia. Meeting dietary standards remains the challenge to Ethiopia. Scanning the food systems to analyse the various actors engaged in nutrition and food safety is critical for identifying viable intervention strategies and adhering to the concepts of sequencing, layering, and integration during nutrition interventions. To that end, RAISE-FS conducted a nutrition scoping study. The purpose of this scoping study was to assess and document the nutrition interventions of various stakeholders, as well as to identify major gaps, in order to guide the RAISE-FS project's nutrition strategy.

A survey using semi-structured key informant interviews was used for the scoping study in which 14 key stakeholders were interviewed. The interviews included governmental, non-governmental organizations, and knowledge institutes including -research centres and universities. Data gathered through interviews was complemented by academic and grey literature, including published papers, strategies, policies, performance reports, and research reports from various institutions who are engaged in nutrition intervention.

According to the findings of the scoping study, many nutrition sensitive and specific interventions are undertaken throughout the country by various governmental and non-governmental organisations. Various actors are working to enhance the availability and accessibility of diverse and nutrient-dense foods through fruit and vegetable gardening, as well as to promoting different nutrient-dense commodities such as

Quality Protein Maize (QPM), orange fleshed sweet potato, iron and zinc rich beans, pumpkin, amaranths, pigeon pea, and so on. Furthermore, various activities are being implemented to encourage the consumption of nutritious foods through social behavioural change communication, including interpersonal communication, community awareness creation (cooking demonstrations), and the use of mainstream mass media and social media. The messages for these activities emphasize the importance of increasing the production and consumption of nutrient-dense foods. A number of training manuals, guidelines, job aids, pocket guide and recipes have been developed to support these activities. There are also different research projects on various nutrition issues.

The study also highlighted major challenges to the production and consumption of a nutritious diet across the food system. At the production side, challenges included limited access to agricultural inputs. Farmers have limited knowledge about nutritious

indigenous foods and bio fortified crops and limited uptake of new technologies. After harvest, farmers have limited access to post-harvest technologies, which, combined with challenges in accessing markets, may limit the ability of farmers to produce large quantities of nutritious, but highly perishable, crops including fruits and vegetables.

Limited collaboration and coordination among the various actors working on nutrition, a high rate of leadership turnover, and a lack of vertical and horizontal integration were among the governance challenges that have been identified. Critical issues were also raised around scale-up and sustainability of various projects and interventions after external support ended.

Based on the finding of this study as well as a review of key policy documents, different entry points and further studies have been suggested for best effectively supporting the nutrition interventions in the RAISE-FS project.

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## **RAISE-FS: supporting food system transformation...**

*(continued from page 2)*

the project collaborates with potential scaling partners. These are,

- i) The flagship projects of the Ministry of Agriculture: Productive Safety Net Programme, Agricultural Growth Program and Agricultural Transformation Institute;
- ii) Development partners such as The Rural Economic Development and Food Security and the World Bank;
- iii) For the commercial food system with both the public sector and the private sector, specifically with the private associations and the commodity platforms; and
- iv) NGOs such as SNV, SHA, GIZ, IFDS.

## RAISE-FS facilitates 2022 planning and validation workshops

### Planning workshop

In order to improve collaboration and partnerships, RAISE-FS recognises stakeholder engagement as an important first step in project implementation. As a result, a collaborative planning session was held in each of the regions following the signing of the collaboration agreement between RAISE-FS and the implementing partners. The planning workshops were conducted for two days in each region, and the RAISE-FS regional planning team comprising professionals from research institutes and universities prepared regional plans. To assist and guide the planning, advisors and component leaders of the project presented draft generic activities. The planning which focuses primarily on innovation testing and validation in order to generate evidence.

### Validation of the work plan by stakeholders

Consecutive to the planning session, RAISE-FS organized validation workshops at SNNPR and Sidama, Amhara, and Oromia regional states, respectively. The purpose of the workshops was to review and validate the 2022 work plans to be implemented in the regions and to launch the RAISE-FS project in the presence of

various food system actors. It was noted that RAISE-FS employs a Research for Food System Transformation (R4FST) approach. Then presentations on key elements, drivers, and major outcome areas were given to provide context and insight into the food system transformation approach. The work plans were presented by members of teams of experts drawn from the implementing partner institutions and thoroughly discussed by participants. The workshops were held from 13 May 2022 to 02 July 2022 in Hawassa, Bahir Dar, Harar and Addis Ababa.

### Focus areas of interventions for 2022

The focus areas for 2022 at regional levels were validation of sustainable agricultural practices (integrated soil fertility management, integrated pest management), sustainable seed system establishment/ strengthening, piloting semi-commercial agricultural enterprises for increased diversity of foods and off-farm income generation for women and youth. The focus commodities are oil crops (sesame, sunflower and soybean), poultry, potato, pulses, vegetables in home gardening, and food security crops such as sorghum and root crops.

Activities related to food safety and enabling environment for food system transformation are planned at national level.

### Target woredas for 2022

In total RAISE-FS project plans to reach 27 woredas in the three regions in the project period. Woredas will be added from Tigray in the coming years when situations permit. In 2022, the project and implementing partners targeted 13 woredas of which three represent the commercial, four high potential and six food insecure food system typologies. From SNNP and Sidama regions Hawassa Zuria, Gumer and Boloso Bombe woredas; from Amhara region Mirab Armachiho, Yilmana Densa and Angot woredas; from Oromia seven woredas Eastern Oromia Kersa, Haramaya and Babile and from central Oromia Ada'a, Wolmera, Dodota and Sire are target woredas.

### Composition of participants

Experts from implementing partners: regional bureaus of agriculture, Ethiopian Agricultural Research Institute, regional agricultural research institutes, universities; Women and Children affairs office; Youth and Sports affairs office; and Cooperative Promotion Office.



activities including the new modalities of operation. Implementing partners expressed their concern about how soon the activities will start this year as the cropping season is approaching. It was reflected that activities for the 2022 production season have been planned with time constraints in mind and further concerted discussions will be held with partners and concerned stakeholders in identification of specific implementable activities through region level planning process.

Dr. Irene Koomen, RAISE-FS coordinator from Wageningen University & Research (WUR), who

joined the discussion via Zoom, highlighted that WUR has a long-standing and strong relationship with Ethiopian Universities and Agricultural Research Institutes. She noted that the exciting thing about RAISE-FS is that it is about systems thinking, which can support the transformation of the food system. Dr. Irene was pleased with the event and appreciated participants for their collaboration work and looks forward to the implementation.

The meeting was held in a very congenial atmosphere. Participants from implementing partners reflected positively and they look forward to implementing the activities.

"I would like to congratulate you; you have come a long way to realize this project. We are happy to be in this consortium. We are very much committed to the implementation."

Dr. Tilaye Teklewold, Director-General of Amhara ARI

"I am happy that Bahir Dar University is part of this team. We have had a lot of success with previous projects. We are like a family and we are happy to work with you. We will be very much committed and we will do our very best to carry out the activities."

Dr. Firew Tegegne, president of Bahir Dar University

"As Sothern ARI we are very much committed to working together and for the implementation of the activities."

Mr. Lacha Garuma, Director General of Southern ARI

## Soaring Fertilizer Costs...

*(continued from page 04)*

Although Ethiopia procured fertilizers before the start of the Ukraine war, the cost of fertilizer has risen almost two-fold when compared to that of 2020. According to MoA (2022), the country needs about 1.9 million tons of fertilizers for this cropping season. As July around 1.5 million tonnes of fertilizer reached to farmers' cooperative and union, 0.82 million tons have already been distributed to farmers. Moving fertilizer from ports to the final destinations needs urgent action in arranging logistics and maintaining security of transporters along the way. It is of paramount importance to design

an integrated strategy to address the fertilizer supply and distribution system problems. In the absence of a strategy the food system is likely to be affected in multiple ways.

The government's endeavour to subsidize fertilizer costs is a positive move that requires cautious implementation.

Together with national level stakeholders and project partners, RAISE-FS is working on a fertilizer alert study. This study will provide insights into the current situation and recommendations for mitigation and resilience strategies with a short, mid- and long-term perspective.

For more information, questions and comments you can contact us through:

[info.raisefsethiopia@gmail.com](mailto:info.raisefsethiopia@gmail.com)

Contact address of RAISE-FS

Dr. Dawit Alemu  
Country representative  
Stichting Wageningen Research - Ethiopia  
[dawit.alemu.swr@gmail.com](mailto:dawit.alemu.swr@gmail.com)

Dr. Irene Koomen  
Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation  
[irene.koomen@wur.nl](mailto:irene.koomen@wur.nl)

Website: <http://www.raise-fs.org>

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