



Issue 04 June 2023

## 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 April and June 2023.

## Food Safety Technical Working Group (FSTWG) identifies priority food safety concerns

Food safety is a crucial issue that affects the health and well-being of millions of people around the world. To ensure food safety it requires concerted efforts from all relevant stakeholders. To this end, SWR Ethiopia facilitated the establishment of a national Food Safety Technical Working Group (FSTWG). The FSTWG is a collaborative initiative that aims to overcome the fragmentation of efforts and mandates scattered across sectors and organizations, strengthening weak coordination, avoiding conflicts of interest, and addressing capacity limitations.

The FSTWG is composed of 11 experts' representatives from

key national food safety actors from Government ministries, authorities, and institutes as well as non-governmental organizations and the private sector. The group's purpose is to supervise and lead the profiling exercise on food safety and provide a forum for all involved partners to communicate and work on pertinent food safety issues.

The FSTWG held its first meeting on April 11, 2023, at the SWR Ethiopia meeting hall. In his opening speech Dr. Dawit Alemu, SWR-Ethiopia country representative, highlighted the

*Continue reading on page 2*

## Inside this issue

National Food Safety Technical Working Group identified .....	01
Gender transformative approaches: going beyond .....	03
Ethiopian parliament approves contract farming .....	04
Backstopping and Technical Guidance for Successful.....	05
Seed value chain: a critical leverage point .....	06



National Food Safety Technical Working Group 2nd round meeting

## National Food Safety ...

*Continued from page 1*

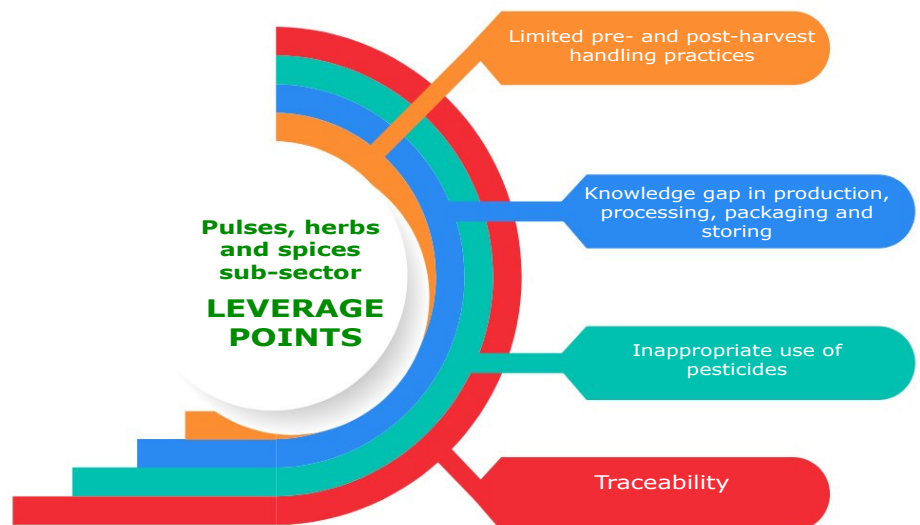
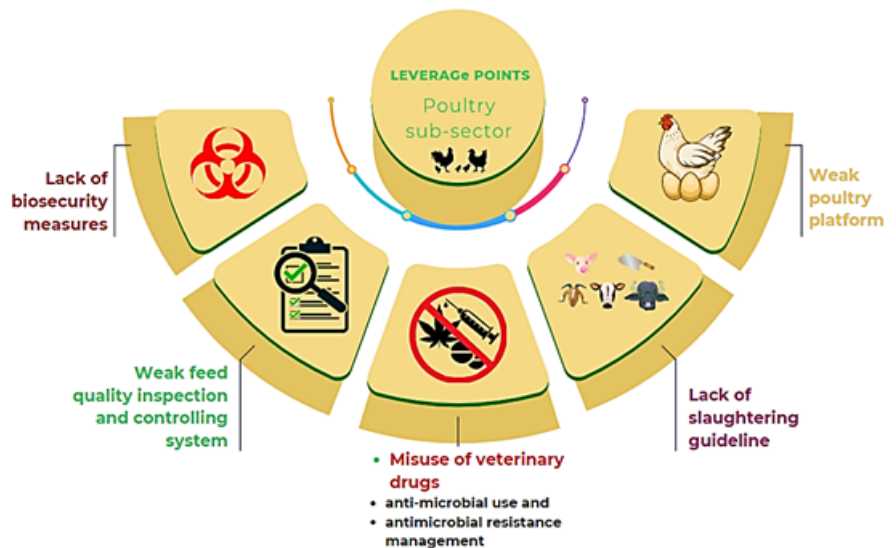
importance of strengthening the national food safety management system in Ethiopia. He added his expectation from the technical team to identify existing gaps, update standards, work on protocols and guidelines for improved food safety, and provide a forum for all involved partners to communicate.

During the first meeting, the group discussed and reached mutual understanding on the importance of strengthening the national food safety management system. The team made initial discussions and fully agreed on having a strong working team that could contribute strength national food safety system. The Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI) was selected as Chairperson, Ethiopia Agriculture Authority (EAA), vice-chairman, and Sichtung Wageningen Research Ethiopia (SWRE) as secretary of the technical working group. Term of reference for the technical working group was drafted, reviewed and approved by the technical working group.

In the second round of the group meeting, the team identified key priority food safety areas in poultry, pulses, spices, and herbs. A presentation was made which discussed existing practices, challenges, and their impacts on human health and economic development in these sectors. Fanuel Fikremariam and Animaw Yehenew from Ethiopian agricultural authority, Animal Products and Quality Testing Centre and Plant Regulatory Directorate respectively presented the existing practices, challenges and their impacts in the respective sectors. The presentation laid the ground for a thorough discussion which resulted in identification of priority actions in addressing the food safety challenges in these sectors.

The presenters also heralded the preparation of national poultry development strategy which was prepared in 2022 in collaboration with ILRI and MoA as well as the development of food safety and quality control strategy for primary agricultural products by MoA. It was agreed

In conclusion, the establishment of the national food safety technical working group is a significant step towards addressing food safety issues in Ethiopia. The collaboration between various sectors and organizations is crucial in strengthening weak coordination



that following sequencing and layering principle, the technical group to build up on ongoing initiatives to strength national food safety system. The FSTWG will exert its full capacity to enhance the national food safety system, and SWRE will play a facilitation role. Action points will be further developed to prepare the implementation strategy in collaboration with responsible organizations.

and avoiding conflicts of interest. The FSTWG's efforts will undoubtedly contribute to enhancing the national food safety system and promoting the health and well-being of Ethiopians.

## Gender transformative approaches: going beyond treating the symptoms

*Conventional gender mainstreaming approaches' sole investment on treating the symptoms of gender inequality without looking at the underlying causes has not brought the desired gender goals.*

Conventional gender mainstreaming approaches' often solely address the symptoms of gender inequality without looking at the underlying causes and as such has not brought the desired gender goals. Gender transformative approaches on the other hand aim to change existing power dynamics, structures, and social norms that are the root causes of gender-based inequality as a means of achieving development objectives.

Over the past years, there has been a growing interest in gender transformative approaches in agricultural development. A range of development practitioners are integrating gender transformative approaches as both a worthy end in itself and a means to better development outcomes.

RAISE-FS organized a learning trajectory to visit gender transformative good practices in the agriculture sector. The good practices were solicited by a scoping study conducted by RAISE-FS project. Subsequently, a team was formed from RAISE-FS regional liaison offices in South, Amhara and Oromia, involving implementing partners' teams from Hawassa University, Areka and Worabe research centres and SARI. The team conducted a learning visit to three organizations hosting gender transformative approaches in agricultural context. The three cases include:

- Transformative household methodology supported by Ripple Effects in Boditi woreda-Dairy for Nutrition and income (DANI) project
- Social Analysis and Action in village economic and social association groups in Dara woreda supported by CARE (Livelihood for Resilience project)
- Gender model Families in Meskan woreda supported by IFAD (PASIDIP II programme)

The three days learning trajectory involved working sessions with project and partner staff, site visits to approach implementation areas, interview with community participants, discussion with project representatives and local public office experts.

### Pathways for change in social norms

Gender transformative change does not necessarily refer to a specific set of activities implemented at a time. It is usually the cumulative result of different actions involving

changes at multiple levels. Gender-transformative change, framed as moving toward gender equality, can be examined across three key dimensions. Individual, relational and structural.

The learning trajectory also exhibited gender transformation pathways at these four different levels:

### Individual (agency) level change:

At the individual level, participants reiterated several changes resulting from gender transformative approaches interventions. Among these, improvement in knowledge, skills, belief, changes in attitudes towards equality, increased knowledge of one's rights and enhanced self-esteem are some of the changes attributed to the interventions. In the formal arena, individual changes involved increase in access to personal resources like businesses and income opportunities for women. Through their participation in informal self-help groups, women not only gained access to economic opportunities, but also the confidence and skills to take on new roles in their community.

### Changes in gender relations

*"Before 2017, the only place I go out to was the market, never have I had the courage to speak in public. After the "kote" meaning "gender" training, my husband and I now fairly share our household tasks as well as all decisions in the house. This training changed mine and my family's life for good. I now have many responsibilities in the kebele, in my saving group and in the church. I can speak in front of many people without stumbling...our saving is growing from time to time and my husband supports me in every way I do..."*

*Belaynesh, Dara woreda VESA member.*

At relational level, gender norms often dictate men's and women's roles, responsibilities and decision-making patterns in the household. Such gender relations influence access to and control over productive relations leaving some groups disempowered. Gender transformative approaches have been observed to bring change in decision making patterns and distribution of roles in families. Participants of the visit witnessed that gender transformative approaches enabled men to engage more in what used to be regarded as women's domains (like domestic and care work)

*continue reading on page 7*

# Ethiopian parliament approves contract farming proclamation

Oil crop producers in northwest Ethiopia have long faced various challenges related to marketing, including poor market linkages, reduced market prices, transport and storage costs, market information gaps, and collusion by brokers or middlemen, apart from significant production issues such as the lack of agricultural inputs, financing and technology.

Efforts have been made to address these issues using the contract farming modality in the last few years. However, such actions did not solve the problem as expected, mainly due to the absence of a tailor-made legal framework that can support both producers and buyers. There has not been a binding law that holds contract buyers responsible and accountable when defaulting.

The soya bean case in the last production and marketing season in the Amhara region of northwest Ethiopia can be a case in point for this situation. Information from the Amhara Bureau of Agriculture shows that of 265 buyers that entered

into a contract agreement with 51,138 farmers, only 42 have purchased soya beans per their respective contracts. Others refused to buy according to the agreement, and tracing the whereabouts of these buyers has been challenging.

This defaulting of buyers has significantly contributed to the low soya bean price. Had a binding law been enforced at the ground level, those buyers could have collected the soya beans produce, and farmers may not sell at a lower price.

In order to rectify such kind of challenges in the overall agricultural sector and increase production and productivity, the Ethiopian government promulgated the long-awaited contract farming proclamation, which was thought to resolve multiple challenges and problems related to producers, including input supply for producers, market linkage among producers and buyers, and raw material supply to emerging industrial parks.

The Ethiopian reporter in its May 10, 2023 edition, indicates

that the proclamation will allow farmers to increase their production and productivity as they receive support from the buyers- industries, service providers and wholesalers- in the form of technology, knowledge and skills, a good supply of inputs and market linkage between a producer and a contractor. It will play a significant role in the economic structural transformation by enhancing quality, efficiency, and competitiveness and developing agro-processing backward linkages to the agriculture sector.

The proclamation will enable farmers to influence prices and their bargaining power with their buyers if properly enforced.

The Ethiopian reporter also reported that the legal framework will allow for the establishment of an independent and transparent procedure, eliminating the previously chaotic, inconsistent and difficult-to-implement procedure.



*Ethiopian House of Peoples Representative*

The [RAISE-FS issue brief #2](#) brings the conundrum of the contract farming issue to the attention of all concerned bodies, including the policymakers and calls for the importance of making good contractual agreements for law enforcement.

## Backstopping and technical guidance for successful project implementation

Effective implementation strategies are essential for the success of any project. Proper planning, monitoring, and evaluation along with collaborating partner institutions are crucial elements that must be considered to ensure that the project successfully meets its intended objectives. However, even with careful planning, unforeseen circumstances can arise, leading to delays and challenges in project implementation. In such cases, backstopping and technical guidance to all involved partners would be crucial in ensuring the success of the project.

the 2022 implementation of project activities, the RAISE-FS team planned and conducted backstopping sessions for all implementing partners in the three regions.

The backstopping and technical guidance support was meant to support implementing partners to smoothly execute jointly planned activities and achieve the expected outcomes of the project. The backstopping support was focused on monitoring and evaluation, data harmonization, documentation and publications of generated evidence. Besides, the team

periodic backstopping sessions.

In a nutshell, the backstopping and technical guideline support provided by the RAISE-FS team are significantly vital to ensuring the success of the project. The session helped to clarify various issues related to the implementation of the project activities and to bring all involved partners be on the same page and share common understanding. Furthermore, the backstopping sessions helped to identify challenges facing implementing partners and alternative options. The team consolidated the feedback and



*The backstopping session at Gondar (right) and Holeta (left) ARC*

In 2022 SWR Ethiopia has signed collaboration agreements to implement RAISE-FS project with six implementing partners institutions (Bahir Dar, Haramaya and Hawassa universities and EIAR, ARARI and SARI), in the three regions, Oromia, South and Amhara. The collaborators have jointly planned activities which validated by relevant stakeholders in all the three regions and put into action. However, due to the late start of the project activities, there were limited backstopping and technical support provided from the RAISE-FS team to implementing partners. To address this issue and based on lessons learned from

clarified the outcome areas of the project, the meta data that need to be collected, and the different templates proposed by the project. The team has also discussed on project workplans and budget allocation.

The backstopping sessions were held in three project implementation regions and a total of 111 researchers who are actively engaged on RAISE-FS project activities in the nine implementing partners institutions attended. The sessions were highly appreciated by all the experts who mentioned that it helped them to understand many important points related to the theory of change of the RAISE-FS project, and they requested similar and

discussed on the issues raised and suggested options on how to well addresses them.

In conclusion, backstopping and technical guidance are essential for successful project implementation. The RAISE-FS project is a clear example of how such support can help achieve expected outcomes. The feedback from experts indicates that such sessions are necessary for successful implementation of similar projects. Therefore, it is vital to continue providing backstopping and technical guidance to implementing partners to ensure that projects like RAISE-FS can achieve their intended objectives.

# Potato seed value chain: a critical leverage point to transform food systems in Ethiopia

*Enhancing the seed value chain through the establishment of seed producer cooperatives, improving market linkages, enhancing awareness of improved potato seed management, and designing storage facilities can go a long way in ensuring that farmers have access to clean and quality potato tuber seed.*

Potato cultivation is a crucial agricultural activity in Ethiopia, particularly in highland and mid-altitude areas during belg and meher seasons. The Southern National, Nationalities and Peoples Regional (SNNPR) state is the largest contributor to the country's annual production, accounting for 42% of the total area and over 47% of the national production. The major potato growing areas in SNNPR include Gurage, Gamo, Gedeo, and Welaita, among others. Despite its significance, potato farming in Ethiopia faces several challenges, particularly in the Gumer area of Gurage zone.

The most significant challenge is the seed system problem, which has hindered farmers' productivity and profitability. The potato seed system

problem was flagged as a major concern during the 2022 south RAISE-FS stakeholder meeting. Farmers in the region have been trying to maintain their potato seed source, but they face challenges due to a lack of seed producer cooperatives and poor market linkage for the multiplied potato tuber seed. The availability of clean and quality seed potato is a critical challenge to farmers, and if they are offered clean seed, they are willing to do their best to maintain it. However, the challenge is getting the clean and quality seed to multiply and produce ware potato.

To address this issue, during the 2022 meher season, two improved potato varieties (Gudene and Menagesha) were brought by Worabe Agricultural Research Centre

from Adula Seed Potato Multiplier PLC in Oromia and validated on farmers' fields. In a participatory variety selection, most participating farmers selected Gudene variety based on their parameters. However, some farmers maintained the seed of Menagesha variety which was not selected during the validation trial.

During the visit to farmers' demonstration fields, the RAISE-FS team observed farmers were multiplying Menagesha variety for seed. The phenomenon showed how unavailability of clean and quality potato tuber seed is a critical challenge to farmers. It proved in whatever means farmers get clean seed of a popular variety,

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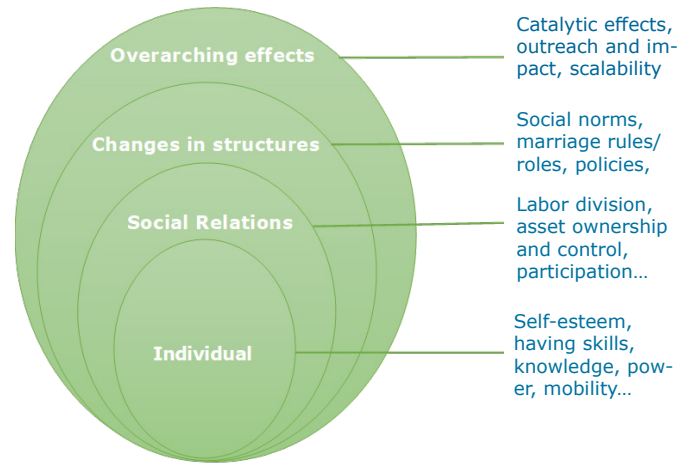
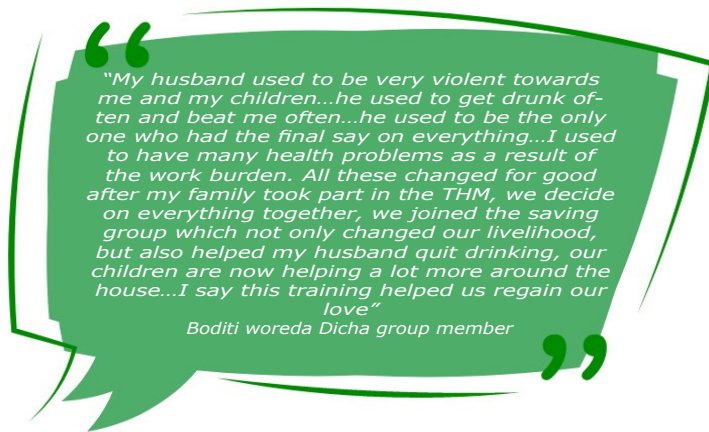


*Farmer Muhaba and his wife on their plot at Bondena Denber kebele, Gumer woreda*

## Gender transformative approaches: going beyond ...

continued from page 3

which is contributing to women’s increased engagement in productive and other social roles. Decisions on assets, income, expenditures etc. that were previously male-dominated were reported to become shared decisions. As a result of this, family cohesion was strengthened contributing to reduction of violence against women and children.



### Societal/structural level changes

Structures, systems, institutions and social norms play a great role in shaping community roles and actions. At societal level, gender transformative approaches contributed to transform customary laws like marriage rules and roles. Participants reported significant change in cultural restrictions on women which previously limited women’s mobility and their productive capacity. Gender transformative approaches brought a shift in perceptions of women’s capabilities in public positions or decisions. As a result, women representation and remuneration at different productive and political roles, forming economic collectives are some of the outcomes that have been attributed to gender transformative approaches. Rules dictating membership and leadership in farmers’ organizations in which women were previously disfranchised are now evolving to engage women as members and leaders.

### Overarching contributions

Organizations are integrating gender transformative approaches to a much wider cause than awareness on gender equality. The different organizations integrated gender transformative methodologies with livelihood and economic interventions in a way that is mutually reinforcing. These methodologies were reported to have largely contributed to development outcomes including livelihood improvement, higher productivity; better access to services and markets; increases in household assets, improved food and nutrition security; reduction in the number of food-insecure months, increased incomes and savings etc.

### Lessons learned

Gender equality and women’s empowerment are globally recognized sustainable development goals. Achieving this requires going beyond recognizing the differences between men and women and working to address deep structural barriers at all levels. The learning trajectory on GTAs evidently exhibited the catalytic effects integrating gender transformative approaches in overall organizational as well as development goals. However, taking these gender transformative impacts at scale still remains to be a great challenge.



Boditi woreda self-help group members demonstrating 'pile sorting' exercise from THM training

## Seed value chain: a critical ...

continued from page 6

they will maintain with care and necessary management practices.

In Bordena Denber kebele, farmers said that “We have been facing a serious problem of yield reduction due to the degeneration of our own seed. The repeated use of this tuber seed for many generations has resulted in the deterioration of its quality. However, last year, a project introduced and demonstrated two new varieties of seeds. We participated in the evaluation and selection process, and we selected the Gudenie variety. We cultivated variety Gudenie, which we preferred. However, some farmers maintained and multiplied the other variety also.”

The observed efforts of farmers to maintain and multiply potato tuber seed that has not been selected during evaluation showed how farmers are challenged to get clean seed potatoes. Farmers’ efforts to maintain and multiply the seed they secured in some way is commendable, but it needs a collaborative effort from all relevant stakeholders in the system to address the potato production problem in Gumer woreda and similar potato growing areas. Enhancing the seed value chain can ensure that farmers have access to clean and quality potatoes tuber seed, which can lead to increased productivity and improved livelihoods.

In conclusion, addressing the challenges faced by potato farmers in the Gumer area of Ethiopia requires a collaborative effort from all relevant stakeholders in the system. Enhancing the value chain through the establishment of seed producer cooperatives, improving market linkages, enhancing awareness of improved seed potato management, and designing storage facilities can go a long way in ensuring that farmers have access to clean and quality potato seeds, leading to increased productivity and improved livelihoods. The seed value chain is indeed a critical leverage point in transforming food systems.

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## Links to RAISE-FS recent publications

- [Rapid Food System Appraisal Tool Guide](https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/swre-raise-fs-22-001_rfsa-tool-guide-1.pdf)  
[https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/swre-raise-fs-22-001\\_rfsa-tool-guide-1.pdf](https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/swre-raise-fs-22-001_rfsa-tool-guide-1.pdf)
- [Soya bean contracting farming issue brief](https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/swre_raise-fs_23_003_soybean_contract_farming_issue_brief.pdf)  
[https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/swre\\_raise-fs\\_23\\_003\\_soybean\\_contract\\_farming\\_issue\\_brief.pdf](https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/swre_raise-fs_23_003_soybean_contract_farming_issue_brief.pdf)
- [Soya bean marketing issue brief](https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/swre_raise-fs_23_002_-soybean_marketing_issue_brief.pdf)  
[https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/swre\\_raise-fs\\_23\\_002\\_-soybean\\_marketing\\_issue\\_brief.pdf](https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/swre_raise-fs_23_002_-soybean_marketing_issue_brief.pdf)
- [Fertilizer alert #02, April 2023](https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/swre_raise-fs_23_004_fertilize_alert.pdf)  
[https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/swre\\_raise-fs\\_23\\_004\\_fertilize\\_alert.pdf](https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/05/swre_raise-fs_23_004_fertilize_alert.pdf)
- [Resilient Agriculture for Inclusive and Sustainable Ethiopian Food Systems Baseline Report 2022](https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/06/swre_raise-fs_22_007_fs_bl_report_2022.pdf)  
[https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/06/swre\\_raise-fs\\_22\\_007\\_fs\\_bl\\_report\\_2022.pdf](https://benefitethiopia.files.wordpress.com/2023/06/swre_raise-fs_22_007_fs_bl_report_2022.pdf)

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