



Issue 05 October 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 July to Sept. 2023.

## A glimmer of hope for ginger production in Southern Ethiopia after years of stagnation

After several years of halted production, ginger cultivation has returned to southern Ethiopia, bringing hope for farmers and the local economy. The region has a long history of producing high-quality ginger, but disease pressure and unfavorable weather conditions have hampered production in recent years. However, with the support of research and partners, farmers in the region are once again able to cultivate ginger and reap the benefits of this lucrative crop. The resurgence of ginger production in southern Ethiopia is a significant

development for the country's economy. The region has a favorable climate for ginger cultivation, with fertile soil and ample rainfall. This makes it an ideal location for growing high-quality ginger that can compete in the global market.

The disease was mainly due to bacterial wilt, as concluded by a team of researchers from the national research system during their 2012 survey report. As a result, the SNNPR

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*Ginger field at Boloso Bombe woreda*

## A Glimmer of Hope ...

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Bureau of Agriculture banned the production of ginger in the region for a specific period until the expected disease pressure reduced. During this period, farmers continued to produce ginger, but the harvest was subpar.

Boloso Bombe *woreda* is a region in Ethiopia that was once renowned for its ginger production. The local farmers had developed a thriving agricultural system that contributed significantly to the food security of the *woreda*. However, in recent years, the *woreda* has faced a severe crisis due to the incidence of ginger disease that devastated the crop and left most households food aid-dependent. The rapid food system appraisal facilitated by RAISE-FS has shed light on the challenges faced by the region and the impact of the ginger disease on the local economy.

The participants of the appraisal highlighted the significance of ginger production in the *woreda* and how it was a source of livelihood for many families. The loss of the crop has had a ripple effect on the entire community, leading to a food crisis that has left many households struggling to make ends meet. The situation in Boloso Bombe *woreda* is not unique. Many areas in the region facing similar challenges. These challenges have a profound impact on the food security of communities, leading to hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

Then, RAISE-FS organized a stakeholder consultation workshop on the research achievements and possible recommendations to tackle the menace. The workshop brought together key resources persons from Addis Ababa University, EIAR, SARI, and the private sector. The importance of the crop and the complexity

of the challenge were taken into consideration during the workshop. Participants recognized the need for a multi-pronged approach to tackle bacterial wilt disease.

This approach would involve both preventive and curative measures to minimize the risk of infection and manage the disease when it occurs. The workshop suggested efforts to concentrate on identifying appropriate planting time and application of Integrated Disease Management options. Additionally, using irrigation to escape bacterial wilt disease pressure in the summer humid season was recommended. Areka ARC, as the regional center of excellence for ginger research, collaborated with RAISE-FS to identify a quick solution for the problem. The center conducted experiments to explore the best solution for the treatment of the ginger disease complex. The experiment focused on validating integrated management options of ginger wilt diseases complex. The experiment identified that application of the recommended fungicide at the recommended

rate just after the first sign of the disease gave better results. A field visit was organized to evaluate the performance of the experiment and the change observed was very impressive. Farmers who followed the recommended treatment were able to harvest good quality ginger produce for the first time in about eight years. This is a significant achievement and a major boost for the ginger industry in the region.

In summary, the promising result observed is good news for farmers in Southern Ethiopia as it will boost food security and provide income for many households. It demonstrates that with the right research and collaboration, solutions can be found to even the most complex problems. This is a major boost for farmers who rely on ginger production for their livelihoods, and it will help to ensure a stable and sustainable supply of ginger in the region. The research effort should continue until a sustainable solution is in place to ensure that farmers can produce ginger sustainably without any threat of diseases. (Here is the link for [ginger working paper](#))



*Ginger field visit at Boloso Bombe woreda*

## The NWEF Forum: A Platform for promoting women's economic empowerment through innovation and technology

The National Women's Economic Empowerment (NWEF) Forum is an annual event that aims to foster dialogue and collaboration among various stakeholders working to advance women's economic empowerment in Ethiopia. The forum was initiated in 2022 by UN Women Ethiopia, the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA), the Ministry of Labour and Skills, ActionAid Ethiopia and the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce. The theme of this year's forum, which took place on June 3-4, 2023, was "Innovation and Technology to Enhance Women's Economic Empowerment".

The forum was officially opened by Dr. Ergogie Tesfaye, the Minister of Women and Social Affairs, who highlighted the importance of the NWEF platform in creating synergies and partnerships among different actors striving for women's economic empowerment. She emphasized the need for coordinated efforts to address the multiple challenges that hinder women from participating in the economic sphere and urged all attendees to contribute their part to promote women's economic empowerment.

The forum brought together policymakers, development practitioners, UN agencies, private sector actors, civil society organizations and researchers to discuss and share best practices and strategies for enhancing women's access to resources and technologies. The forum served as an opportunity to present and review the draft national gender equality and women empowerment policy, which was prepared

by MoWSA with inputs from various stakeholders. The draft policy aims to provide a comprehensive framework for promoting gender equality and women empowerment in all sectors and spheres of life. The participants provided feedback and suggestions on the draft policy and agreed on the need to organize a separate session to further discuss.

access to skills development, access to innovation and technology, etc. The panellists shared their experiences and best practices in implementing gender responsive policies and programs that support women's economic empowerment. The participants also engaged in lively discussions and raised questions and comments on the panel topics.



Several research papers focusing on gender finance gap, affirmative finance, gender responsive ICT policy and other relevant topics were presented and discussed at the forum. The findings of the research papers provided evidence-based recommendations for addressing the existing gaps and challenges in promoting women's economic empowerment. Moreover, different panel discussions were held on various issues related to women's economic empowerment, such as access to finance, access to markets,

Even though several initiatives have been made to improve women's access to finance, different challenges were mentioned that limit women's access to finance thereby putting limits on their participation in labour force and innovation and technologies. Some of these include:

- Limited financial literacy of women: Many women lack the knowledge and skills to manage their finances,

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# Intercropping: A promising technique for increased productivity and food security

The tradition of growing sole crops is a common practice in most parts of Ethiopia, where cereal crops dominate. However, in some parts of southern Ethiopia like Wolaita and Sidama, farmers cultivate multiple crops concurrently with different patterns of mix. Intercropping is a farming technique where two or more crops are grown together in the same field. This technique has been used for centuries in many parts of the world, but it is gaining popularity as a sustainable farming practice.

In Silti *woreda* intercropping is not a common practice where farmers pre-dominantly grow only one crop at a time. The RAISE-FS project in collaboration with Worabe Agriculture Research Centre has introduced an Innovation Recommendation Mapping (IRM) pilot program to promote maize-common bean intercropping. The innovation recommendation map mainly constitutes intercropping of maize with bean as an innovative farming practice that intensifies resource use while increasing productivity and diversification.

This IRM pilot helps farmers make better decisions by using maps generated by the REALIZE project, now completed, that show where the innovation is most suitable. Before demonstrating the IRM output, researchers from the project verified the REALIZE program Silti *woreda* maize and common bean optimality mapping with *woreda* officials, experts, and Worabe ARC research team. The participants agreed that the IRM output matched well with the current situation of the *kebeles* in Silti *woreda*. This was followed up by a validation workshop to assess the biophysical aptitude and

socio-economic feasibility of implementing a maize-common bean intercropping practice. This practice was selected as both maize and common bean are commonly grown as sole crops in the area.

The IRM output takes into account various factors such as soil type, climate, and other environmental conditions. This information is then combined with expert knowledge and local insights to generate highly accurate and reliable



Silti *woreda* map taken from Google Map

recommendations. With this comprehensive approach, farmers can be confident in their choices, knowing that they are based on scientific analysis and tailored to their specific circumstances. The piloting was conducted in five *kebeles*. A total of 25 farmers, 17 men and 8 women, were selected to participate in the pilot project, with the assistance of *kebele* development agents. In order to ensure a diverse representation, 12 of the selected farmers were youth under the age of 36, with an equal number of males and females.

Recently, the RAISE-FS Hawassa

liaison office team visited the performance of the innovation in three of the five *kebeles* on all participant farmers' field, and observed that the maize-common bean intercropping innovation showed promising results. During the field day, host farmers mentioned that the intercropping technique is new to them, and they showed immense interest to adopt the practice. Visiting farmers also expressed their admiration about the performance of the intercropping. This is a positive sign that intercropping can be a viable option for farmers in the area. Farmers' preference about the cropping pattern (intercrop, sole maize and sole common bean) was assessed, and most farmers preferred the maize-bean intercropping practice indicating that the yield they get from the intercrop is better than that of sole crops.

In conclusion, the success of IRM lies in its collaborative approach. By involving key stakeholders such as *woreda* officials, experts, and research teams, the technology is rooted in local knowledge and expertise. This ensures that the recommendations are not only scientifically sound but also aligned with the needs and realities of the farming community. The results of the pilot program conducted by RAISE-FS project indicate that maize-common bean intercropping innovation can be successful in Silti *woreda* where maize and common bean fit well. The potential for increased crop productivity and food security in the region through the adoption of this farming technique is huge. Farmers need to be encouraged to adopt this technique for their future production as it can lead to increased yields and better economic returns.

## Oromia RAISE-FS project review meeting: assessing progress and ensuring success

To assess the progress and status of the planned activities for the 2023 RAISE-FS project, the Oromial Liaison office organized a bi-annual project review meeting. Held on August 19, 2023, at Adama's Hillside Hotel, this one-day workshop brought together various stakeholders, including implementing partners, centre representatives, finance persons, MEL experts and project advisors. The primary objective of the meeting was to review the activities undertaken so far, address challenges faced, and facilitate experience sharing among partners.

Dr. Tesfaye Letta, the Oromia liaison office team leader, set the tone for the meeting with his opening speech. He emphasized the importance of reviewing the planned activities across implementing partners and promoting knowledge sharing among them. Centre representatives and RAISE-FS project focal persons then presented the progress of activities within each of the three food system typologies.

Debreziet Agricultural Research Centre, focusing on commercial food systems, reported that almost all activities are being implemented successfully. However, they faced challenges related to access to finance for one specific activity on business models. Despite this setback, the centre is employing preparatory works like selecting participant women and youth and organizing them in groups.

Holeta Agricultural Research Centre, responsible for high potential food systems, shared that all activities were progressing well except for the pilot and demonstration of potato mini tubers production, which had not yet started at the farmers' field level.



*Dr. Tesfaye Letta, the Oromia Liaison Office RAISE-FS project team leader, making opening speech*

Melkassa Agricultural Research Centre, focusing on food insecure food systems, reported that all planned activities for 2023 were underway and progressing well.

Haramaya University's focal person for the RAISE-FS project, Dr. Bulti Tesso on his part explained a total of 14 research activities planned are being implemented in three *woredas*. With a direct reach to 204 farmers, including 74 youth and 130 adult farmers, the project was deemed to be progressing smoothly. Field trial management was also on track as per the plan.

Participants unanimously agreed that the workshop provided a valuable opportunity for understanding the current status and progress of the RAISE-FS project. The opportunity to learn from one another was highly appreciated by all. The project outcome advisors also acknowledged gaining more insights from this meeting and gaining clarity on previously unclear reports received from implementing partners. Participants suggested such

type of platform to be organized regularly.

The meeting also delved into financial matters, including reporting, budget utilization, challenges faced, and on-time budget settlements. Mr. Tolessa, RAISE-FS Oromia liaison office finance officer, presented the financial guidelines of SWR Ethiopia to the participants, sparking detailed discussions on these guidelines. The aim was to suggest solutions and recommendations to address any finance-related issues in the remaining budget year.

In conclusion, by assessing progress, addressing challenges, and sharing experiences, stakeholders were able to ensure successful accomplishment of project activities. The recommendations made during this meeting will play a vital role in steering the project towards its envisaged outcomes. With continued collaboration and knowledge sharing, the RAISE-FS project is poised to make a significant impact on food systems in Oromia and beyond.

## Farmers in Angot woreda start to reap the benefits of the small-business activities

*Though it is a bit an early stage to determine the viability of these small business models, and a thorough cost-benefit analysis has not yet been performed, those involved in sheep-fattening activities have already started to reap some promising benefits in a time span of less than three months.*

The baseline and Rapid Food System Appraisal (RFSA) conducted in the food-insecure *woreda* of Angot, North Wello Zone, revealed the existence of significant challenges pertaining to joblessness, limited livelihood alternatives for sustenance, and restricted access to finance, particularly for women and youth. In such areas where land is scarce and the available land is degraded and frequently affected by frost, hail and drought, such problems become notably severe.

In order to address these demanding challenges, RAISE-FS and Sirinka Agricultural Research Centre (ARC) are piloting a small business model that centres around poultry production and sheep fattening activities in Angot *woreda*. The activities started in 2022, and are currently being implemented in close collaboration with Bisrat Union, Angot *Woreda* Cooperative Promotion Office, *Woreda* Livestock Agency and Rural Saving and Credit Cooperatives (RuSACCOs) of Koso Amba and Eshet Amba *kebeles*.

In executing this endeavour, a formal agreement was entered into with Bisrat Union on establishing a guarantee fund scheme in conformity with the credit modality of the union. In accordance with their established practice, the union extends a loan to their cooperative members, amounting to threefold the sum saved, with an interest rate of 12 per cent. Following the same guiding principles, the cooperatives then offer credit

to their selected members at a 15 per cent interest rate with in-kind.

After taking this in-kind credit, 30 farmers in Angot *woreda* engaged in sheep fattening and poultry production endeavours/businesses. Twelve youths, comprising of 4 females women and 8 males men have each received six or seven sheep for fattening, and additionally, 18 youths, consisting of 12 females women and 6 males, have each received 50 chickens. Participant farmers were trained in poultry production and sheep fattening before receiving the chickens and sheep as in-kind credit. The idea behind in-kind credit is to facilitate efficient loan utilisation while providing technical support to farmers involved in sheep fattening and small-scale poultry business models.

Mr Alebachew Tsegaw, a chairperson of Koso Amba

RuSACCO, said; "The small business model has created job opportunities and benefited some young and smallholder farmers in the *kebele*. The agroecology of the area is conducive to sheep-fattening activities. Farmers did not face feed scarcity this year because of ample rainfall. They could have gained even better results if the fattening activity had begun earlier. Most farmers have decided to purchase sheep for the next round of fattening cycle. Only the farmers who unknowingly purchased sheep at high prices made a small profit." Mr Alebachew continued, "In light of this experience, some farmers request us to become cooperative members." This shows as the activity plays

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*One of the participant women farmer in sheep fattening business model*

## The NWEE Forum: A Platform for ...

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- apply for loans, or invest in their businesses. This is limiting their engagement and success in the economic sector.
- Limited ID ownership of women: many rural women do not have an IDs, which prevents them from accessing saving and credit services offered by financial institutions. The current financing infrastructure therefore favours men, who are more likely to have IDs.
- Laws inhibiting women only cooperatives: in most rural cooperatives, heads of households, who are mostly

the situation to make informed decisions.

- Limited engagement of women in science and technology fields: women make up only 28 percent of the workforce in science, technology, engineering and math, which also limits their participation in innovation and technology.

The forum was a platform for sharing best practices and lessons learned on how to leverage technology and innovation to advance women's economic opportunities. Some of the key takeaways that are relevant for RAISE-FS are:

economic empowerment can generate positive spill over effects for families, communities and society at large. Therefore, it is essential to mobilize adequate resources and partnerships to support women's economic empowerment initiatives.

The NWEE Forum concluded with a closing remark by Ms. Alemitu Omot, the state minister of MoWSA, who appreciated the active participation and contribution of all the attendees. She also reiterated the commitment of the ministry and other partners to continue supporting



- men get to be members of cooperatives and the cooperative law does not allow establishing women only cooperatives.
- Data gap (lack of sex disaggregated and baseline data) to inform decision making: different actors working for economic empowerment of women (including policymakers) lack evidence to understand

- As women's economic empowerment is one of RAISE-FS' pillars, the forum can serve as a good opportunity for the project to promote innovation and technologies that can contribute to women's economic and social empowerment in the agriculture sector.
- Investing in women's

the NWEE platform and advancing women's economic empowerment in Ethiopia. She called for sustained collaboration and coordination among all stakeholders to ensure that women have equal access to opportunities and resources that enable them to participate in and benefit from the economic development of the country.

## Farmers in Angot woreda ...

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a role for the youth and women to be members of the cooperative.

Nigussie Seyoum, who is a researcher in Sirinka ARC and the centre representative for the RAISE-FS team, pointed out that the research centre selected the Awassi sheep breed and Sasso chicken varieties based on the agro-ecology of the area and facilitated the linkage with poultry out growers and coordinate the sheep procurement process with the support of professionals. He noted: "Despite initial challenges, including delayed start than anticipated time for

various reasons and limited follow-up because of the security situation, the results are encouraging. We haven't yet conducted a profitability analysis, but we can tell from farmers' feedback that the pilot program is heading in the right direction. Some farmers sold sheep for the new year and reaped profits of up to 20,000 ETB from the first-round fattening.' Negussie further added that the poultry production activity is also progressing well.

In the efforts to kick start the guarantee fund activity, back-and-forth discussions have been made with Bisrat Union

in the zone and two saving cooperatives and cooperative promotion office at the *woreda* with the facilitation of RAISE-FS and Sirinka ARC. Although it takes time to bring all stakeholders on board, one key takeaway from the activity is that it brings all the relevant actors together to create jobs for the jobless and income improvements of youth and women in the food-insecure area. The small- business model through the guarantee fund activity improved the relationship between members and the cooperatives.

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### Links to RAISE-FS recent publications

- [Feasibility study: Black soldier fly production for animal feed in Ethiopia](https://tinyurl.com/5n6kkrwj)  
<https://tinyurl.com/5n6kkrwj>
- [Importance of Ginger in Ethiopia: recent trends and challenges](https://tinyurl.com/mrywff8t)  
<https://tinyurl.com/mrywff8t>
- [Pesticide Lifecycle in Ethiopia: challenges, opportunities and leverage points](https://tinyurl.com/4jkeytch)  
<https://tinyurl.com/4jkeytch>
- [Designing optimal \(M\)SME business models for the provision of postharvest processing services](https://tinyurl.com/34tvr3u)  
<https://tinyurl.com/34tvr3u>
- [Mapping gender and women focused initiatives in the agriculture sector: a scoping study](https://tinyurl.com/38yz45eh)  
<https://tinyurl.com/38yz45eh>

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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