



Issue 06 December 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 Oct. to Dec. 2023.

Woreda Food System Profiles for bottom-up planning and informed decisions

In the pursuit of a more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food system in Ethiopia, the Resilient Agriculture for Inclusive and Sustainable Ethiopian Food System (RAISE-FS) project has undertaken the development of nine woreda food system profiles. These profiles serve as comprehensive overviews of the current status, dynamics, and behaviours of the local food systems within the intervention woredas, providing valuable insights for evidence-based, bottom-up planning. The woreda profiles aim to ensure that stakeholders are equipped

with a deep understanding of the complex challenges and realities within each woreda, thereby establishing a solid foundation for the planning process. Through the exploration of various dimensions, including demography, agroecological conditions, production factors, markets and value addition, food and nutrition security, social inclusion, as well as policies and government support, these profiles offer a

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Women farmers participating in the FGD

Woreda Food System ...

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holistic view of the woreda's food system landscape. It is important to note that the development of these woreda profiles is rooted in meticulous research and engagement. Insights gathered from baseline surveys and rapid food system appraisals (RFSA) conducted in two kebeles of each intervention woreda have formed the basis of these profiles. These kebeles were selected to be representative of the agroecology of the woredas, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the local context.

Furthermore, validation workshops were organized in each woreda, bringing together a diverse array of stakeholders including woreda administrators, agriculture experts, researchers, university lecturers, and representatives from various governmental offices. The participation of individuals who were directly involved in the RFSA added an invaluable layer of grassroots insight to the validation process. Key findings from the appraisals and surveys were thoroughly discussed and validated during these workshops, allowing for a robust and comprehensive validation process.

The input and feedback received from woreda officials during these workshops were carefully considered and integrated into the woreda profiles, ensuring that they accurately reflect the realities on the ground. This collaborative approach not only enhances the credibility of the profiles but also fosters a sense of ownership and inclusivity among stakeholders.

It is important to emphasize that these woreda profiles are not static documents but rather dynamic tools that will continue to evolve in response to new data, insights, and



Women at Ada'a woreda participating in community mapping

changing realities within the woredas. They are designed to serve as foundational resources that can inform and guide evidence-based planning, policy formulation, and targeted interventions aimed at strengthening the resilience, inclusivity, and sustainability of Ethiopian food systems.

In conclusion, the development of these woreda food system profiles represents a significant step towards fostering a deeper understanding of local

food systems and creating a solid evidence base for informed decision-making. By equipping stakeholders with comprehensive insights into the dynamics and complexities of each woreda's food system, these profiles pave the way for more targeted, effective, and inclusive interventions that can drive positive change within Ethiopia's food system landscape.

A leap towards gender transformative research for development: it starts with us

In today's society, promoting gender equality and inclusion is crucial. One effective approach is to provide staff training on gender transformative methods. By equipping staff with the knowledge and skills to address the root causes of gender inequality, a more inclusive and empowering environment can be created for all. As part of the effort to integrate gender transformative approaches in research for food system transformation, SWR Ethiopia collaborated with CARE Ethiopia to conduct a 5-day trainers' training on the Social Analysis and Action approach. The training brought together 22 RAISE-FS project-implementing staff from national and regional project offices, partner universities, and agricultural research centers. The aim of the training was to enable partners to recognize gender-related biases, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices that may impact their work outputs and interactions with the community. Additionally, it aimed to increase their confidence in facilitating gender equality-related dialogues with others.

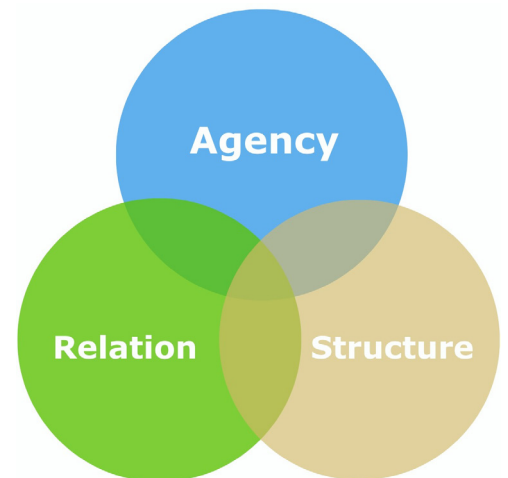
The Training

The SAA training employed several participatory tools and adult learning methodologies. Through the different tools, partners were able to explore the differences between gender and sex, how social norms shape peoples' beliefs, relations, decisions, and life choices, and why it is important to work with norm keepers to challenge restrictive norm keepers. One important tool was the gender equality framework that illustrated the importance of working in the three pillars: building agency, changing

relations, and transforming structures.

The 'Power Walk' was another powerful exercise in which participants practiced "walking" in someone else's shoes and experienced what it feels like to be powerless or powerful based on different factors. The exercise helped participants comprehend concepts like inclusions, intersectionality, and discrimination. With the 'Vote with your feet' exercise, project staff explored their beliefs about different issues like gender equality, social norms, gender roles, gender-based violence, etc. in a game-type format to help them question some of their values, biases, perceptions, and misunderstandings and help them understand how personal experiences and values impact the decisions and outcomes of their personal as well as professional lives.

The TOT included a crucial component on facilitation skills,



Gender equality framework

which taught participants essential attributes of SAA facilitators. A key component of the SAA process, trust was demonstrated during the training. With the use of various interactive approaches, the vital characteristics of SAA facilitators were made even clearer.

The final day of the training focused on 'male engagement' exercises. In the 'me and my



"I have lost breath because of the fast flow of the chores; on the outside, it seems easier for women to manage but we fail to recognize that it is a strain for them. I'm used to this type of activity cause in my home it is a normal occurrence for my wife but when I did it, it felt never-ending. I never imagined it was this burdensome." Another participant said "We usually complain that our wives and housemaids are often 'moody', after this exercise, I thought the mood change could be because of their heavy work burden."

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Efforts to transform local food systems through promotion of nutritionally dense crops

The importance of dietary diversity in ensuring food and nutrition security cannot be overstated. In order to address this critical issue, the RAISE-FS project conducted a baseline survey and rapid food system appraisal (RFSA) in the selected kebeles of Boloso Bombe and Gumer woredas. The results of the survey revealed that the primary food sources in these areas are limited to specific crop types, leading to a lack of dietary diversity. Additionally, there is a notable deficiency in

lettuce, and Swiss Chard. Similarly, the Worabe ARC introduced four vegetable crops—carrot, radish, lettuce, and Swiss Chard—to Silti and Gumer woredas.

In Bombe Zuria, farmers had almost stopped growing sweet potatoes due to lack of planting materials and the decline of sweet potato production caused by various diseases, including sweet potato virus disease (SPVD). The arrival of OFSP, which is high in beta-

the new papaya trees in their homestead. Protective measures such as fencing and cow dung application as a repellent against porcupine attacks demonstrate the farmers' eagerness to manage and nurture the papaya trees. In addition to papayas, the project introduced Moringa oleifera, a tree vegetable rich in antioxidants and traditionally consumed in the lowland areas of South Ethiopia. Farmers have shown strong interest in its cultivation, with successful survival rates noted. However,



Homegarden with introduced vegetable and Ethiopian kale in Gumer woreda



Food prepared during the training from the introduced vegetables and local kale

the consumption of nutrient-dense foods. In response to these findings, Areka and Worabe research centres, in collaboration with the RAISE-FS project, have proposed strategic intervention activities to address these challenges.

In implementation of the proposed interventions Areka ARC introduced three varieties of Vitamin A-rich orange-fleshed sweet potatoes (OFSP) and Solo papaya to the Bombe Zuria kebele. In Zaba Kebele, they introduced carrot, radish,

carotene essential for Vitamin A production, has sparked great interest among farmers. They have started harvesting OFSP after four months of planting, considering this period as the best for yield. Additionally, the introduction of Solo papaya, which has the characteristic of bearing fruits in a short time and throughout the year with consistent water supply, has caught the attention of farmers. The enthusiasm of farmers is evident in their care for the new variety, as they pay close attention and monitor

concerns about early harvesting impacting future tree growth have surfaced, indicating farmers' cautious approach toward its sustainable utilization. The tradition of growing Ethiopian kale as the primary leafy vegetable in Gurage and Silti woredas is deeply rooted in the local agricultural practices. This nutritious crop has been a staple for both home consumption and local markets, providing a rich source

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Documentation of evidence is key to guide food safety in Ethiopia

National Food Safety Technical Working Group writeshops have gathered professional in the field in Addis Ababa at Nexus International Hotel, from November 13-18 and November 27-December 3, 2023. This collaborative effort aims to develop comprehensive documents on national poultry biosecurity guidelines, poultry product quality and safety as well as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Handling Practices (GHP) for sesame and hot pepper. Distinguished experts from various key national food safety entities, including Government ministries, authorities, institutes, non-governmental organizations, universities and the private sector, have been convened for this significant writeshop.

In his opening speech, Dr. Dawit, SWR Ethiopia country representative and RAISE-FS project manager, highlights the importance of collaboration, knowledge sharing, and evidence-based decision-making in addressing complex issues like food safety. Getenesh Alemayehu, the secretary of the technical team, provided an introduction to the objectives of the writeshop. With a focus on the poultry, spice, and sesame sectors, the writeshop aimed to develop comprehensive guidelines and best practices to ensure the safety of food along the entire value chain.

Chair of the food safety technical

team, Mr. Getinet Fikresilase, delivered a comprehensive overview of the establishment of the team, its objectives, the process of identifying food safety priority issues, and the crucial importance of documenting evidence to guide the food safety system and address related food safety issues.

The development of national poultry biosecurity and product safety guidelines is of utmost importance as it will serve as a comprehensive framework for the poultry industry. These guidelines will encompass various aspects such as animal health, biosecurity measures, and disease control strategies. By establishing standardized practices, the poultry sector will be able to enhance its productivity, quality, and overall safety.

Similarly, the focus on developing GAP and GHP for sesame is crucial. Sesame is a significant agricultural commodity in Ethiopia, and ensuring its safety from farm to fork is paramount. By adhering to practices based on the guideline, stakeholders in the sesame industry can safeguard the quality and integrity of their products, while also meeting international food safety standards.

In addition, hot pepper GAP and GMP guideline is formulated in a broader scope to provide a foundation for multi- sectoral

collaboration, internal goal setting and sector specific strategic planning.

The establishment of comprehensive guidelines for poultry product quality and safety is imperative to safeguard consumer health and enhance the overall safety of these products. The guideline for poultry meat and egg product safety addresses critical aspects including facility design, personal hygiene, animal welfare, slaughtering processes, packaging and labeling, storage and transportation, traceability systems, inspection and certification, waste management, and marketing.

In his concluding remarks at the writeshop, Dr. Wubshet Zewed, Executive Lead of the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Health and Veterinary Public Health, emphasized the potential of joint efforts in addressing food safety challenges and strengthening the food safety system landscape. He expressed gratitude to the SWR Ethiopia RAISE-FS project for shedding light on the issue of food safety and its coordination efforts.

The outcomes of these collaborative workshops will serve as valuable resources for all stakeholders in the food safety sector. A stakeholder validation workshop will be convened to present and validate the resulting documents. Once approved by stakeholders, these documents will serve as important guidelines, offering best practice recommendations, supporting policy development, and facilitating capacity building initiatives. Ultimately, they will contribute to strengthening Ethiopia's food safety framework and advancing the country's agricultural products in both local and global markets.



Getinet fikresilase, chair of technical team presenting general overview of the NFSTWG activities

Farmers witness promising results of maize and common bean innovations in Sire Woreda

Farmers who actively participated in the evaluation and validation of innovative agricultural technologies recently had the opportunity to witness the promising results firsthand. The culmination of their involvement was showcased during a field day event organized on September 22, 2023.

Ethiopia faces the challenge of increasing agricultural productivity to support its growing population, especially in regions like Sire woreda where small farmers rely on maize and common bean crops. The area grapples with soil degradation, fertility loss, and limited access to agricultural technologies. In response to these challenges, the RAISE-FS project, in partnership with the Melkassa Agricultural Research Centers (MARC), has been implementing various research activities to address these issues.

In an effort to address the pressing challenges faced by small-scale farmers in the woreda, a number of key initiatives have been undertaken to improve crop productivity. One such initiative involves the validation of early and mid-maturing OPV maize varieties using the Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM) approach. This approach aims to optimize soil fertility and enhance the performance of maize crops, ultimately leading to improved yields for farmers.

In addition to the validation of maize varieties, another important activity has been the demonstration of maize-common bean intercropping. This practice not only maximizes land use efficiency but also promotes natural pest control and enhances soil fertility. By integrating common bean crops with maize, farmers can diversify their income sources and improve overall farm productivity. Furthermore, the Participatory Varieties Selection (PVS) of common bean varieties has

been carried out to involve farmers in the selection process. This participatory approach ensures that farmers have a say in choosing varieties that best suit their specific needs and growing conditions. By empowering farmers to make informed decisions about the varieties they cultivate, the PVS approach contributes to improved crop performance and overall agricultural sustainability.

Farmers who actively participated in the evaluation and validation of innovative agricultural technologies recently had the opportunity to witness the promising results firsthand. The culmination of their involvement was showcased during a field day event organized on September 22, 2023. The event featured visits to demonstration sites, providing farmers with the opportunity to observe the practical application of the technologies in the field while also sharing their own valuable experiences.

Mr. Kedir Nado, a maize farmer, recently welcomed visitors to his field to showcase the technologies he has been implementing. His field has become a testament to the success of these innovations, and Mr. Kedir was eager to share his thoughts on the impact they have had on his farming practices. Expressing his delight, Mr. Kedir emphasized the significance of the demonstrated technologies, noting that their performance has exceeded that of his on other fields. Initially hesitant to offer his land for the demonstration, he recounted how he was

eventually convinced by the MARC team that the showcased technologies would not only benefit him but also neighbouring farmers.

In expressing his gratitude, Mr. Kedir extended his thanks to both the MARC team and the RAISE-FS project for providing him with this valuable opportunity to implement and benefit from these innovative agricultural technologies.

Similarly, Mr. Usman, who hosted the maize-common bean intercropping demonstration, conveyed his genuine



Mr. Usman in his farm

enthusiasm for the successful outcome of the experiment. He emphasized that the maize-common bean intercropping method has yielded superior results compared to sole cropping and his own traditional practices. It was evident that Mr. Usman found great value in participating in this innovative agricultural approach.

Dr. Bediru Beshir, the Director of the MARC, expressed his

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A leap towards gender transformative ...

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spouse' exercise, volunteer male trainees were made to physically demonstrate traditionally female domains of domestic work like cooking, cleaning, and child care. After this exercise, participants shared what they learned. One male participant said the following:

To wrap up, the participants regrouped with their regional teams to collaborate on hypothetical cases for action planning. They analysed the cases, formulated actionable plans, pinpointed factors that may impact the implementation of these plans, and proposed RAISE-FS interventions aimed at providing support to the communities at various levels.



While I have received similar training in the past, this particular training stood out due to its wide-reaching scope and unique approach. Unlike previous trainings which predominantly focused on gender mainstreaming, this program explored the broader spectrum of social issues, specifically challenging and addressing complex social norms. The comprehensive nature of this training not only enriched my understanding of community dynamics but also prompted a profound reevaluation of my own life from a fresh perspective. One of the most impactful takeaways from the training is the realization that our role extends beyond providing solutions to the community; it also involves empowering them to identify and shape their own solutions.

Truayinet Mekuriaw
Debrezeit Agricultural Research Centre



I would say it is my first time to have participated in such type of training. The comprehensive nature of the training has equipped me with invaluable knowledge of various gender analysis tools and methods. Understanding how to ensure the inclusion of all members of the communities in development initiatives is paramount, and the training has provided me with a solid foundation in this regard. This newfound understanding will undoubtedly will help me play a greater role to enhance the implementation of RAISE-FS project activities, ensuring a more inclusive approach. Moving forward, I am eager to apply these newfound skills and knowledge to drive positive change within my sphere of influence, fostering inclusivity and empowerment.



Nigusie Seyoum
Sirinka ARC

The way forward

Individuals biased attitudes and practices on gender equality, not only prevent the development of a gender-equitable workplace but also ultimately result in gender discriminatory

outreach. As RAISE-FS is planning to integrate gender transformative approaches in its interventions, the TOT is a leap forward toward this journey. Going forward, a series of action and learning platforms will be set up at institutional,

as well as community levels to take forward the issue of gender equality and women empowerment. Let us leap together towards a more equitable food system where everyone has equal opportunities to thrive.

Efforts to transform local food systems ...

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of essential nutrients such as vitamin K, beta-carotene, and vitamin C, as well as carbohydrate, fiber, fat, protein, manganese, and calcium.

In an effort to diversify the vegetable production trend dominated by kale, the RAISE-FS project in collaboration with Worabe ARC introduced four new types of vegetables - radish, Swiss chard, lettuce, and carrot. While kale remains a popular choice for farmers, some have also embraced the cultivation of carrots for the local market. Each of these introduced vegetable crops offers distinct health benefits, complementing the nutritional value provided by Ethiopian kale.

In order to ensure the long-term impact of introducing these nutrient-rich crops, RAISE-FS, in collaboration with Areka and Worabe, has conducted training sessions for farmers. These sessions cover safe vegetable crop cultivation, various cooking methods, and the incorporation of a wide range of vegetable dishes into their diets. By participating in these trainings, farmers not only have the opportunity to refresh their existing knowledge, but also to embrace new practices such as utilizing different parts of a vegetable in addition to the one usually consumed. This holistic approach aims to empower farmers with the skills and knowledge needed

to sustainably integrate nutrition-dense crops into their agricultural practices and diets.

The RAISE-FS project's interventions not only aim to diversify food sources but also empower communities with knowledge and resources for sustainable agriculture. By introducing nutrient-rich crops, addressing planting material access, and promoting alternative crops like Solo papaya and Moringa oleifera, the project in collaboration with its local partners is fostering resilience and nutritional enhancement in local communities like Boloso Bombe and Gumer woredas.

Farmers Witness Promising Results ...

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satisfaction with the successful demonstration of agricultural technologies provided to farmers' fields by the centre. He conveyed his pleasure in observing the contentment of farmers with these technologies and pledged to further collaborate with woreda stakeholders and farmers in the upcoming years. In addition, Dr. Tesfaye Letta, RAISE-FS Oromia liaison office team leader, conveyed gratitude on

behalf of the RAISE-FS project to the farmers and all involved stakeholders. Finally, Mr. Bune, the Sire woreda administrator, expressed appreciation for the support from MARC and the RAISE-FS project in demonstrating the agricultural technologies in their woreda. He emphasized the impressive innovations witnessed and his office's commitment to scale up the technologies. Furthermore, he encouraged participating farmers to prepare themselves for the scaling

up of these technologies and assured them of the woreda's assistance in ensuring the successful implementation of this endeavour.

In this field day, farmers from two kebeles, head of Sire woreda administrator, woreda agricultural offices experts and head, RAISE-FS regional team, MARC centre director and researchers, EIAR focal person and extension director and OBN media journalist were participated.

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Stichting Wageningen Research (SWR) Ethiopia



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