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## 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 Jan. to March, 2024

## Preparation in progress ahead of the start date for EUDR implementation

As the EU's new Regulation on Deforestation-free products (EUDR) comes closer to implementation, Ethiopian exporters find themselves at a critical juncture. The EUDR, aimed at promoting sustainable and climate-friendly trade practices, presents a significant challenge for Ethiopian products destined for the European market. With a focus on seven key commodities, including coffee and soya bean, the EUDR requires a fundamental shift in production and supply chain practices to comply with stringent sustainability criteria.

Ethiopia's long-standing trade relationship with the EU means that the implications of the EUDR will be keenly felt. In 2022 alone, Ethiopia exported Euro 910 million worth of products to the EU, with agricultural products and food accounting for 80% of these exports. The impact of the EUDR on Ethiopian exports cannot be understated, and proactive measures are necessary to adapt to the new regulatory landscape.

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# EUDR

## EU Deforestation Regulation



The road ahead may be daunting, but with collaborative efforts and strategic planning, Ethiopian exporters can navigate the EUDR landscape and emerge stronger in an increasingly sustainability-focused global economy.



## Preparation in progress ahead

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Recognizing the urgency of the situation, a multi-stakeholder consultative meeting was convened by RAISE-FS to address the implications of the EUDR on Ethiopian exporters. Representatives from key organizations such as ECTA, MoTRI, EAA, ECX, and private companies gathered to discuss the intricacies of the EUDR and its potential impact on Ethiopian exports. Introductory presentations were given by Dr. Martha Belete of Addis Ababa University and Ato Denu Lemma of the RainForest Alliance. The EUDR places a strong emphasis on deforestation-free production, socially responsible practices, geolocation traceability, due diligence, and circular economy principles. With an implementation date of December 30th, 2024, Ethiopian exporters are faced with the daunting task of aligning their practices with these stringent requirements.

One of the key concerns raised during the meeting was the potential impact on smallholder farmers who may struggle to meet the regulatory

requirements. The need for accurate geolocation of small and scattered farm plots, coupled with the prohibition of certain agricultural practices, poses a significant challenge for farmers. Additionally, questions were raised about the potential financial burden of compliance and the need for clear guidelines from the EU to facilitate the transition.

In response to these concerns, representatives from Ethiopian regulatory bodies highlighted ongoing efforts to prepare for the EUDR. The Ethiopian Coffee, Tea and Spices Authority underscored initiatives to collect data, build capacity, and seek extensions from the EU to ease the transition. However, it was acknowledged that substantial financial and time investments would be required to ensure widespread compliance. Moving forward, it was agreed that a coordinated task force involving key stakeholders would be essential to navigate the challenges posed by the EUDR. Furthermore, heightened awareness campaigns and targeted support for smallholder farmers were identified as crucial steps in preparing Ethiopian exports for the new regulatory landscape. The consultative meeting shed

light on the complexities and challenges that lie ahead for Ethiopian exporters in light of the EUDR. While efforts are underway to prepare for the impending changes, a concerted and holistic approach is essential to ensure a smooth transition. As the clock ticks towards the implementation date, swift and decisive action is imperative to safeguard Ethiopia's export interests in the EU market.

In conclusion, the journey towards EUDR compliance presents both challenges and opportunities for Ethiopian exporters. By proactively addressing these challenges and leveraging available support mechanisms, Ethiopian products can continue to find success in the EU market while aligning with sustainable and climate-friendly trade practices. In the long term, it is expected that also other countries will have similar demands so the sectors need to get prepared so as not to lose export destinations. The road ahead may be daunting, but with collaborative efforts and strategic planning, Ethiopian exporters can navigate the EUDR landscape and emerge stronger in an increasingly sustainability-focused global economy.



*Dr. Dawit Alemu, SWR Ethiopia country representative making opening speech*

## Enhancing supply of seed potato through farmer-managed mini-tuber production under screen houses

Potato production plays a vital role in ensuring food security, particularly during the critical period preceding the harvest of grain crops. However, the country faces challenges in achieving optimal potato yields, primarily due to the limited availability of high-quality seed potatoes. In response to this issue, initiatives have been undertaken to promote the

resulting in significant yield and quality losses. To address this challenge, efforts have been made to explore alternative strategies for producing high-quality seed potatoes, including the use of mini tubers generated in screen houses.

Mini tubers, produced through tissue culture, offer several advantages in terms of handling,

have been at the forefront of seed potato production using in vitro-derived mini-tubers, such efforts remain limited in Ethiopia. Therefore, alternative approaches such as farmer-managed quality seed production systems are essential to address the gaps in available quality seed potato supply.

In line with this objective, the RAISE-FS project, in collaboration with the Holeta Agricultural Research Center and Haramaya University, initiated the demonstration and piloting of potato mini-tuber production and management under screen houses on farmers' fields. The aim is to address the shortage of potato seed at the local level through training and awareness creation among host farmers, follower farmers, agricultural



production of mini tubers in screen houses as a means of enhancing the supply of clean and healthy seed potatoes at the local level.

Potato cultivation in Ethiopia covers approximately 314,652 hectares, with an estimated total tuber yield of 4,186,455 tons during the meher and belg seasons combined. Despite the extensive cultivation, the average yield remains low at 13.3 t/ha, highlighting the need for interventions to improve seed quality and ultimately enhance productivity and profitability for smallholder farmers.

One of the key factors contributing to the low potato yield in Ethiopia is the limited availability of disease-free seed potatoes. The continued use of farmer-saved seed potatoes without renewal from a reliable source has led to the spread of seed-borne diseases,



storage, and planting. These small, disease-free tubers serve as the foundation for seed potato production and are crucial in addressing the seed availability gap. By utilizing screen houses, a controlled environment is created, minimizing disease transmission and insect infestation, thus ensuring the production of high-quality and healthy seed potatoes.

While some research centres and private companies

development agents (DAs), woreda experts, and regulatory bodies to introduce this new method of clean and healthy seed potato production at the community level.

The initiative involved the construction of screen houses on the farms of selected farmers in two woredas (Kersa and Wolmera), targeting two kebeles in each woreda during the main cropping season of

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# Empowering local communities to identify and address social issues through participatory approaches

The partners of RAISE-FS in Southern Ethiopia have been provided with crucial knowledge and skills through extensive training in Social Analysis and Action (SAA). The primary objective of this training was to familiarize participants with the fundamental concepts of SAA and enhance their facilitation skills, which they will utilize when cascading the training at the community level.

Mr. Degemu, vice woreda administrator and head of the agriculture office, in his opening address, underscored the pivotal role of gender empowerment in all facets of development, be it within the family, community, or national level. He emphasized the need for participants to fully grasp the tools introduced in the training, enabling them to effectively communicate and implement these strategies within their teams and at the grassroots level. Mr. Degemu also expressed his optimism regarding the potential of the SAA approach to bring about positive changes in gender dynamics within families and communities.

The training session employed a participatory approach, combining brief presentations with reflective group work and discussions. Facilitators skillfully applied their expertise to effectively convey the SAA tools while minimizing judgmental reflections. Additionally, gender-related energisers were integrated into the training sessions to ensure engagement and relevance.

The core contents of the training encompassed a range of essential topics, including basic concepts related to SAA, facilitation skills for effective knowledge transfer, gender empowerment and its significance in development, and

practical application of SAA tools at the community level. The RAISE-FS project's initiative in providing such comprehensive training for experts is commendable, as it equips them with the tools necessary to effect positive change at the grassroots level. The ripple effect of their efforts has the potential to bring about sustainable improvements in gender relations, ultimately contributing to broader societal development.

setbacks. Therefore, it is imperative for participants to promptly apply their newfound knowledge and skills to drive meaningful impact within their respective communities.

In conclusion, the SAA training delivered to RAISE-FS partners in Southern Ethiopia represents a significant step towards fostering positive change within communities. The dedication and enthusiasm displayed by participants underscore



Female training participant

The successful implementation of the SAA approach has the potential to yield transformative outcomes within communities. The commitment of RAISE-FS partners to embrace these approaches is a testament to their dedication to fostering positive change. As Mr. Degemu rightly pointed out, any delay in initiating SAA intervention activities at the community level could result in missed opportunities and potential

their commitment to driving meaningful impact. As we look towards the future, let us remain steadfast in our resolve to empower individuals and communities, knowing that through collaborative action, we can create a more just and equitable society for all.

## Food System Resilience in Tigray: strengthening collaborative engagement

The RAISE-FS Ethiopia project has resumed its activities in Tigray, Ethiopia, signalling a renewed commitment to addressing the challenges facing the region's food system. Following a baseline survey and Rapid Food System Appraisal (RFSA) conducted in collaboration with TARI and Mekelle University, the project has gained valuable insights into the dynamics of the food system in Tigray. These findings have laid the groundwork for identifying key leverage points to strengthen the region's food system.

In line with its dedication to stakeholder engagement, the RAISE-FS Liaison Office in Tigray facilitated an RFSA validation on 14th March 2024, and a 2024 plan validation workshop on 15th March 2024 in Mekelle. The primary objective of these events was to present the RFSA findings and provide an opportunity for local stakeholders to review and validate the results. Additionally, the workshops aimed to validate proposed activities by stakeholders.

The validation workshop represented a significant milestone in the project's engagement with key actors in the local food system. By bringing together stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, the workshop aimed to ensure that the RFSA findings accurately reflect the realities and dynamics of the Tigray food system and that the planned activities can effectively address the challenges identified by the RFSA. This collaborative approach was crucial for gaining a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the region's food system and for involving all stakeholders in addressing those issues.

Dr. Eyasu Abrha, the head of Tigray's BoA, emphasized the substantial challenges facing the agricultural sector in Tigray, including conflict, rainfall scarcity, and locust invasion. These challenges have severely impacted agricultural activities, affecting the livelihoods of farmers and communities in the region. Dr. Eyasu stressed the importance of collaboration

and expressed gratitude for the support from partners such as RAISE-FS in addressing these challenges and working towards mitigating the damage inflicted on the agriculture sector.

The RFSA, conducted in partnership with TARI and Mekelle University, served as a foundational step in understanding the dynamics of the local food system. The findings of this appraisal have been instrumental in identifying leverage points to address challenges and capitalize on opportunities for food system transformation. Driven by the commitment to leverage local expertise and insights, the validation workshop aimed to ensure that the RFSA findings accurately reflect the realities and dynamics of the Tigray food system.

The validation workshop also saw active participation from RAISE-FS outcome advisors, who provided technical inputs to strengthen proposed activities and address concerns raised by participants. Dr. Mulugeta

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*Tigray region RFSA validation workshop participants group photo*



## Biannual meeting of the Ethiopian Network for Gender Equality in Agriculture

The Ethiopian Network for Gender Equality in Agriculture (ENGEA) is a national platform established by the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture in 2015 to close the gender gap in Ethiopian agriculture through the exchange of experience and information, partnership and networking, research, advocacy, and services.

In the past eight years, the network has been organizing regular workshops, and thematic discussions, on key issues related to gender equality in agriculture. In February 2024 the network

solutions for smallholder farmers.

Mrs. Genet Abdela, Lead Executive for Women and Social Affairs Inclusion during her introductory remarks underlined that, with women making up more than half of the population, Ethiopia's agricultural sector contributes significantly to the growth and development of the nation. The ministry's most recent gender equality strategy provides a path map for successes and projects aimed at advancing gender equality in the industry. Mrs Genet stressed the need

will remain a document until it is put into action. Following the introductory remarks, the newly launched gender equality strategy (2023-2029) was briefly introduced to participants, aiming to address key gaps in various sub-sectors and affiliated institutions. The strategy identified major bottlenecks in agriculture and horticulture development, livestock development, natural resource development, and agricultural investment and resources. The strategic document prioritized sector-wide objectives to tackle the identified challenges.



held its biannual meeting with the major objectives of disseminating the new Gender Equality Strategy and exchanging views on existing gender-responsive engineering

for strong coordination and teamwork among the network members to ensure the implementation of the plan because, in her opinion, even a well-thought-out list of goals

Following the presentation of the gender equality strategy, participants had the opportunity to provide feedback. Key issues raised included the need for an

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## Biannual meeting of the Ethiopian Network ...

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adequate budget for gender equality activities, addressing underlying norms perpetuating inequalities in agriculture, and the necessity to extend gender equality platforms to grassroots levels.

In addition, the meeting highlighted the crucial role of agricultural engineering in empowering women and smallholder farmers. The application of gender-responsive approaches in the development and distribution of agricultural technologies was emphasized as a means to address gender disparities. However, feedback from participants indicated that current mechanization efforts in Ethiopia do not sufficiently incorporate traditional knowledge and community norms, often focusing on developing prototypes without considering local contexts.

The discussions underscored the importance of integrating gender-responsive solutions into agricultural engineering practices to effectively support women and smallholder farmers. A comprehensive approach is required to ensure that agricultural technologies are not only accessible but also tailored to the specific needs and realities of diverse farming communities. This will contribute to enhancing operational, ownership, and decision-making capabilities, ultimately paving the way for more inclusive and sustainable agricultural development in Ethiopia.

### Key takeaways

- Investing in gender equality within the agriculture sector is not only a matter of justice and human rights but also a strategic imperative for building more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable

food systems. Extending the reach of the strategy, however, requires allocating budgetary resources for translating gender strategies into actionable initiatives within agriculture. Adequate gender budgeting not only signifies a commitment to gender equality but also facilitates the implementation of targeted interventions that promote gender equality in all agricultural activities.

- Encouraging gender-responsive agricultural engineering can significantly impact the transformation of the food system by increasing women's participation in male-dominated activities, improving productivity, decreasing labour costs, and promoting food safety and quality. This requires taking the following pragmatic actions.
  - Gender integration in R&D- this can range from incorporating gender considerations into all stages of agricultural research and development processes to promoting gender transformative approaches.
  - Promoting public-private partnership - bringing together the resources, expertise, and networks of both the public and private sectors, can catalyse positive change in agricultural development, scaling up agricultural innovations to make them accessible to farmers.
  - Institutional and policy change- advocating for institutional and policy changes that influence decision-makers to mainstream gender considerations in agricultural policies, programs, and investments, and allocate

resources for gender-responsive research and development initiatives.

- Strengthening accountability mechanisms is crucial for effective gender mainstreaming in the agricultural sector. By holding stakeholders accountable for integrating gender considerations into policies, programs, and budgetary decisions, we can ensure that gender equality objectives are actively pursued and achieved.
- Cascading the national gender equality platform to grassroots structures is essential for ensuring that gender equality initiatives are effectively implemented and have a meaningful impact at the local level. This decentralized approach promotes greater involvement and ownership from local stakeholders, enabling them to pinpoint priorities, develop interventions, and allocate resources in a manner that is tailored to local circumstances.

### Looking ahead

As RAISE-FS, we strive to build a more inclusive and sustainable Ethiopian food system, it is imperative to integrate gender equity and social inclusion considerations across all stages of agricultural endeavours. By leveraging gender transformative, innovative engineering solutions and promoting gender equality in agriculture, we can unlock the full potential of marginalized groups like women and youth thereby catalysing transformative change that benefits not only individuals and communities but resulting in country-wide positive effects as a whole.

## Food System Resilience in Tigray ...

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Diro, RAISE-FS project deputy manager, reiterated the project's commitment to prioritizing the region in commodity selection and interventions, considering the unique challenges faced by Tigray. With two remaining years to achieve planned activities, Dr. Mulugeta urged all stakeholders to work collectively towards the stated objectives, emphasizing the potential for a significant impact on the lives of the target community within the remaining period.

The validation workshop represents a pivotal step towards ensuring that the RFSA findings serve as a

reliable foundation for future interventions and policies aimed at strengthening the food system in Tigray. By engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders, the project aims to capture a comprehensive picture of the food system and identify key areas for improvement. In conclusion, the resumption of activities by the RAISE-FS project in Tigray underscores the project's commitment to collaborative engagement and evidence-based interventions to address the challenges facing the region's food system. Through continued partnership and stakeholder involvement,

the project aims to contribute to sustainable transformation and resilience in Tigray's food system.

The collaborative spirit and collective commitment demonstrated by stakeholders at the validation workshop underscored the potential for positive change and resilience in the region's agricultural sector. Building on the insights gained from this workshop, it is imperative to continue working together towards a more sustainable and inclusive food system in Tigray.

## Enhancing supply of seed potato through ...

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2023. Expert-led training on mini-tuber production under screen houses was provided to host farmers, covering various aspects such as plantlet/mini tuber hardening, soil mixture preparation and sterilization, pot filling, screen house maintenance, establishment and management of potato crops in screen houses, and postharvest handling of mini-tubers.

Feedback from farmers and stakeholders indicated a positive reception towards this new approach of clean and healthy seed potato production under screen houses managed by host

farmers with close supervision from experts. The successful demonstration in Kersa woreda showcased remarkable tuber yields achieved at the farmers' level, reinforcing the potential of mini-tuber production under farmer management to enhance the supply of clean seed potato at the local level.

The experience gained from this initiative underscores the significance of local-level clean and healthy seed production to avoid the bulk transportation of potato seed and prevent the spread of diseases from one location to another. Moreover, it highlights the potential for mini-

tuber production under screen houses to alleviate the gap in both the quality and quantity of seed potatoes, thereby contributing to enhanced potato yields and food security.

In the next step, efforts will focus on linking these farmers with seed-producing cooperatives to sustainably supply clean seed potatoes at the community level. By scaling up mini-tuber production, this approach will ensure a continuous supply of quality seed potatoes, contributing to increased yields and food security while creating employment opportunities.

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