

ATI NEWSLETTER



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Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Institute

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FARM Project Launch

The Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Institute (ATI) launched the Food Security and Agriculture Rehabilitation Measures in Conflict-Affected Regions of Ethiopia (FARM) project, financed by the Agence française de développement (AFD) in Eastern Africa and the European Union (EU), on July 27, 2023, at the Capital Hotel, Addis Ababa.

The FARM project aims to contribute to reducing food insecurity in Ethiopia by relaunching resilient agricultural activity in conflict-affected regions and improving agricultural productivity by strengthening the seed sector and agro-ecological practices. It involves improving and rehabilitating cereal and pulse production, selecting small ruminants, apiculture and poultry breeding activities, small-scale irrigation, and horticulture production.

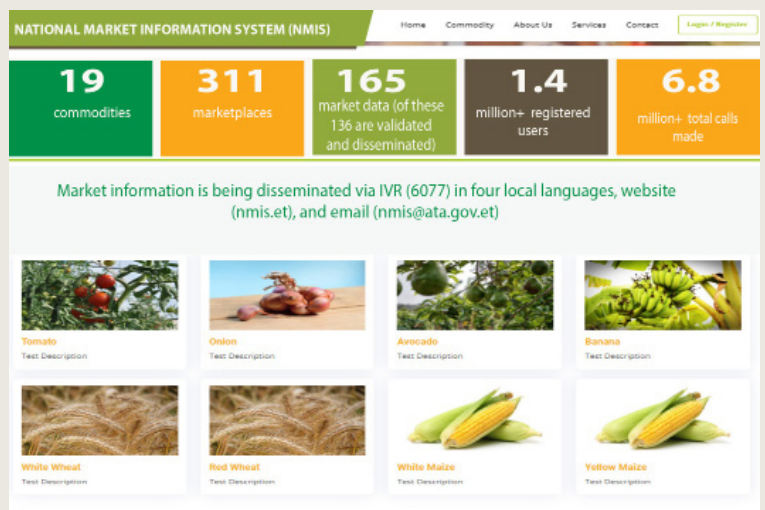
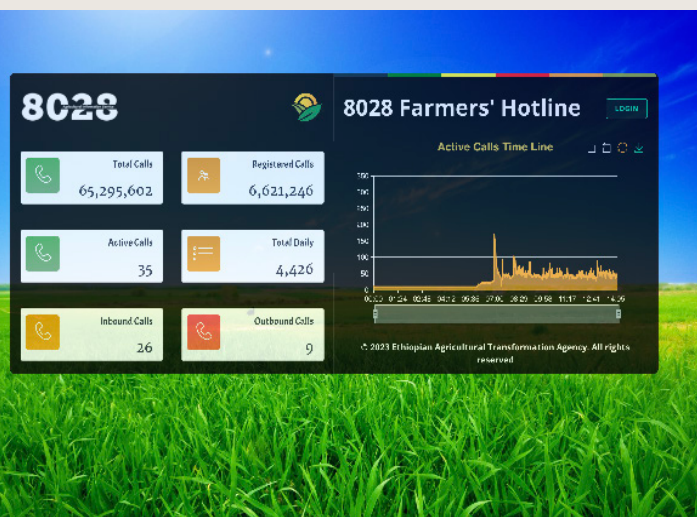
The FARM project provides an 18 million euro grant from AFD and a 14-million-euro grant delegated by the EU to AFD.

The FARM launch workshop marked the formal commencement of the project in the presence of all relevant national and regional stakeholders to pave the way for proper implementation of the project's planned activities and to ensure that the project's results, effects, and objectives are understood and achieved. The workshop also helped raise awareness about the possible roles of each stakeholder in the project. An insight on the project boundaries, duration of the project, and budget was also shared among participating stakeholders to form a clear alignment on the project and enable full collaboration.



Digital Agriculture Services Re-operationalized in Tigray Region

The ATI's Digital Agriculture team from the Headquarters and Tigray center conducted an awareness creation workshop and training sessions for data collectors and other key stakeholders from August 3–5, 2023, at Axum, Tigray. The workshop and training session aimed to give participants a general overview of the recently re-operationalized digital agriculture services, the National Market Information System (NMIS) and the 8028 Farmer Hotline (FHL), to enable them to use the services and notify smallholder farmers and other users about the digital platforms and their functions. Forty-one data collectors and key woreda, zonal, and regional officials—of whom 16 were women—from 11 woredas attended the event.



An MoU signing to strengthen Private Sector Engagement in the Agriculture Sector

The ATI and Lersha, a pioneering private digital agriculture platform in Ethiopia, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to work together on digitizing Ethiopian agriculture on August 28, 2023. The MoU focuses on the implementation of a comprehensive farmer digital profile to allow various digital agriculture services to be provided to smallholder farmers with a diverse range of priority value chains (commodities) and inclusive youth job creation in the Farmer Production Clusters (FPC) woredas.

This collaboration will be carried out over a period of three years, commencing in September 2023 and concluding in August 2026. The scope of this collaboration will encompass the Amhara, Oromia, Somalia, Tigray, the former SNNPR, and Sidama regions, covering a wide regional landscape with the potential to include 150 FPC woredas.

The primary focus of the partnership lies in developing and enhancing value chains that include production and management components. The key value chain commodities of focus will be wheat, soybean, malt barley, rice, maize, avocado, tomato, onion, and livestock (fattening and feed production).

Under the terms of the MoU, the two partners will create digital profiles for over 1 million smallholder farmers, provide agro-climate advisory and fertilizer recommendations to registered 1,050,000 FPC small-holder farmers through the establishment of personalized digital profiles, empower and train 82,500 aspiring youths (of which 70 percent are women) by delivering a contextualized training program, and onboard to engage 55,000 trained young trainees in Lersha's digital platform to offer a one-stop digital solution and strengthen ATI's 8028 Farmer's Hotline and the National Market Information Service (NMIS).





A 10-year Agricultural Transformation Plan Developed for the SWEPR

The ATI, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), developed the 10-year Agricultural Transformation Strategy for the Southwest Ethiopia People Regional (SWEPR) State. A final validation workshop was held on September 10, 2023, with key stakeholders from the region before the official handover of the strategy.

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood in the Southwest Ethiopia People Region (SWEPR), with 95 percent of the population engaged in crop and livestock production. Crop production in the region is dominated by commercial crops, vegetables, and fruits, with an estimated value of 190 billion ETB, while the livestock population in the region reaches 44 million, with poultry, cattle, and bee colonies taking the major share.

To leverage the region's huge potential in crops, livestock, and natural resources, a holistic regional agricultural strategy needed to be developed. Thus, the region requested to collaborate with the MoA and ATI to develop a strategic plan to transform the agriculture of the SWEPR.

The work conducted focuses on 13 key thematic areas across the crop, livestock, and natural resources sub-sectors while also incorporating cross-cutting initiatives such as climate change and rural finance. A four-phased approach including current state assessment, challenge identification and prioritization, intervention identification, and implementation planning was implemented to develop the agricultural transformation plan.

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Photo courtesy of PMO

The ATI Joined the Green Legacy Initiative by Planting Avocado Seedlings

The ATI senior management and staff joined the second phase of the Green Legacy Initiative, held under the theme “Let’s Plant Our Future Today”, by planting avocado seedlings at Shere Dibabdiba Kebele of East Shoa Zone, Oromia Region.

During the tree planting event, Dr. Mandefro Nigussie, CEO of the ATI, highlighted the contribution of the Green Legacy Initiative to sustainable agriculture by reducing land degradation and mitigating climate change consequences. He particularly acknowledged the alignment of the second phase of the Green Legacy Initiative’s focus on planting horticultural crops with ATI’s activities. Following the planting occasion, ATI management and staff visited the avocado seedlings planted the previous year.

The Green Legacy Initiative is a large-scale tree-planting campaign that was launched by the Ethiopian government in 2019 with the goal of planting 5 billion trees by 2022. This initiative is aimed at restoring degraded landscapes, mitigating climate change, and improving soil fertility.

Agriculture plays a significant role in this initiative, as the trees being planted are a mix of indigenous and non-indigenous species chosen for their ability to provide food, fodder, and income for rural communities, support biodiversity, and also address climate change. The Green Legacy Initiative is also creating green jobs for both urban and rural communities involved in planting, monitoring, and caring for the trees. For instance, the initiative is employing youth and low-income communities to plant trees in degraded areas while also training them on sustainable land management practices.



Additionally, the initiative promotes agroforestry, which is the practice of integrating trees into

agricultural landscapes to enhance the productivity of farming systems. This practice can help improve soil health and water retention and also mitigate the effects of climate change. In the second phase, Ethiopia will plant another 25 billion seedlings.



Ethiopia will plant
25 billion seedlings
in the second phase

Impact Story



Felekech Bafa, a 40-year-old woman, is a banana farmer in the former Southern Nation and Nationality People Region (SNNPR), Gamo Zone, Merab Abaya Woreda, and Omo Lante Kebele. She is married and has four children.

Agriculture is the basis of her family's livelihood. She started working in banana farming when she got married. As she had inherited the traditional farming techniques, productivity was so low. This used to keep her constantly worried and looking to improve her farming techniques.

Three years ago, Felekech got the opportunity to attend a training session conducted by the ATI for Kebele experts and farmers about the Farmer Production Cluster (FPC), an approach that aims to enhance farmers' adoption of full-package agricultural inputs and technology. The FPC clusters farmers together for faster diffusion of research recommendations, which improve farming practices and facilitate access to input finance by leveraging scale as well as increasing marketable surplus. It also makes modern technology, including machinery, more affordable, fosters bargaining power, and enables stronger market linkages, improving profitability through enhanced commercialization. The ultimate goal of FPC is to establish farmer-owned enterprises. The FPC intervention covers selected grain and horticulture commodities.

It didn't take long for Felekech to embrace the concept of the FPC. She immediately gathered 26 other farmers (7 of them women) and established the cluster with 31 hectares of land, to which she contributed 1.5 hectares.



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She remembers the first time she received 50 seedlings of an improved variety of banana, which have brought a significant change to her productivity. Before enrolling in the FPC, she used to harvest only four to five quintals per hectare. Now, her productivity has increased fourfold, yielding up to 20 quintals per hectare. As her produce is of high quality, she can sell it for a higher price. She joyfully talks about the encouraging results and expresses her gratitude to the ATI: "Some of the products are consumed by my family, and the remaining are taken to the market. With the money I make from selling, I buy other food items." She smiles and adds, "We (she and her family) are grateful to the ATI and all those who helped us receive good agronomic practices through access to extension services and experience-sharing with farmers in the FP. If we had not been supported this way, we would have still been farming traditionally and would not have enhanced our production."

As she embarked on a supervisor's role, her confidence in women's capacity to manage their farms was boosted. "Farming is not just for men. Although the cultural influence is heavy, women are just as capable of working anywhere as men. We are all equal. But women get more affected when there is a difficult situation in the family, due to their important roles at the family level. For instance, they are more affected when a child drops out of school or goes to bed hungry; when there is not enough money. That is why I encourage and train myself in cluster farming practices," says Felekech.

Felekech feels she is leading a better life now. The lifestyle and diet of her family have improved. "Because I earn a better income, I can send my kid to a university," she proudly reflects. She is optimistic that farmers will earn more when a processing industry is established.

Since the start of the FPC project in the former SNNPR, 13,886 farmers have benefited from the project.

