

MONTHLY UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 2009

Agribusiness and Trade Expansion Program

“INCREASING RURAL INCOMES AND EMPLOYMENT”

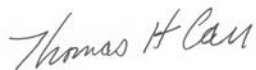
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FROM THE PROJECT DIRECTOR

September marks the end of the program year and a good time to look back on the accomplishments of the last 12 months. What is noticeable from both this monthly edition and the others before it is the increase in the participation of USAID-ATEP lead clients and partners in the program's activities. In fact, it is clear that on an ever increasing frequency program participants are taking on more responsibility.

Mentioned in this edition are the Ethiopian Veterinarian Association, Axum Greenline, Metema Agricultural Research Station, Pittards Plc, and many other participating firms and agencies.

Readers of this newsletter will see further evidence of stakeholder ownership and sustained initiatives in the next 12 months and I will endeavor, as we move into the fourth year of USAID-ATEP, that our role transitions from implementer to that of supporter.



Thomas H. Carr, Chief of Party
USAID Agribusiness and Trade Expansion Program



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Program participants learn about Niger seed multiplication at a training visit in Oromia.

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USAID Agribusiness and Trade Expansion Program

This project is implemented by Fintrac Inc., a US agribusiness consulting firm. Consortium members include Boot Coffee Consulting & Training, the Economic Competitiveness Group, Manchester Trade, and the Rainforest Alliance. It covers four agricultural production sectors in four regions of Ethiopia which are supported by business development and health programs. For more information, contact USAID-ATEP at:

Ki-Ab Building, 4th Floor Alexander Pushkin Street
PO Box 70696 | Kirkos Subcity | Kebele 23, House #1123 | Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Tel: 251-11-3720060 | Fax: 251-11-3720102
atep@fintrac.com

● PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Cooperative and tannery leaders trained in HIV/AIDS policy and prevention

More than 120 cooperative managers, union leaders, board members and tannery managers in Dansha, Humera, Metema and Bahirdar were trained this month in workplace HIV/AIDS prevention policy and programming. The participants included four farmer cooperative unions (FCUs) with 19,000 members engaged in sesame production, and two tanneries with more than 400 employees.

The training is designed to mainstream HIV/AIDS activities through workplace prevention policies and programming. USAID-AATEP partners CVM/Gonder, Tigray Youth Association and Ossa Bahirdar conducted the training with financial and technical support from USAID-AATEP.

After the training, the companies and cooperatives established 17 HIV/AIDS committees with 145 members, and 190 peer educators. Basic trainings will be conducted with committee members and peer educators to establish workplace HIV/AIDS policies and build capacity to run interventions that include care and support programs.

Pilot program showing benefits of diazinon in fight against ectoparasites

More than 50 percent of processed skins are rejected in Ethiopia because of the “Ekek” ectoparasite disease spread by lice and keds. The disease was identified in the early 1990s by a FAO project that also recommended diazinon as the most cost effective way to control the disease.

Under a partnership with the Ethiopian Veterinarian Association (EVA), the HSL team started a pilot project to demonstrate the efficacy of diazinon in controlling Ekek and to establish a pre-harvest traceability program. The project was launched in partnership with the Ethiopian Tannery, Pittards and Debre Birhan Research Institute with an estimated budget of 800,000 birr through cost sharing. The trials will be conducted on 1,220 sheep by the Dibre Birhan Research Institute.

This project is designed to demonstrate the positive effect of diazinon treatment on the parasites causing Ekek. The skins of Menz and Washera sheep breeds will be analyzed to determine their respective resistance to Ekek under the treatment. The trials will also demonstrate that parasite-free sheep from birth should have no Ekek defects when compared to those that had the parasite and were later treated.



Photo by Fintrac
Visitors survey tomato field trials at Melkassa Agricultural Research Center (MARC).

● QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

New hybrid vegetable seeds now available to smallholders

One of the major challenges of the Ethiopian agriculture sector is the shortage of improved seed varieties. USAID-AATEP, in collaboration with Axum Greenline Seed Company and Melkassa Agricultural Research Center (MARC), has registered three new tomato varieties for use in Ethiopia: Shanty, Irma and Onion (Neptune). USAID-AATEP Communication Specialist Beamlak Tesfaye interviewed Axum Greenline Deputy General Manager Mulugeta Endihnew and the company's Senior Agronomist Oli Olani about the company and its work with growers.

Q: What should we know about Axum Greenline?

A: Axum Greenline is a company engaged in the business of importing and distributing agricultural inputs including seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, bio-controls, sprayers, pruners and planting materials. When first established, Axum targeted the Ethiopian flower industry, for which we were supplying greenhouses and irrigation equipment. Recognizing the progress of the Ethiopian fruit and vegetable industry and other out-field crops, Axum started expanding the range of its supplies and began working with USAID-AATEP.

We are agents for more than 10 international companies that provide a variety of agricultural inputs that we supply. Working with these companies has made our supply inventory reliable and enabled us to extend guarantees for our clients.

(Continued on page 2.....)

● **AT YOUR SERVICE: ASSALIF DEMISSIE**

USAID-ATEP's Assalif Demissie is managing the PEPFAR-funded health sector of USAID-ATEP, which incorporates HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support into the program's agricultural activities. The sector is improving HIV/AIDS prevention, care and services for program clients. Targeted groups include employees and their families from client companies and farms in 45 woredas of the program's four targeted regions: Amhara, Tigray, SNNPR and Oromia. The sector is staffed by three field health advisers and a grants specialist. The program works with clients through grant awards to 12 local NGOs based throughout the regions.

Prior to joining USAID-ATEP, Demissie gained more than a decade of experience at governmental and non-governmental organizations with a range of health sector responsibilities. He has a BSc in nursing, is married and recently became a father.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.
 Reporters interview USAID-ATEP Health Unit Manager Assalif Demissie during the program orientation meeting at Pacific Hotel in Addis Ababa.

(Continued from page 2.....)

Q: Who are your customers and what range of seeds are you supplying?

A: We are supplying inputs for all flower farms in Ethiopia, and nearly 80 percent of our sales are generated from these farms. We are also supplying hybrid seeds to commercial and smallholder farmers in different parts of the country.

Regarding seed supply, we are working on registration of a variety of seeds that we are sourcing from an Israeli company, Hazera. Following the trials conducted in collaboration with USAID-ATEP, we have registered three new hybrid seed varieties of tomatoes and onions. Additional varieties of cotton, wheat and hot pepper are also ready for registration by the National Seed Release Committee following the successful trials. We are the first seed company in Ethiopia to register hybrid vegetable seeds.

Q: Are these new varieties in the market now and what are you doing to introduce these varieties to growers?

A: Yes, these varieties are available in the market for both smallholder and commercial farmers. Prior to the registration, Axum was importing these varieties for commercial farms with import permits. We were not allowed to sell them to small-scale farmers. But now these varieties are available for smallholder farmers following the trials and registration. The purpose of the trials at Melkassa Agricultural Research Center (MARC)

was to ensure that these new varieties are suitable for small scale farming.

What we would like to emphasize is that Axum is not expecting a big boom market for these varieties because the hybrid seeds are more expensive compared to the local varieties and need special care. Following the registration, we are training smallholder farmers in the Amhara and Oromia Regions on these new varieties and establishing demonstration sites in collaboration with farmer unions. We are also trying to show them the cost-benefit analysis of having these varieties over the local varieties. To date, we have marketed about 200 kg of onion seeds and more than 1 million tomato seeds.

Q: What are the positive features of these new varieties when compared to the local varieties?

A: The new varieties are hybrid seeds unlike the local varieties, which are open pollinated. These varieties are disease resistant, early maturing, have longer shelf life, high yielding and can survive both cold and dry seasons. Any other associated technology is not required to grow these varieties. When compared with local varieties, their yield is four times higher. The onion varieties can give more than 40,000 kg/hectare and the tomato varieties more than 70,000 kg/hectare.

Q: Can we say that the price of these new varieties is reasonable especially for smallholders?

A: The varieties are reasonably priced when considering the yields they give and their outstanding characteristics, such as longer shelf life, low consumption of water and others stated earlier.

● PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

USAID-ATEP drafts HIV/AIDS policy

Recognizing the seriousness of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and its impact on households and workplaces, USAID-ATEP drafted its first HIV/AIDS workplace policy. The draft policy was developed by a committee formed during the third quarterly staff meeting in collaboration with Fintrac management.

The draft policy has six sections including: a policy statement, objectives and scope, specific provisions, policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and budget and finance. The policy will be adopted and implemented in consultation with program employees, Fintrac management and specialists at all levels.

The policy is an important step in developing a consistent and equitable approach to enhance HIV/AIDS awareness among USAID-ATEP employees and their family members and make available the necessary tools for providing information, care and support. The overall objective is providing a framework for action to heighten awareness and reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS and to serve as a model for USAID-ATEP clients.

Program teaches farmers to grow new sesame varieties

The oilseeds and pulses team held a sesame seed multiplication field day on September 23 at Metema Agricultural Research Center in collaboration with the Amhara Regional Agricultural Research Institute (ARARI) and Gonder Agricultural Research Center (GARC). The event was attended by regional officials, agricultural experts and commercial and smallholder farmers.

The field day introduced farmers to two high yielding and disease resistant sesame varieties. Following the harvest at the end of October, the new varieties will be registered by the National Seed Release Committee and be made available for smallholder farmers.

As a side event, training in basic HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention as well as use of condoms was also conducted for the participants by USAID-ATEP Field Health Advisor Alemneh Tadele. At the end of October, more than 40,000 condoms will be distributed to the farmers.



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

Farmers learn how to use compost in coffee production during a training session at Kumato Kebele in Dara Woreda, SNNPR.



USAID-ATEP Field Health Adviser Kelemua Bogale visits program client Awassa Greenwood Farm in Ziway.



Representatives from Ethiopia Tannery, Pittards, Debre Birhan Research Center and USAID-ATEP pose for a photo after meeting to discuss HSL activities.