

## SUCCESS STORY

# Good agricultural practices boost sesame yields in Humera

Many oilseed farmers in Ethiopia are unfamiliar with Good Agricultural Practices such as proper land preparation, crop rotation and Integrated Pest Management (IPM). With USAID's Agribusiness and Trade Expansion Program (ATEP), however, that is rapidly changing. Located in the equatorial belt, Ethiopia has an ideal climate for the production of oilseeds and pulses, and is a major producer in East Africa of highly valued white sesame, especially in the northern region of Humera. Although sesame is one of Ethiopia's main exports, volumes do not meet demand because of production shortfalls.

Like many other sesame farmers in Humera, Gebre Yohannes Asgedom relied on traditional growing methods resulting in low yields and high production costs. In late 2007, the sesame crop in Humera was affected by flooding and widespread pest problems. Many sesame producers were forced to replace crops with sorghum. Those who continued with sesame production had poor yields averaging only 250 kg per hectare.

In response to this and other challenges in Humera, USAID-ATEP is showing farmers like Yohannes how to apply GAPs. USAID-ATEP Agronomist Yitbarek Liben provided technical assistance at Yohannes' 12-hectare farm, which serves as a demonstration site for project trainings. Yohannes was shown how to prepare land to improve soil composition, and introduced to high quality seeds, proper planting and spacing techniques, weeding and IPM. He also received a sesame production manual in the Tigrina language for use as a reference during production. The result was a substantial increase in yields: Yohannes harvested 5,000 kilograms (420 kg per hectare) on his 12 hectares of land, 50 percent higher than the previous season, and 170 kg per hectare higher than average sesame yields in Humera. Moreover, GAPs such as proper land preparation, use of quality seeds and timely weeding reduced his production costs from \$548 per hectare (\$6,576 total) to \$361 per hectare (\$4,332 total), a drop of 34 percent. Following the harvest, Yohannes decided to store his product until the market offered more competitive prices. Because sesame has more than doubled in price since November 2007, Yohannes is in an even better position to increase his net income.

"My business has now been profitable with the assistance of USAID. Encouraged by this I am planning to expand my farm," Yohannes said.



Photos by Fintrac Inc.

Gebre Yohannes Asgedom improved his yields and lowered production costs by using Good Agricultural Practices.



**To date, 150 people have attended USAID-ATEP training days and workshops on sesame production in Humera. This includes 60 MoARD development agents and sesame experts as well as 45 farmer clients. In addition, 76 farmers like Gebre Yohannes participated in an on-farm field day addressing problems in sesame production. Following their participation, the newly-trained development agents have in turn trained 377 farmers in Humera, with a further 1,000 planned, creating more opportunities for farmers to increase sales and boost Ethiopia's sesame exports.**