

Monthly Update – March 2011

## Capacity to Improve Agriculture and Food Security Program “Addressing Constraints for Successful Agriculture”

### FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Welcome to the Capacity to Improve Agriculture and Food Security (CIAFS) project, funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and implemented by Fintrac Inc. and local partner First Consult. USAID-CIAFS is a four-year project, scheduled to run from 2011-2015, and will integrate strategic capacity building, capturing best practices, and monitoring and evaluation system support. The goal is to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of Ethiopian agriculture and increase local capacity.

The program offers a bold approach to agriculture sector development by targeting Ethiopian agents of change and allied agribusinesses such as policymakers, civil society, farmers, processors, traders, and exporters. This bulletin presents monthly highlights of program activities, including emerging results. It will also showcase client success stories and how our work is improving agricultural practices and pinpointing challenges to industry growth.

*Teshome Lemma, Chief of Party,  
Capacity to Improve Agriculture and Food Security*



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

**USAID-CIAFS will help improve agricultural productivity, benefitting individuals all along the value chain and ultimately strengthening the industry as a whole.**

### RAPID STARTUP

USAID-CIAFS entered startup on February 12. The startup team, consisting of local project staff and representatives from Fintrac's US home office, mobilized activities within three weeks of award. Activities so far include:

- Identifying and renting office space
- Recruiting local staff
- Holding initial meetings with USAID personnel
- Training new staff in administration and Fintrac's Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system
- Procuring computer equipment and software
- Meeting with USAID and government and private sector counterparts
- Submitting the Annual Work Plan, incorporating input from USAID and project stakeholders
- Identifying food security topics that may need further analysis, at the request of the Ministry of Agriculture

### USAID-CIAFS MEETS WITH THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE

USAID-CIAFS was officially introduced to the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) on March 17, 2011. State Minister Ato Wondirad Mandefro received the USAID-CIAFS team, USAID/BEAT Office Chief Daniel Moore, and the incoming COTR, Semachew Kassahun, at his office. The team explained activities anticipated in the work plan, including leadership training for MoA officials and other stakeholders, scheduled for this quarter in collaboration with USAID's LEAD-Africa project. The team also briefed the minister on an upcoming USAID-CIAFS workshop to formally launch the program and solicit ideas for priority activities from MoA and other stakeholders. The minister offered his support in introducing USAID-CIAFS to his team to evaluate and prioritize the MoA's leadership and management needs.

### STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

In the first month of implementation, USAID-CIAFS held meetings with national and international organizations to get insight into the constraints to agricultural production and food security. The meetings helped the program identify

critical policy gaps and tailor activities to address those constraints. The process helped establish relationships and create a shared vision that will foster future collaboration. Meetings have been held with senior officials from the Agricultural Transformation Agency, LEAD-Africa, the Institute for International Education (IIE), the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Association, FirstConsult, and the Regional Bureaus of Agriculture in Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, and Tigray regions.

In March, FirstConsult Managing Director Nebil Kellow met with government, donor and business leaders. Kellow is helping USAID-CIAFS target specific opportunities to address structural constraints to Ethiopian agriculture. The meeting focused on developing trade opportunities for Ethiopian products and ensuring food security and sustainability of production. Other topics included Ethiopia’s performance in international markets, critical trade issues affecting competitiveness, and capacity development.

## TARGETING KEY AGENTS OF CHANGE

USAID-CIAFS will train “agents of change” based on practical assessments, using knowledge gained from extensive field work and exposure to the agriculture sector. The program’s internationally trained policy reform experts will work through in-country networks to ensure that our capacity-building efforts are grounded in the issues that most affect farmers, traders and others in agriculture value chains. We will ensure strong feedback loops between our technical analysis and capacity-building efforts to help meet the GOE’s goal of achieving middle income status by 2020.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

USAID-CIAFS will emphasize a participatory “learning by doing” approach. Teams will include stakeholders from government, the private sector and civil society, led by experienced policy makers and renowned experts, to address issues at all levels. Capacity building will include working sessions and short courses, best practice case study analyses, diagnostic tools, and observational trips where appropriate. USAID-CIAFS will ensure that prominent Ethiopian institutions are part of high-profile events and that papers and recommendations are distributed widely. The program is organizing its first major event for 100 participants from the MoA, regional bureaus of agriculture, and the private sector. The training will be co-hosted by USAID’s LEAD-Africa project.

## ANALYTICAL STUDIES

Using Ethiopian and international experts, USAID-CIAFS will deepen the existing body of analysis on agricultural best practices and alternatives through analytical studies and project evaluations that support the reform agenda. USAID-CIAFS will demonstrate the benefits of targeted reforms through consistent communication using diverse media, focusing on the potential for job growth, productivity increases, increased food availability, and lower food prices. International and regional best practices, including Ethiopian successes such as the establishment of ECX, land administration certification and GOE adoption of national guidelines for livestock intervention will be highlighted. USAID-CIAFS will research the available information on best practices and produce summary articles that can be easily distributed to stakeholders and others.

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