

BENEFIT – Integrated Seed Sector Development in Ethiopia, 2016-2019



Project summary



The Integrated Seed Sector Development project in Ethiopia (ISSD Ethiopia) is implemented under the umbrella of the Bilateral Ethiopian Netherlands Effort for Food, Income and Trade Partnership (BENEFIT Partnership). The project goal is to improve female and male smallholder farmer access to and use of quality seed of new, improved, and/or farmer preferred varieties to sustainably increase agricultural productivity. This brief summarizes our approach, key partners, and the six projects components.

Improved access to quality seed for farmers

The government of Ethiopia prioritizes agricultural development as key to accelerating growth, overcoming poverty and enhancing food security. Increased agricultural productivity is vital for stimulating growth throughout the economy. Improving farmer access to quality seed of new, improved, and/or farmer preferred varieties is crucial to increasing agricultural productivity and thereby contributing to food security, increased income and economic development in the country.

Integrated seed sector development

ISSD is an inclusive approach that recognizes and builds upon a diversity of seed systems. ISSD recognizes the relevance of informal and formal seed systems, as well as the complementary roles of the private and public sectors. The ISSD approach promotes entrepreneurship and market orientation, and facilitates the development and implementation of enabling and evolving policies, for establishing a dynamic seed sector. Building upon a diversity of seed systems, interventions guided by ISSD foster pluralism in the interests of food and nutritional security and economic development.

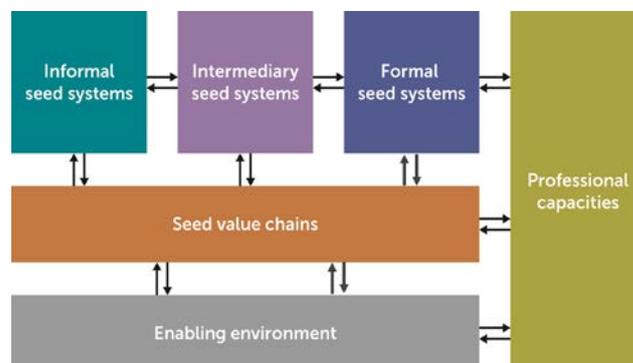
Partners in ISSD Ethiopia

The project is a joint effort of Bahir Dar University, Haramaya University, Hawassa University, Mekelle University, Oromia Seed Enterprise, the Ethiopian Seed Association and Centre for Development Innovation of Wageningen UR. Partners include governmental organizations at federal, regional and local level, non-governmental organizations, development organizations, and seed businesses operating at different scales. The project is funded by the Directorate General for International Cooperation through the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Addis Ababa.

Components of ISSD Ethiopia

ISSD Ethiopia supports farmers and farmer groups to improve seed management practices in informal seed

systems. In intermediary seed systems it assists seed producer cooperatives in taking seed production up as local businesses. The project strengthens the capacities of small, medium, and national seed enterprises to produce and market quality seed in formal seed systems. ISSD Ethiopia also addresses seed value chain bottlenecks across these seed systems and works to improve the enabling environment throughout the entire seed sector. The project puts strong emphasis on strengthening the capacities of seed professionals. ISSD project components are illustrated in the figure below.



ISSD Ethiopia project components

Informal seed systems

ISSD Ethiopia works with farmers and farmer groups to strengthen their capacities in seed production and management practices, building on local knowledge and responding to local demand. Working in remote and less favourable agricultural areas, we focus on crops important for food security and try to help farmers manage risk and become more resilient. ISSD works with a wide diversity of local and improved varieties. Women have a key role in this seed system and are a focus in terms of capacity building and training, strengthening seed networks to improve access and use of quality seed, and action research and validation to promote technology development and deployment. This is a new component in the 2016-2019 project phase.

Intermediary seed systems

ISSD Ethiopia supports seed producer cooperatives in the production and marketing of quality seed of both local and improved varieties. The objective is to support cooperatives to become more professionally organized, self-reliant, entrepreneurial, and ultimately to become sustainable local seed businesses (LSBs). LSBs may function as out-growers to unions, and public and private seed companies, and/or market quality seed of a diverse range of crops and varieties locally. In the latter case, they cater to a niche in the seed market that is neither attractive for large private seed companies nor adequately addressed by the public seed enterprises. In the former phase (2012-2015) ISSD Ethiopia worked with 288 LSBs across 137 *woredas* (administrative divisions in Ethiopia). These LSBs produced 31,361 tonnes of botanical seed and 6,971 tonnes of seed potatoes in 2014, thereby satisfying, for e.g., 32.2% and 20.9% of the estimated national seed use for wheat and potato. Over the past four years, quality seed of as many as 194 different varieties of over 25 crops was produced. The project continues to work with 25 LSBs directly and 145 LSBs indirectly. Well performing LSBs serve as reference for other seed producer cooperatives and for partners interested in adopting the LSB approach. Partners in scaling the LSB approach include universities; research institutes; *woreda* offices of the Bureau of Agriculture; regional seed enterprises; private seed companies and NGOs.

Formal seed systems

Most private small and medium scale seed producers used to operate as out-growers to regional seed enterprises. In the former phase (2012-2015) ISSD Ethiopia promoted and supported these seed producers through training and coaching as a means to strengthen their capacities in seed production as well as business management. This enabled them to become more competitive and less dependent as out-growers. Many obtained certificates of competence and now function as independent businesses. ISSD Ethiopia will continue to support 25 small and medium size enterprises and national companies with strong business potential. ISSD will support them to find specific market niches that provide viable seed business opportunities. ISSD supports four public seed enterprises in Ethiopia to enhance their business orientation and improve their overall capacity.

Seed value chains

ISSD Ethiopia aims to identify, prioritize and solve seed value chain bottlenecks in all seed systems. The project promotes strategic linkages among seed producers and input and service providers along seed

value chains in order to improve efficiency. Specific attention is paid to engagement with Dutch and international companies involved in seed and seed related services, to explore and identify business opportunities and support the development of business to business (B2B) opportunities. Seed core groups and stakeholder platforms at regional and national level identify and address challenges and opportunities in specific value chains in regards to the access, availability, quality, and utilization of seed. In its former phase (2012-2015) ISSD Ethiopia has successfully worked on seed value chain bottlenecks of quality assurance; one result is the approval of seed regulatory authorities in Amhara and SNNPR by the respective regional state councils. Moreover, the project supported piloting of direct seed marketing activities on a wide scale; and supported the establishment of specialized seed units within regional agricultural research institutes for coordinating early generation seed production.

Enabling environment

Agriculture is a dynamic sector and policy makers should be able to adapt to changing circumstances, diverse environments and societal demands. ISSD Ethiopia aims to advocate the embedding of evidence based innovations in policy frameworks, and to support their implementation. Policy makers now better recognize the value of ISSD interventions. Advocacy has resulted in the recognition of the importance of the informal and intermediate seed systems in providing farmers access to seed of locally demanded crops and varieties. This is illustrated by the 2013 Seed Proclamation and 2014 national Seed Systems Strategy. Key Ethiopian ministry of agriculture partners have acknowledged the contributions of ISSD in addressing seed sector issues in terms of both policy and practice. As a result, ISSD Ethiopia has become a focal point for policy makers to collect opinions on strategies to address seed sector challenges.

Professional capacities

ISSD Ethiopia emphasizes the capacity development of staff and partners and fosters a learning culture, both within the programme and beyond. ISSD and partners organize trainings and a variety of complimentary activities to promote an ISSD community of practice. Using a diverse range of documentation materials and tools, and a variety of communication channels the former project (2012-2015) has enhanced awareness on ISSD within the agricultural sector in Ethiopia.

For further information please visit
<http://www.issdethiopia.org>

Further information

ISSD Ethiopia – Programme Management Unit
info@issdethiopia.org
www.issdethiopia.org
Mohammed Hassena, mohammed.hassenabeko@wur.nl

ISSD Ethiopia – Wageningen University and Research centre, Centre for Development Innovation
<http://tinyurl.com/ISSDethiopiaCDI>
Stephen Walsh, stephen.walsh@wur.nl