

# ENSP Newsletter

Ethiopia-Netherlands  
**SEEDPARTNERSHIP**



Issue 07, March 2024

## About this newsletter

The purpose of the ENSP newsletter is to provide relevant information on the latest developments and current issues in the Ethiopian seed sector and the partnership support activities.

In this issue we highlight the major activities that have taken place between Jan. and March 2024.

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## Seed CEOs: Women entrepreneurs cultivating seed business success in Ethiopia

In an effort to support local seed companies, ENSP has recognized the need to empower women in the seed business. Despite initial challenges in including women-owned seed businesses in the program, a new strategy has been implemented. ENSP has launched an incubator specifically tailored for female-led small- and medium-scale enterprises in seed production, seedling preparation, input supply, and fertilizer production. This initiative runs parallel to the ongoing efforts to enhance the seed production of 10 domestic seed businesses. The program, which ran

from March to October 2023, provided customized support to women involved in the seed value chain, taking into account their educational background, business type, and developmental stage. This proactive approach aims to create a more inclusive and diverse landscape within the seed industry, ultimately contributing to the overall growth and success of the sector.

Empowering women entrepreneurs is not only about individual success stories; it is about driving economic growth and

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## Seed CEOs: Women entrepreneurs cultivating seed ...

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community development. A study by the Mastercard Foundation in 2020 revealed that closing the gender gap in entrepreneurship could potentially add USD 5 trillion to the global GDP by 2025. This economic boost is particularly crucial in developing countries like Ethiopia, where women entrepreneurs play a vital role in supporting their families and uplifting communities out of poverty.

The program conducted a thorough needs assessment to design tailored support for women entrepreneurs in the seed value chain. It offered a comprehensive training module covering essential areas for business success, including business model development, market access strategies, financial literacy, and presentation skills.

To further equip the participants, technical experts visited their farms, nurseries, and shops, providing guidance on good agricultural practices. Guest speakers also delivered short lectures during the training sessions. These were complemented by coaching sessions to provide additional support to the participants with their assignments and to clarify any unclear points. Additionally, a three-day experience-sharing visit and a pitching competition with prize money were organized as highlights of the incubator. The success of the first round of the program led to the launch of a second-round incubator program on March 5th, 2024, with an increased number of participants from five to thirteen new participants in the seed



value chain. The major challenge faced on the first round was finding women-owned business in the seed value chain. For the second round, the team has made a significant effort to find more women through their network. As a result, women from different parts of the seed value chain were found. The training modules and approach were customized to best meet the specific needs of this new group, building on the successes and challenges from the first round.

Participants of the first incubator program shared their experiences, with one stating, "My previous approach to customer acquisition was limited, but



now I have learned new and effective methods to attract and retain customers."

Another participant mentioned, "I have gained a deeper understanding of the significance of effectively marketing a brand." Empowering women plays a crucial role in Ethiopia's economic growth and community development. The ENSP is committed to continuing its support and promotion of women-led businesses in Ethiopia's seed value chain. By empowering women entrepreneurs, ENSP is contributing not only to individual success but also to the overall economic development of Ethiopia.



## EAA partner with private seed companies to pilot variety testing for registration

It is well known that a significant development in Ethiopia's agricultural sector had happened with the ratification of the new seed law, Proclamation 1288/2023. This law brings about three variety registration systems, marking a pivotal shift by allowing private companies to directly participate in the variety testing for registration system.

With Article 4 (1b) of the seed proclamation, applicants are now empowered to conduct variety performance or adaptation trials, DUS test, or both. This is followed by evaluation from the National Variety Evaluation Committee and final approval by the National Variety Release Committee. This progressive approach opens doors for private seed companies to actively engage in the registration of crop varieties, thereby contributing to the overall growth of the sector.

In line with this groundbreaking provision, ENSP in collaboration with EAA set a pilot to involve of private seed companies in variety adaptation trials. This initiative holds immense significance as it presents a new and valuable learning opportunity for the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority as well as the companies.

Four private seed companies, namely Nunhems, GAWIT int. business plc, GREENLIFE, and Markos PLC, have been selected to undertake variety adaptation trials for the registration of selected vegetable crops. Their selection is based on their technical capacity, experience

in variety registration, and reputation within the industry.

The selected crops for this pilot initiative are tomato, onion, and pepper, with each company assigned to conduct the adaptation trial for one crop. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed among the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority, Seed Companies, and Sticthing Wageningen Research Ethiopia

Authority outlined the expected procedures and practices during the adaptation trial. This included crucial aspects such as standard checks, application procedures, site requirements, evaluation timelines, and report writing formats. The interactive session allowed representatives from the companies to seek clarification on various matters, ensuring a clear understanding of their



(ENSP project).

An orientation meeting was organized for the private seed companies on January 18, 2024, at the SWR office. The objective of this meeting was to familiarize the companies with the processes and technical procedures involved in conducting vegetable varieties adaptation trials for registration. Representatives from the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority, private vegetable seed companies, GIZ/SSAP, and ENSP actively participated in this half-day session.

The meeting addressed past challenges in variety registration, emphasizing the need for improved trial management and cost efficiency. A comprehensive presentation by a representative from the Ethiopian Agricultural

roles and responsibilities.

This orientation meeting signifies a pivotal step in piloting variety testing for registration by private seed companies in Ethiopia. The anticipated benefits extend not only to the participating companies but also to the enhancement of the overall variety registration process in the country. The collaborative efforts between public and private entities pave the way for a more dynamic and inclusive approach towards variety registration. This pilot initiative holds promise for driving sustainable growth and innovation within Ethiopia's seed sector.

## Crop testing protocols for different crops validated

Crop protocols are essential for maintaining standardized procedures and guidelines set by regulatory authorities to uphold the quality, uniformity, and distinctiveness of crop varieties. These protocols are integral part of variety registration and certification process, which are crucial steps in the development and commercialization of new crop varieties. By adhering to these protocols, growers and breeders can ensure that their crop varieties meet the necessary standards for market acceptance and consumer satisfaction. Cognizant of this EAA in collaboration with ENSP developed a draft crop testing protocol for horticultural crops (tomato, onion, pepper, potato, cassava,) and sunflower in 2023.

In line with this, the Ethiopia Netherlands Seed Partnership

(ENSP) in collaboration with the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority (EAA) recently conducted a successful crop protocol validation workshop for horticultural crops and sunflower. The workshop, which took place on January 26, 2024, at Bishoftu, Pyramid Resort, provided a platform for valuable discussions and knowledge exchange in the field of crop variety testing protocol.

The main objective of the workshop was to gather valuable inputs for the enrichment and endorsement of crop protocol documents. It was an important step towards ensuring the quality and standardization of protocols for various crops. During the workshop, protocols for six crops (DUS and NPT) were presented by the task force. These protocols were developed based on the experi-

ence of wheat and barley crop protocols, with the support of GIZ/SSAP, as well as insights from UPOV, Indian, and other countries' experiences.

It's worth noting that these new crop protocols are expected to replace the national variety release guideline and mechanism document that has been in use for years. The aim is to align with international best practices and procedures in variety release and registration, particularly for DUS.

The workshop brought together participants from regional and federal agricultural research centres, Ethiopian Agricultural Authority, private vegetable seed companies, GIZ/SSAP, ATI, HLIs, and ENSP. The diverse representation allowed

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## Vermicompost Production: An emerging business opportunity for young professionals

The Ethiopia Netherlands Seed Partnership (ENSP) recently organized a training session for interns, focusing on the potential of vermicompost production as a viable business opportunity for young professionals. The training was specifically designed for participants of the ENSP internship program, aiming to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to engage in vermicompost production and management as a sustainable business venture.

During the training, interns were provided with in-depth insights into the various techniques and processes involved in vermicompost production. This included guidance on the selection of suitable organic materials, the maintenance of optimal environmental conditions for earthworms, and the methods for harvesting and packaging vermicompost. The practical aspect of the training also involved visits to established entrepreneurs engaged in vermicompost

production and sales, allowing the interns to observe firsthand the production process and engage in discussions with business owners regarding the viability and market-related aspects of the business.

Dr. Mohammed Hassena, ENSP project manager, emphasized the multifaceted objective of the training. Beyond the individual business opportunities for the participants, ENSP aims to promote sustainable agricultural




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## Crop protocols for different crops ...

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for a comprehensive review and discussion of the protocols. One of the key highlights of the workshop was the active participation of all attendees who provided valuable feedback on each document. This collaborative approach ensured that diverse perspectives were considered, leading to a more robust set of protocols.

The workshop marked a significant advancement in the improvement and standardization of testing protocols for horticultural crops and sunflower. The valuable inputs gathered during the workshop will be instrumental in further refining the documents to ensure they adhere to the highest standards and incorporate the latest developments in crop protocol validation.

ENSP look forward to seeing the impact of these validated protocols in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of variety release and registration processes, ultimately contributing to the growth of the seed sector in Ethiopia.



## Promoting sustainable agricultural practices for vegetable production in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is known for its rich agricultural heritage, and vegetable production plays a crucial role in the country's economy. However, the current practices employed by vegetable growers in Ethiopia are not sustainable and pose risks to the environment and human health. In response to this challenge, ENSP project has assessed the existing agricultural practices and facilitated a consultative workshop to explore options for sustainable agricultural practices.

The assessment has highlighted a significant concern regarding the extensive reliance on inorganic fertilizers like UREA, NPS, and KCl, while neglecting the use of organic fertilizers at the field level. Additionally, the uncontrolled use of pesticides without exploring alternative pest management methods has been flagged as

problematic. These practices not only contribute to environmental pollution but also pose potential health and safety risks for both growers and consumers. It is crucial to address these issues to ensure sustainable and responsible agricultural practices. To address these challenges, the consultative workshop held in Addis Ababa brought together key stakeholders, including

representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, research centres, development partners, and local seed distributors. The workshop aimed to explore available sustainable agricultural practices related to vegetable production, particularly focusing

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## Promoting Sustainable Agricultural Practices ...

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on pest management and integrated soil fertility management.

In his opening address, Mr. Abdella Negash, the chief executive officer of the horticulture development department at the Ministry of Agriculture, appreciated the significant contribution of the ENSP project to the to promote sustainable agricultural practices in the development of the seed sector and expressed gratitude for the efforts that have been put forth thus far. He also outlined the objectives of the workshop, which aims to bring together key stakeholders to explore the potential of utilizing available technologies for vegetable crop production within the research system, ultimately promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

During the workshop, researchers from prominent

agricultural research centres presented available sustainable agricultural practice (SAP) technologies, sparking discussions among the participants. The engagement resulted in a consensus among stakeholders on the concept of sustainable agricultural practices and confirmed the readiness of local seed distributors to promote these practices.

Moving forward, the workshop outlined several key action points to promote sustainable agricultural practices for vegetable production. These include verifying integrated soil fertility management technologies, standardizing the application rate and frequency of inorganic fertilizers, promoting soil test-based nutrient management using soil testing KITS, and introducing innovative integrated pest management strategies.

The workshop concluded with a commitment from all participants, including senior researchers, development partners, and government representatives, to actively support the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices in vegetable production. A total of 27 participants from various sectors actively contributed to the discussions and decision-making process.

The outcomes of the consultative workshop signal a positive step towards promoting sustainable agricultural practices for vegetable production in Ethiopia. By harnessing available technologies and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, there is a clear opportunity to enhance the production and productivity of vegetable crops while ensuring the long-term sustainability of Ethiopia's agricultural sector.



Workshop participants



## Vermicompost Production: An emerging business...

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practices through the use of vermicompost as an organic fertilizer, which aligns with sustainable seed production and supply. Dr. Mohammed also encouraged interns to consider diversifying their engagement in the agricultural sector by exploring opportunities in vermicompost production and supply.

The training not only aimed to provide practical knowledge but also to inspire young professionals to consider the potential of vermicompost production as a means of contributing to sustainable agricultural practices and en-

trepreneurial endeavours. As the interns continue their journey with ENSP, they are well-positioned to leverage their training and contribute to the promotion of environmentally friendly and sustainable agricultural practices through vermicompost production.

The training, which took place in Hawssa town from 11th to 12th March 2024, was attended by 15 interns, some of whom had already graduated from the internship program and embarked on their own business ventures. The participants expressed their appreciation for the support provided by the ENSP project and

acknowledged the relevance of the training in preparing them for potential entrepreneurial endeavours in vermicompost production.

The training provided a valuable platform for young professionals to explore the potential of vermicompost production as a sustainable and lucrative business venture. By imparting essential skills and knowledge, ENSP aims to empower interns to actively contribute to the promotion of sustainable agricultural practices and the production of organic fertilizers for sustainable seed production and supply.

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