



Newsletter

Issue 12, June 2025

About this newsletter

ESP is one of SWR Ethiopia projects. The purpose of the ESP 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 April -June 2025.

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Significant step forward in the Ethiopia's variety testing for release and registration

Ethiopia has achieved a significant milestone in its agricultural sector with the implementation of the new Seed Proclamation No. 1288/2023, particularly in the variety release and registration process for wheat and vegetable crops. This marks a major step forward in transforming the system, which was historically fragmented and inefficient due to the involvement of various institutions. However, the new system introduces a streamlined approach by grouping candidate varieties of the same crop—based on their maturity groups—for Distinctness, Uniformity, and Stability (DUS) testing, as

well as National Performance Trial (NPT) testing. This ensures that all varieties are evaluated side by side, fostering greater transparency and comparability. The Ethiopian National Variety Release Committee (NVRC) has made groundbreaking decisions regarding the release and registration of bread wheat and tomato varieties, in alignment with the seed proclamation and the Plant Variety Release and Registration Directive No. 1065/2025. This was made effective with collaboration among key stakeholders in

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Significant step forward in the Ethiopia's variety testing ...

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the agricultural ecosystem. Here's a closer look at what was achieved:

Bread wheat varieties: A Rigorous evaluation process

ESP supported piloting of the new variety registration and release system. Over the past two years (2023 and 2024), Distinctness, uniformity, and stability (DUS) test and national performance trial (NPT) were piloted for the first time in Ethiopia. Given the existing capacity and capability of EAA, the pilot was outsourced to EIAR under the supervision of the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority (EAA). The trials were conducted for three distinct maturity sets-early, medium, and late-ensuring that the varieties were thoroughly assessed for their performance in their specific agro-ecology.

The pilot was implemented following the protocol developed for the testing, a process that underscores the importance of cascading the new law into practice. It also underscores the need for EAA assume its roles and responsibilities as an independent organization to ensure that there will be transparent system of variety release and registration. In this new system, out of 14 bread wheat candidate varieties four outstanding varieties were approved by the NVRC for release and registration, marking the success of the pilot.

Vegetable crops adaptation

In addition to bread wheat, the NVRC also made decisions on the release and registration of three tomato -- varieties for two private seed companies. What sets these crops apart is the involvement of private companies in managing variety adaptation trials by themselves as per the directive 1065/2025 provisions. The technical committee evaluated the performance of these varieties, reflecting a growing trend of public-private partnership in Ethiopia's seed sector.

This approach underscores the importance of empowering private companies to actively participate in variety testing for registration, as it serves to stimulate greater private sector investment within Ethiopia's seed industry. Furthermore, there is a greater expectation that this approach will expedite the introduction of improved crop varieties, effectively addressing the needs of both farmers and consumers.

Collaboration: The key to success

Ethiopian Seed Partnership played a key role in this whole process, both technically and financially. However, it was not alone. Many partners played a role for the achievements we

have witnessed today, which shows how multi-stakeholder collaboration significantly contribute for achievement of common goals. The public research institutes such as the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), Regional Agricultural Research Institutes, and development partners have all played pivotal roles in this journey.

This multi-stakeholder approach has not only strengthened Ethiopia's variety release and registration system but also laid a strong foundation for future advancements in regulatory services.

Looking ahead

Today's milestone is more than just a step forward for Ethiopia's seed sector. It is a leap toward a more resilient, productive, and sustainable seed system. By developing and following a regulatory framework, fostering partnerships, and empowering both public and private actors, Ethiopia is well-positioned to achieve its agricultural transformation goals.

As we celebrate this encouraging achievement, we look forward to seeing the inclusion of other crops in this new system and also look forward to positive impacts these new crop varieties will have on farmers' livelihoods, food security, and the broader agricultural landscape.



Teaming-up and collaborative strategies to enhance HDP nexus for sustainable seed system in fragile and conflict affected states

In an effort to organize the seed sectors of the Somali and Afar Regional States, two separate workshops were held in Jigjiga and Semera towns on May 14 and June 13, 2025, respectively. The primary objective of these workshops is to lay the foundation for coordination mechanisms among humanitarian, development, and peace (HDP) actors within the seed sector to address critical seed sector

that access to high-quality seeds remained a significant hurdle. He expressed hope that the forthcoming Seed Coordination Committee would serve to enhance availability of quality seed within the region. In both regions Dr. Mohammed Hassena and Dr. Dandena Gelmesa from ESP once again led discussions, sharing insights from other regions while emphasizing the importance of adopting the HDP Nexus approach for its potential to canalize

in Somali and Afar regions. This innovative guideline was proposed with the aim of customizing interventions to meet the distinctive needs of each region, drawing inspiration from the positive outcomes witnessed in Tigray. Regional seed sector coordination focal persons

Mr. Abdiwasa Ahmednour representing the Somali region and Habib from the Afar region presented the seed coordination Term of Reference (ToR), that outlines the specific roles and responsibilities of the committees and key stakeholders within the seed value chain. The identified actors include the Bureau of Agriculture (BoA), cooperative promotion agencies, research institutes, regulatory bodies, seed producers, as well as



The workshop in Semera, Afar Region

challenges and contribute to the establishment of the system.

In Jigjiga, Ahmednur Abdi from the Somali Regional State Bureau of Agriculture highlighted an urgent need for quality seeds, with less than 25% of demand currently met through the formal sector.

In Semera, Yasin Ali, Head of the Afar Regional State Bureau of Agriculture and Natural Resource Development, opened with an inspiring message about Afar's evolving agricultural landscape. Once deemed unsuitable for farming, the region is now experiencing a surge in agricultural activity. However, Yasin acknowledged



The workshop in Jigjiga, Somali Region

effective and sustainable solution to the seed system transformation. Moreover, Zerihun Abebe and Habtamu Diriba, representing Mercy Corps, brought forth a thought-provoking concept known as the Seed and Seed System Response guideline, specifically designed for implementation

humanitarian and development partners. Both presenters emphasized, by setting clear expectations and defining the tasks of each entity involved, the ToR aims to streamline coordination efforts and

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Teaming-up and collaborative strategies to enhance HDP nexus ...

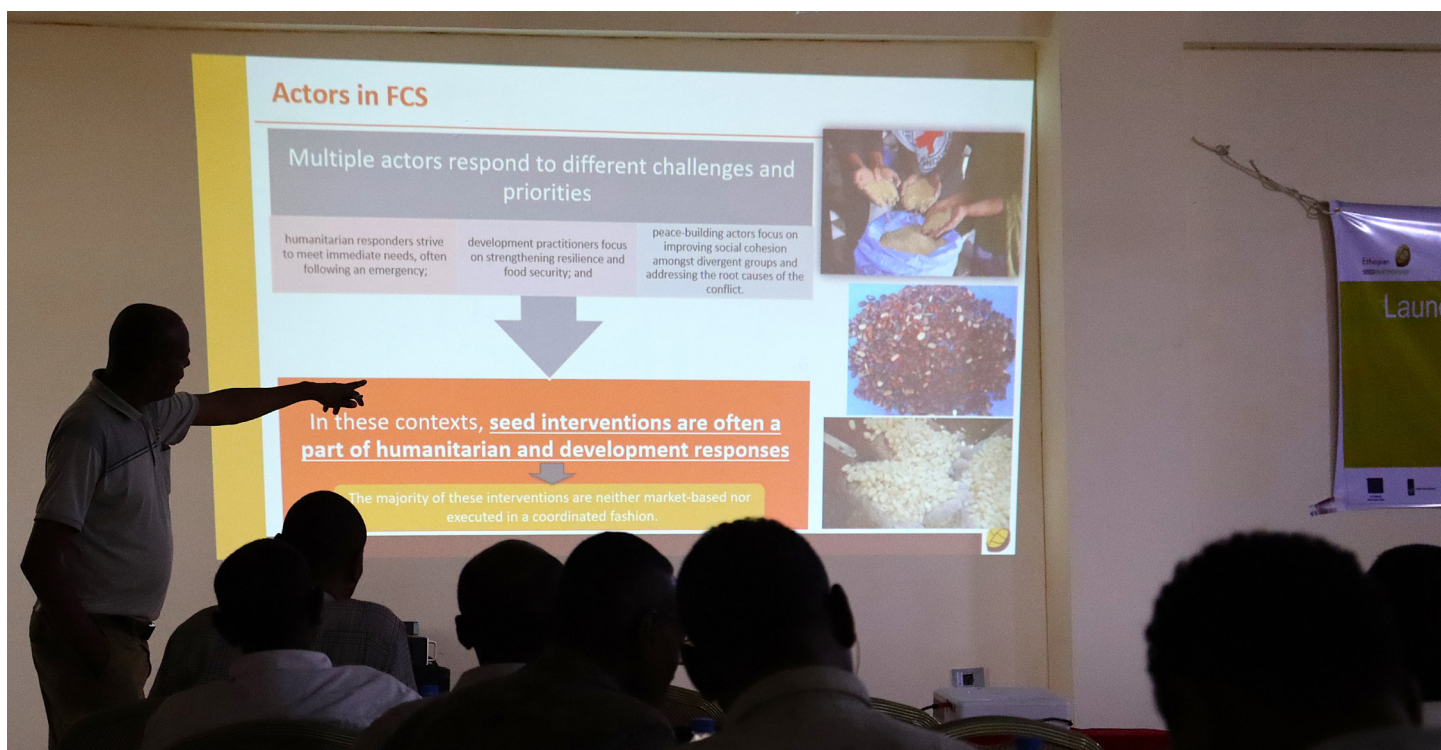
enhance the efficiency of the seed sector.

Discussions in Somali region pinpointing issues such as land availability, financial constraints, limited access of quality seed for farmers

in Jigjiga: lack of basic facilities like seed cleaning machines and laboratories, logistical challenges in transporting seeds for quality testing, and reliance on donor-supplied seed varieties unsuitable for local conditions. Dr. Mohammed Hassena reassured attendees

the workshop as a critical step toward harmonizing stakeholder efforts.

Both workshops—were more than just meetings; they served as crucial milestones in the ongoing initiative to



Dr. Dandena Galmesa presenting during the workshop in Semera, Afar Region

and lack of market-based seed and seed system interventions and weak coordination. Some of the key recommendations forwarded included the urgent need to establish and effectively implement regulatory frameworks aimed at addressing the prevalent issue of poor seed quality in the region, aligning regional seed strategies with national policies, and strengthening coordination among seed actors toward market-oriented seed system development in the region. Participants in Semera echoed concerns heard

that ESP would provide basic lab equipment and training to address these issues, and he suggested the committee priority should be advocating for regional government investment in the seed sector.

Similarly, at the end of the Semera workshop, priority areas for the committee were suggested. Of the priorities suggested includes developing roadmap for achieving EGS self-sufficiency, and establishment of a centralized database for seed-related information. Ahmed Amon from Afar's Bureau of Agriculture pledged full support for these efforts, while Hadjie Abdu Hassen of Afar Seed Enterprise commended

transform the seed system in these regions into one that is both market-driven and sustainable. They brought together diverse stakeholders—regional agricultural bureaus, research institutes, cooperative agencies, humanitarian organizations like FAO, Mercy Corps, WFP, GIZ, OWDA, IRC, and others—all united by a shared vision: to respond to seed sector insecurity by working together under HDP nexus through collaboration and unwavering commitment.

ESP internship success story: Aynadis Kifle's journey from intern to entrepreneur

In this column of our newsletter, we highlight the incredible journey of Aynadiss Kifle, a determined young professional who turned her passion for horticulture into a thriving seed and agro-input business. Aynadiss' story is a testament to the power of hard work, persistence, and the opportunities provided by programs like the internship program of ESP.

ESP: Could you share a little about your background?

Aynadiss: Certainly. My name is Aynadis Kifle, my residence is Amhara Region, Northern Shewa and I graduated in the field of Horticulture from Debre Markos University.

ESP: When did you become part of the ESP internship program?

a private seed company in Addis Ababa. However, the salary wasn't sufficient to sustain life in Addis Ababa, so I decided to start my own business around my birthplace. Now I am the owner and manager of Aynadiss Agricultural Input Supply Store.

ESP: How did the ESP internship program helped you in starting your business?

personality and motivation to start my own business.

ESP: What challenges did you face when starting your business?

Aynadis: The biggest challenge was financial. I had the business idea but lacked the start-up capital. I convinced my family, who helped secure a 100,000 ETB credit from Tsedey Bank/



Aynadiss: I joined the ESP internship program which lasted for six months in 2023 (the first round of the internship program).

ESP: What path did your career take after completing the internship?

Aynadiss: After the internship program, I was hired by the same company for six months around Mojo. Then I had a chance to be employed in

Aynadis: The program was instrumental. It provided me with knowledge about the Ethiopian seed sector, introduced me practically to the type of varieties highly demanded, and taught me about seed marketing, promotion techniques, and customer handling. It laid the foundation for my seed and agro-input business, because the soft skill training on personal development, business management and entrepreneurship trainings gave me the right

Micro-Finance, using their certificate of farmland ownership as collateral.

ESP: How did you convince your family to support your business idea?

Aynadis: I explained that my salary in Addis wasn't enough and shared the knowledge I gained from the internship

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Seed and Seed System Response Guideline – to align humanitarian and development efforts in fragile regions

The seed systems in seed-insecure regions of Ethiopia, such as Tigray, face significant challenges, often exacerbated by humanitarian seed aid that unintentionally disrupts local markets and systems. Recognizing this, Mercy Corps has spearheaded an initiative to develop the Seed and Seed System Response Guideline, a comprehensive framework aimed at fostering market-based seed interventions and strengthening seed system coordination in the region.

Why the guideline?

The Seed and Seed System Response Guideline is a strategic tool designed to improve seed system governance, ensure effective coordination, and promote market-based approaches to seed intervention. The initiative began with Mercy Corps proposing the concept and advocating for its adoption by key stakeholders. Recognizing the potential impact of this approach, the matter was referred to the regional seed coordination committee for further action. A team of experts was appointed to draft the guideline, which underwent rigorous reviews, consultations, and validation workshops involving diverse stakeholders. After incorporating valuable feedback, the finalized guideline received formal endorsement from the Tigray Regional Bureau of Agriculture during a workshop held in Mekelle in May 2025.

Addressing key challenges through socialization

To ensure effective implementation of the guidelines and address existing challenges in the seed system, Mercy Corps and regional seed coordination committee a socialization workshop. The workshop aimed to shift emergency seed aid interventions toward a sustainable, market-based approach. Participants—including humanitarian organizations like WFP, Helvetas, Care Ethiopia, and CRS—engaged in experience-

sharing sessions and discussed ways to overcome critical issues such as:



The workshop concluded with a unanimous agreement to phase out emergency seed aid gradually in favour of a structured, market-based system that empowers farmers and small-scale seed traders.

What is next?

Looking ahead, Mercy Corps aims to expand these efforts to other regions, including Afar and Somali, by adapting the endorsed guidelines to their unique contexts through a

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ESP internship success Story: Aynadis Kifle's journey ...

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program about the seed business, its demand, and the profitability. I also emphasized that staying employed wouldn't lead to growth. My family realized my determination and they decided to support me.

ESP: How did your business perform initially?

Aynadis: I was able to start the business as small-scale business, but it performed much better than I expected. There was significant demand for seed and agro inputs in my area. Within six months, I paid off my initial loan and later borrowed an additional 500,000 ETB, which I also repaid within a year.

ESP: What do you think contributed most to your success?

Aynadis: The training and the exposure I had in the entire internship program, the hard work sentiment and excellent customer handling were crucial. Moreover, I ensured to customers that the different items I supply, or sell are genuine products and provide advisory services for free, this has helped me build trust and loyalty.

ESP: What advice would you give to other young professionals?

Aynadis: I encourage young professionals to change their mindset about agriculture. It is rewarding but requires dedication and hard work. If they lack start-up capital, they should look for other alternatives and start small. They have to also hunt opportunities, which enhance their professional skills such as ESP' internship program. The ESP project doesn't provide financial aid but equips young professional with knowledge and skills, and crates linkage with potential employers.

ESP: What challenges do young professionals face in entering the seed sector?

Aynadis: Access to finance is a major challenge, especially it is difficult to get loan without collateral. Many young entrepreneurs struggle with this issue, as I did initially.

ESP: What should stakeholders



in the seed sector do to support young professionals?

Aynadis: Stakeholders should encourage young professionals to join the seed industry by providing support and opportunities. Banks and micro-finance institutions should include youth-focused credit portfolios to help start-ups in this sector. ESP project

should also continue its effort of training and arranging placement for interns, so that more young professionals will get better job opportunity.

ESP: What are your thoughts on the ESP internship program?

Aynadis: ESP has done an excellent job. Without it, I doubt I would have started my business. I'm very grateful and encourage ESP to continue its efforts, including organizing training on new topics and refresher courses for internship graduates.

ESP: what is your future plan

Aynadis: I am planning to expand my business, already started the process to open my branch at Debrebirhan town. I am also planning to create opportunities for young professionals like me.

ESP: thank you for your time and sharing your experience.

We believe Aynadiss Kefle's journey from an unemployed graduate to a successful entrepreneur is an inspiring story of resilience and determination. Her experience highlights the importance of programs like the ESP internship program in equipping young professionals with the skills, motivation and confidence needed to engage in and succeed in the seed sector.



Seed and Seed System Response Guideline ...

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collaborative approach with ESP and regional seed coordination committees. This expansion will promote broader adoption of sustainable seed system practices across Ethiopia. Additionally, both parties plan to track annual progress and monitor results to assess the wider impact of these efforts, providing valuable evidence for further learning and improvement.

By adapting the guidelines to their unique regional contexts, these initiatives aim to promote sustainable seed system practices across Ethiopia. One-time plenary discussions have already been held in both regions, laying the groundwork for broader adoption and fostering resilient seed systems that benefit both humanitarian and development goals.

Mercy Corps Ethiopia

Mercy Corps Ethiopia is currently implementing the ESP-Seed Insecurity Responses program across 10 districts in three regions:

- In the **Afar Region**: the program is active in Amibara, Dubti, and Afambo *woredas*.
- **Somali Region**: it covers Awbare, Haroreys, and Tulli Gulid *woredas*.
- **Tigray Region**: the intervention focuses on Endamakoni, Emba Alaje, Raya Azebo, and Degau Timbein *woredas*.

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