



# Newsletter

Issue 13, September 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 July - Sep 2025.

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## Mapping the HDP Nexus in Ethiopia: Key insights from Afar, Tigray, and Amhara Regions

In the fragile and conflict-affected regions of Ethiopia; Afar, Tigray, and Amhara, agriculture plays a critical role in sustaining livelihoods and fostering stability. However, the governance of agricultural systems, particularly seed governance, has emerged as a key challenge within the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus framework. A recent assessment by the Ethiopian Seed Partnership (ESP) sheds light on the actors,

coordination platforms, and challenges shaping the agricultural landscape in these regions.

### A complex landscape of actors

The ESP assessment identified 70 organizations active in agriculture-focused initiatives across the three regions. These actors range from international NGOs (INGOs) and local/national

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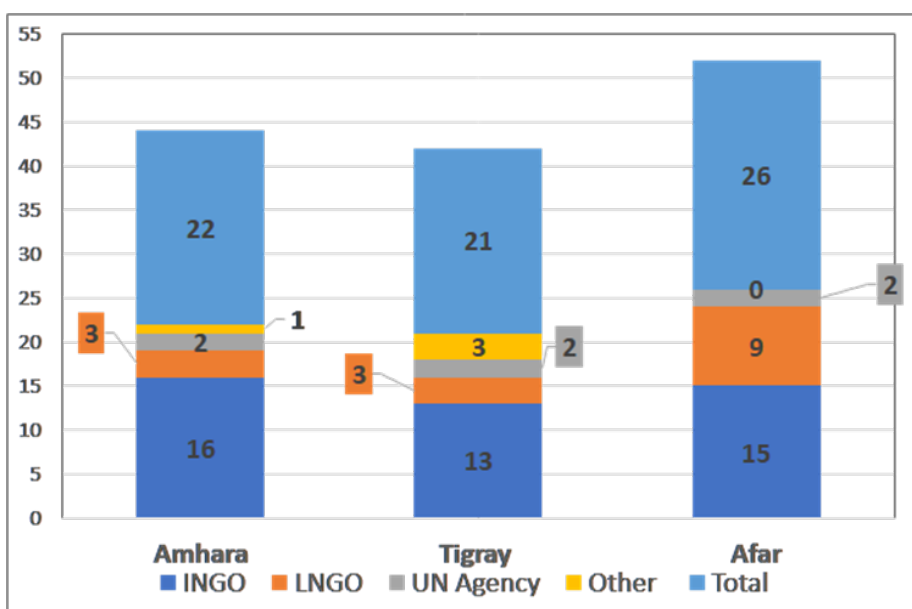


Figure 1: Organizations active in agriculture-focused initiatives across the three regions



## Mapping the HDP Nexus in Ethiopia: Key insights from ...

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NGOs (LNGOs) to UN agencies and specialized entities like the International Red Cross Society (ICRC) and CGIAR centres.

Despite the presence of these actors, the integration of peacebuilding efforts within

into their operations within the HDP framework. Limited expertise in integrated project design: a lack of experience in designing projects that combine humanitarian aid, development, and peacebuilding complicates efforts.

typically involve direct seed distribution, seed vouchers, and cash transfers. However, issues such as low-quality seeds distributed by some NGOs without proper approval underscore governance gaps.

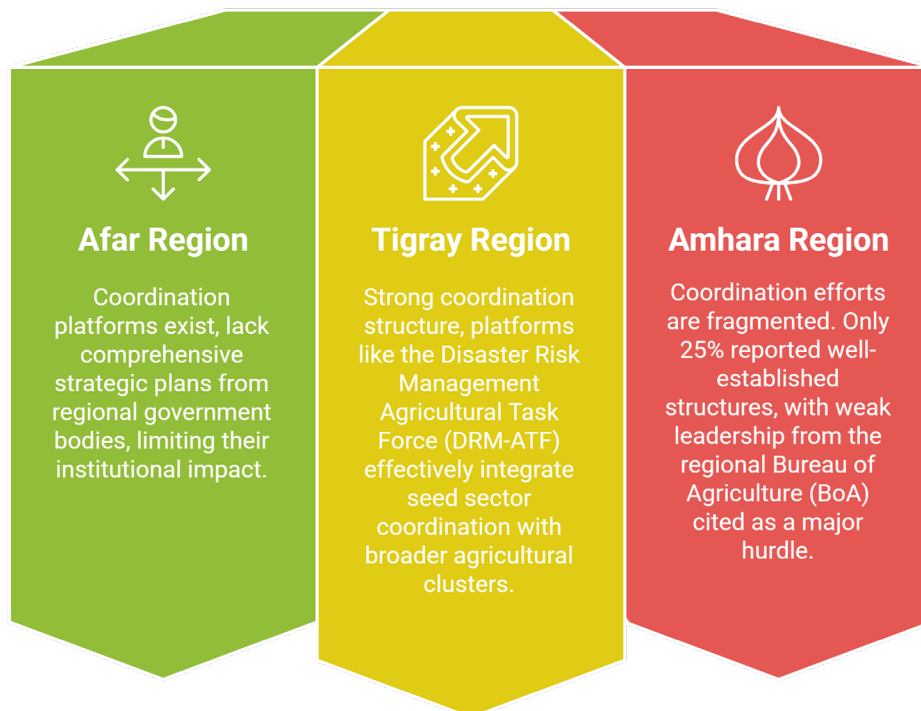


Figure 2: Coordination platforms: Strengths and weaknesses

the HDP Nexus framework remains limited across all three regions.

### Challenges to HDP Nexus implementation

Operationalizing the HDP Nexus framework faces several systemic challenges:

Weak coordination among actors: fragmented interventions, siloed financing mechanisms, and a lack of joint strategic planning.

Unclear role of peacebuilding: many organizations struggle to define how peacebuilding fits

### Seed governance: A crucial element

Seed governance is a cornerstone of the HDP Nexus framework. The ESP report highlights significant regional disparities:

- Weak governance structures: coordination platforms initiated by ESP remain largely unknown to local actors.
- A more integrated approach is evident, with active seed sector coordination and technical working groups.
- Emergency seed responses

Amid these challenges, many organizations are championing community-based seed systems through initiatives like cooperative seed production, community seed banks, and revolving seed projects.

### The implication of the assessment to enhance the operationalization of the HDP coordination

The findings underscore the need for stronger coordination platforms, greater clarity around peacebuilding efforts, and improved seed governance structures to operationalize the HDP Nexus effectively.

Recommendations include the formulation of explicit guidance for humanitarian actors, enhancing coordination mechanisms that incorporate peacebuilding and seed governance, fostering collaborative analysis and planning, leveraging best practices, and promoting joint funding to facilitate HDP interventions. Additionally, capacity-building efforts and engagement with governments and donors are essential to advance the HDP approach. By addressing these gaps, stakeholders can create a cohesive strategy that not only improves food security but also contributes to seed system development that contributes to sustainable peace in fragile contexts.



# Strengthening the chickpea and grass pea value chains

*As part of the Ethiopian Seed Partnership (ESP), RESILIENCE BV Ethiopia, is actively enhancing the chickpea and grass pea value chains, which are important for ensuring food and nutrition security. These efforts align with ESP's primary outcome area, which emphasizes strengthening the private seed sector. Recent developments in these value chains include stakeholder engagement and developing comprehensive business cases.*

## Strengthening the chickpea value chain

For many Ethiopians, chickpea is more than a crop, it is a part of our daily meals and cultural identity. From Shiro to Kolo, chickpea has long been a staple on the Ethiopian plate. Beyond this, chickpea is also a vital cash crop for thousands of smallholder farmers and a powerhouse of nutrition, rich in protein and essential micronutrients like zinc and iron, yet the adoption of high yielding, disease-resistant varieties remains limited among the value chain actors.

Recognizing this challenge, a consultative workshop was organized in Addis Ababa to explore opportunities to strengthen the chickpea value chain. The workshop brought together a wide range of actors, from seed companies, farmers, processors, and researchers, to seven potential off takers, creating a rare space for open dialogue across the value chain.

The workshop discussions focused on five priority areas essential to strengthening the chickpea value chain. Participants looked at factors that influence variety selection for farmers, seed companies, and off takers, and compared the advantages and challenges of sourcing directly from farmers versus working through traders. They also discussed the barriers hindering the adoption and promotion of improved varieties, while emphasizing

the need for credible data and demonstrations to build confidence among both producers and buyers. The conversations concluded with identifying opportunities for collaboration, highlighting how coordinated efforts across the value chain can generate shared benefits for all actors.

## Key insights from stakeholders

The workshop generated several important insights for advancing the chickpea value chain. Farmers emphasized that “seeing is believing”, highlighting the value of demonstration plots in showing yield potential, disease resistance, and taste qualities of improved varieties, which in turn encourages adoption. Off takers stressed the need for consistency and taste assurance, explaining that they require clear evidence

and off takers seen as essential for reducing risks and fostering greater investment in improved varieties.

## Next Steps

Building on the momentum of the workshop, ESP is moving forward with clear next steps. Variety trials will be carried out with seed companies to generate solid evidence on performance of the released varieties, while nucleus farmer out grower models will be set up to create practical pathways for wider adoption. At the same time, consumer testing with selected off takers will help build confidence in both taste and quality. Together, these actions aim to strengthen collaboration across the value chain, build



*Pictures from the workshop*



of quality before committing to new varieties. Participants also pointed to the nucleus farmer out grower model as a sustainable pathway for the value chain. Finally, there was broad agreement on the importance of stronger connections across the value chain, with closer relationships among seed producers, farmers,

trust among stakeholders, and speed up the use of improved chickpea varieties. More than just introducing new varieties, this effort is about creating stronger markets and ensuring that a crop so central to Ethiopian culture continues to

*(continue reading on page 4)*



## Strengthening the chickpea and grass pea ...

support farmer resilience and improve household nutrition.

### Grass pea business case workshop

Grass pea is a legume with enormous potential

is increasing. Yet, Ethiopian farmers still rely on varieties which pose toxicity risks, due to a combination of factors affecting the availability of and access to improved seed. The objective of ESP, in collaboration with the University of East Anglia (UEA)

During the workshop, a variety of stakeholders active in Ethiopia's seed system was present, ranging from public to private sector and civil society. Stakeholders agreed that the "integrated seed systems approach",



*Different chick pea and grass pea varieties demonstrated during the workshop*

as a nutritious, low-input, regenerative and climate-smart crop, but it remains underutilized primarily due to the presence of the toxin B-ODAP which causes neurolathyrism (paralysis of the lower limbs). Recent advances in bioscience, however, have produced new low-toxin varieties, as well as those containing the traits most desired by farmers, such as higher yields and improved pest and disease resistance.

These varieties hold particular importance for Ethiopian farmers, among whom grass pea cultivation

and the Norwich Institute of Sustainable Development (NISD) is to understand how to ensure widespread, rapid and ongoing access to improved grass pea seed across Ethiopia's rural areas.

NISD and UEA have therefore recently released a report "the business case for grass pea in Ethiopia", outlining an action plan for the scale-up of low-ODAP grass pea across Ethiopia to complement nutritious and climate smart agriculture. This report, and the three approaches for the expansion of improved grass pea use in Ethiopia it describes, was validated during an online stakeholder workshop on August 5th.

with distribution of improved grass pea through local seed businesses, is the most viable approach proposed.

As follow-up to the workshop, NISD and UEA are now starting a pilot with Bishoftu Agricultural Research Centre for multiplication of good-quality breeder seed of low  $\beta$ -ODAP grass pea variety Wasie for large scale demonstration and commercial seed production. Stakeholders in the grass pea seed sector interested to participate in this pilot, are welcome to reach out to Resilience.

# Strengthening seed labs for better quality control and seed supply

The Ethiopian Seed Partnership has been actively working to bolster seed regulatory services across the country. As part of this initiative, the partnership has focused on strengthening seed inspection laboratories to ensure the delivery of high-quality seeds to farmers. Following an extensive assessment of existing seed laboratories, gaps were identified, including limited technical capacity among lab analysts and inadequate laboratory equipment.

improving the overall capacity and efficiency of seed quality assurance services.

In its continued effort, the Ethiopian Seed Partnership extended its support to the South Ethiopia Region Agricultural Inputs Quality Control and Quarantine Authority. Specifically, the Dilla Plant Seed Quality Control Centre received basic laboratory equipment to strengthen its operations. This support is expected to significantly enhance the authority's service delivery capacity, enabling it to play its role in ensuring quality

build its capacity and establish a strong foundation for seed sector transformation in the region.

Dr. Merihun Fikru, Regional Bureau Head, also commended the Ethiopian Seed Partnership for its contribution. He highlighted that this collaboration would create synergy in the region's efforts to improve seed quality production and supply chains, ultimately benefiting local farmers and boosting agricultural productivity.



*Tiko Tilante, Director General of the authority (left) and Abdo Woyema ESP deputy project manager, handing over the lab equipments equipments*

To address these challenges, the partnership has taken significant steps, including organizing training sessions to enhance the technical skills of lab analysts. Additionally, basic laboratory equipment was provided to several seed labs across various regions to ensure their full functionality. This effort is aimed at

seed production and supply in the region.

During the handover, Tiko Tilante, Director General of the authority, expressed heartfelt appreciation for the assistance. He emphasized the importance of such support for the newly established region, noting that partnerships like this are critical in helping the region

The support provided to South Ethiopia Region marks another milestone in achieving sustainable agricultural development. With continued efforts and partnerships, Ethiopia is poised to improve seed quality and availability, empowering farmers and contributing to food security across the nation.





# Ethiopian Seed Partnership: Planning for 2026 and beyond

In late September 2025, the Ethiopian Seed Partnership (ESP) convened a four-day workshop in Hawassa. This gathering brought together members of the partnership; SWR Ethiopia, RESILIENT BV, Mercy Corps Ethiopia, and the Ethiopian Seed Association; to reflect on achievements from 2024/25, strengthen collaboration, and develop a strategic roadmap for 2026 and beyond. The event was an opportunity to align efforts, share knowledge, and foster team synergy through insightful discussions and collaborative sessions.

## Aligning with sector trends and priorities

The workshop was designed to ensure that the partnership's initiatives remain aligned with both Ethiopia's evolving seed sector landscape and international development priorities, particularly those of the European Union and

The Netherlands. By reviewing progress made during the previous year, participants identified valuable lessons that informed the planning process for the years ahead.

Key priority areas were outlined for future focus:

Enhancing ongoing initiatives: building on existing successes within the partnership to drive greater impact.

Strengthening collaboration: fostering stronger alignment among various outcome areas and implementing organizations within the partnership.

Addressing fragile contexts: reinforcing the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus in conflict-affected and fragile regions.

Continue supporting for the improvement of legal frameworks: Supporting

improvements in Ethiopia's seed legal framework and service delivery systems.

Partners of ESP believes these priorities will enable the partnership's goal to advance Ethiopia's seed sector, ensuring supply of high-quality seeds that are important for food and nutrition security, and building resilience to climate challenges.

## Strengthening collaboration and alignment across partners

The Ethiopian Seed Partnership is powered by a diverse team of passionate professionals who bring complementary expertise to the table. While collaboration across multiple organizations can be complex, ESP partners are making significant strides in co-creating activities, aligning networks, and fostering a joint





## Ethiopian Seed Partnership: Planning for 2026 and ...

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learning agenda. One notable example of this collaborative spirit is the establishment of cross-component working groups. These groups are instrumental in facilitating continuous collaboration, fostering innovation, and ensuring that learning remains a core component of all activities.

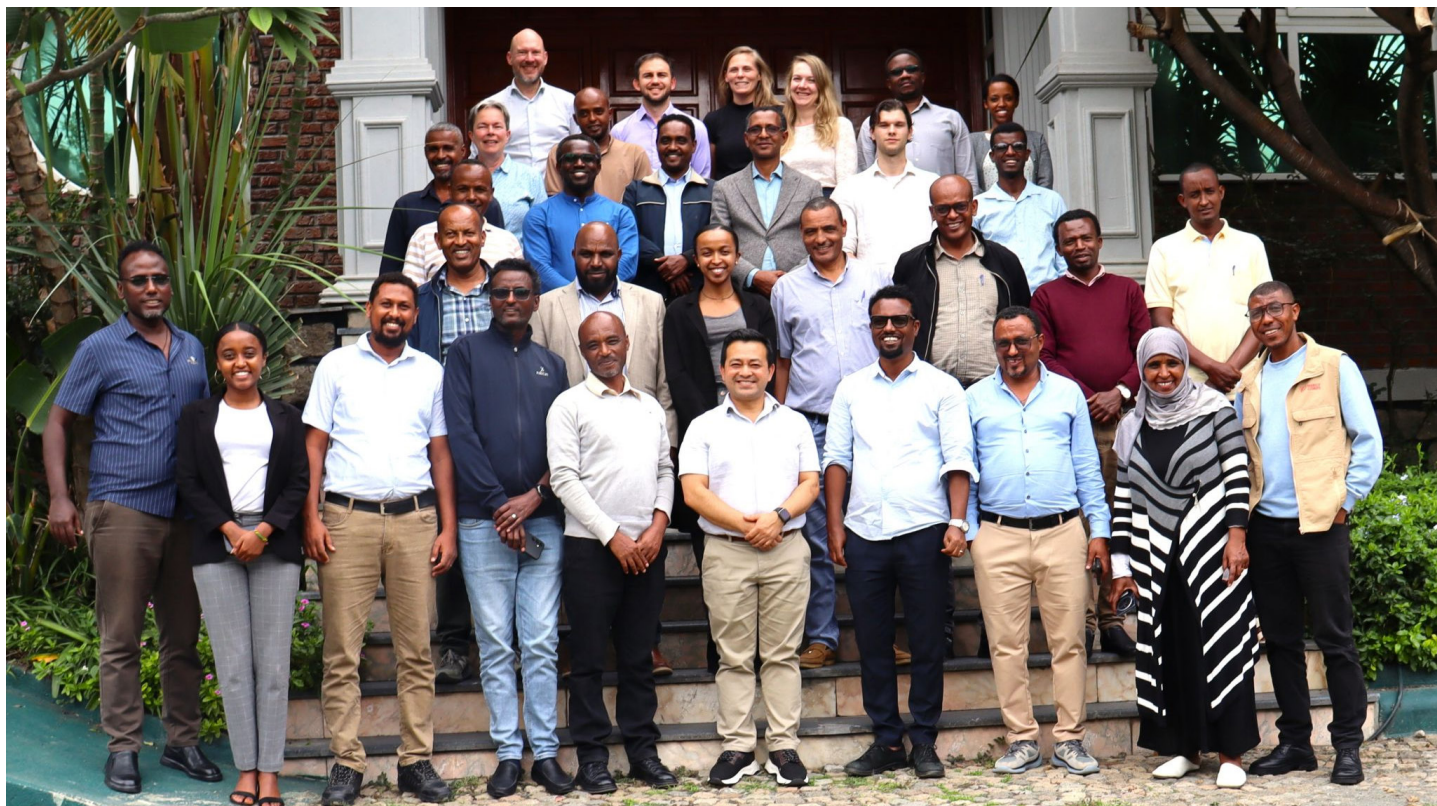
### Adaptive management: A key to success

In an ever-changing external environment, adaptive management has emerged as a cornerstone of ESP's success. The ability to reflect on activities, adapt strategies, and pivot when necessary has been critical to achieving results. This flexible approach ensures that the partnership remains responsive to emerging challenges and opportunities.

### Documenting results for greater impact

As the program continues to make significant progress toward its targets, the coming year will see an increased emphasis on documenting results and disseminating learnings more broadly. Sharing these insights within Ethiopia's seed sector is essential for scaling successful innovations, strengthening the case for future investments, and driving systemic change.

As we look ahead to 2026 and beyond, the Ethiopian Seed Partnership remains steadfast in its vision to contribute significantly to the transformation of the Ethiopian seed sector. As it has been agreed by all partners during the workshop, through strengthened collaboration, adaptive management, and a focus on results, ESP is on track and continue driving meaningful change for farmers, communities, and the nation as a whole.



## Upcoming African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) x SeedNL multi-stakeholder webinar series!

How can Farmers' Rights and Plant Breeders' Rights complement each other in diverse legal and agricultural seed systems across Africa? While often seen in tension, these rights can be mutually supportive when policies recognise the distinct yet connected roles of farmers and breeders. Yet too often, conversations around seed laws become polarised, overshadowing the practical possibilities for synergy. Following a successful webinar series in collaboration with The Asia and Pacific Seed Alliance focusing on three Asian countries, this series will explore what facilitates or hinders such complementarity, grounded in the lived realities of different stakeholders from four African countries. Register

South Africa - 21 October  
12:00 - 13:30 EAT/11:00 - 12:30 CEST  
<https://lnkd.in/eW-j76f4>

Zambia - 30 October  
13:00 - 14:30 EAT/11:00 - 12:30 CEST  
<https://lnkd.in/esRdGMEs>

Ghana - 13 November  
13:00 - 14:30 EAT/11:00 - 12:30 CET  
<https://lnkd.in/ecDVvVfM>



This webinar series builds on SeedNL's podcast on farmers' and breeders' rights - access the podcast here: <https://lnkd.in/e-FKFT3J>

### Contact us:

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More information about ESP can also be found on:

Website: <http://www.esp-seed.org>

You can also find us on our social media pages:

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