Stichting Wageningen Research (SWR) Ethiopia

WAGENINGEN UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

Ethiopian SEED PARTNERSHIP

Newsletter

Issue 14, December 2025

About this newsletter

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 supoort activities.

In this issue we highlight the major activities that have taken place between Oct - Dec 2025.

Inside this issue

A new chapter of seed self-sufficiency for Benishangul Gumuz Region

The Benishangul-Gumuz Region, a fertile area in Ethiopia renowned for its agricultural potential, particularly in maize production, is taking significant steps toward achieving seed self-sufficiency. Historically, the region has been a key supplier of hybrid maize seed for the nation, with larger companies and public seed enterprises producing seeds in the area. However, the reliance on external processing facilities has resulted in additional costs, which are ultimately borne by local farmers.

To address this challenge and unlock the region's potential, a consultative workshop was held on January 19, 2024, by the Ethiopian Seed Partnership (ESP) in collaboration with regional stakeholders. The workshop aimed to establish regional seed technical and steering committees and to chart a path toward building a self-sufficient seed sector within the region.

During the workshop, ESP presented a suggestion to the regional bureau of

(*continue reading on page 2*)

A new chapter of seed self-sufficiency for...

(Continued from page 1)

agriculture (BoA), emphasizing the need to license capable private entities to enter the seed business. The idea was well-received, leading to an agreement to grant Certificates of Compliance to at least two private companies and one union. The BoA committed to identifying potential companies and providing them with the necessary support beyond merely issuing licenses. ESP, which has a dedicated private sector support program, included the two newly licensed companies in the region in its initiatives without requiring them to compete with firms from other regions. The project provided technical assistance and facilitated connections with Early Generation Seed (EGS) suppliers. As a result, the new companies secured EGS for the 2025 production season and signed agreements for 2026, enabling them to cultivate 130 and 50 hectares of hybrid maize and sorghum seeds, respectively.

This milestone was celebrated during a field day event organized by ESP in collaboration with Rodas Agricultural Development PLC on December 30, 2025. The event took place at a seed production farm in Afaa Sizim kebele, Aburamo woreda, and attracted a diverse audience, including representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, regional and woreda officials, research centre, university, and local farmers.

The field day showcased the region's immense potential for hosting private seed companies capable of producing high-quality seeds. It also served as a platform for exploring market linkages for the newly established firms. Participants were impressed by the progress made and acknowledged the previously untapped capacity of local out-growers to establish independent seed companies.

This initiative marks a turning point for the region in its pursuit of seed self-sufficiency. Historically reliant on seeds allocated by the MoA, the region is now recognizing its ability to produce and supply seeds locally. The effort underscores the importance of fostering local capacities and highlights the critical roles of public-private partnerships in developing a strong regional seed sector. The region needs to continue to build on this momentum, and the focus should remain on empowering private sector actors and strengthening their contributions to regional seed sector development.

Seed producer cooperatives visit Solagrow PLC to learn innovative potato seed multiplication technology

In its continued effort to address seed insecurity in Ethiopia, the SWR Ethiopia ESP project has partnered with Haramaya and Mekelle universities to enhance the supply of improved seeds through Seed Producer Cooperatives (SPCs). This collaboration focuses on upgrading the technical and infrastructural capacities of SPCs in Oromia and Tigray regions. By improving governance, access to Early Generation Seed (EGS), and market linkages, the initiative aims to empower SPCs to provide high-quality seeds to farmers in the seed insecure areas.

As part of this effort, SWR Ethiopia, in collaboration with Haramaya University and Solagrow PLC, organized a field visit for SPC members from Kersa woreda in the East Hararghe zone. The visit took place at Solagrow PLC in Bishoftu and showcased the innovative apical root cutting technology for potato seed multiplication. This advanced method is expected to revolutionize sustainable and efficient seed production in Ethiopia.

The primary goal of the field visit was to introduce SPC leaders and members to the benefits of apical root cutting compared to conventional potato seed tuber multiplication. The visit also aimed to facilitate knowledge transfer, skills, and establish sustainable linkages between SPCs and Solagrow PLC.

Jan van de Haar, Managing Director of Solagrow PLC, warmly welcomed the visitors and shared insights into the company's operations. Established in 2006, Solagrow has been a key player in advancing Ethiopia's potato seed production system. The company specializes in multiplying mini tubers using stem cuttings, providing farmers with a sustainable source of high-quality potato seeds.

"Apical root cutting technology is not only simple and cost-effective but also holds immense potential for scaling up sustainable seed production," said Jan van de Haar during his welcoming remarks. He reaffirmed Solagrow's commitment to supporting SPCs in East Hararghe and other regions, provided that sustainable seed production systems are strengthened.

Participants of the visit discussing with Jan van de Haar, Managing Director of Solagrow PLC,

The field visit featured an interactive session where participants had the opportunity to ask questions about seed multiplication procedures, disease management, costs, and scalability. Jan van de Haar addressed their queries comprehensively, boosting confidence among participants about adopting this innovative technology.

The participants were then given a guided tour of Solagrow's facilities, including seed multiplication units utilizing apical root cutting technology, media preparation areas, and quality control stations. This hands-on experience allowed participants to observe critical procedures, handle materials, and witness quality control measures firsthand.

"Before today, it was just a theory. Now I can visualize each step," said Jibril Mohammed, Manager of the Haji Faji SPC. "We are eager to implement this technology, especially if we receive continued support in infrastructure and mentoring." He expressed optimism that the visit dispelled doubts and provided hope for higher yields

(*continue reading on page 4*)

Seed producer cooperatives visit Solagrow PLC …

and increased income with minimal inputs.

Experts from Haramaya University lauded Solagrow's integration of research with practical application. Bekele Kebeda, a horticulturist at the university, described apical root cutting as "a sustainable solution to potato seed scarcity." He noted that its simplicity makes it accessible for cooperatives with proper training.

What is next?

Kemal Kasim, Research Communication Team Leader, and the ESP project focal person at the Universityt, echoed these sentiments: "The farmers' questions were sharp and practical—they wanted to know about costs, labor, and how to start. That shows they are ready. Our next step is to provide them with inputs and knowledge through targeted support and internship programs."

The ESP project will continue its support to increase supply of improved seed by strengthen these cooperatives adopt the newfound knowledge and scale it up to increase their seed multiplication capacity. As part of this initiative, two graduate interns will be placed at Solagrow PLC to receive comprehensive training on apical root cutting technology. These interns will later train these SPC members, ensuring that the knowledge and skills gained are effectively transferred to local communities.

"This visit signifies more than just knowledge transfer; it marks the beginning of a partnership," said Jan van de Haar. "We are committed to supporting these farmers and experts in scaling quality seed production across regions." The field visit concluded with a shared commitment among all stakeholders to foster innovation, improve seed systems, and contribute to enhanced quality seed supply in East Hararghe and beyond through sustainable agricultural practices.

Enhancing capacity and resilience of seed producer cooperatives in Oromia Region

In a commendable effort to address seed insecurity and foster seed sector development in Ethiopia, the SWR Ethiopia ESP project has taken significant steps to support six Seed Producer Cooperatives (SPCs) in the East Hararghe zone of Oromia region. This initiative aims to enhance local seed systems, particularly in fragile contexts where access to quality seeds remains a challenge for farmers.

On December 22, 2025, a formal handover was conducted. The cooperatives received three multi-crop carried out, five seed moisture testers, and five weight balances. This equipment is expected to significantly enhance their operational efficiency, improve seed quality, and increase the availability of quality seeds for local farmers.

In addition to supporting the SPCs, the project provided three laptop computers to Haramaya University. This gesture aims to strengthen the university's capacity to support these cooperatives and effectively implement ESP-supported activities.

During the handover ceremony, Professor Mangistu Urge, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Haramaya University, highlighted the university's long-standing dedication to community engagement and agricultural research. He emphasized that this partnership aligns with the university's mission and reiterated its commitment to collaborating with the ESP project to further develop the seed sector.

Dr. Mohammed Hassena, SWR Ethiopia ESP Manager, expressed his optimism about the positive impact of this material support on the region's seed sector. He acknowledged Haramaya University as a key partner in this endeavour and reaffirmed the project's commitment to working closely with the university to achieve shared goals.

Kemal Kasim, Research Communication Team Leader at Haramaya University, provided an insightful overview of the challenges faced by SPCs in East Hararghe. He noted that limited access to appropriate seed processing and quality control technologies has been a significant barrier to progress. The provision of infrastructure support through this project is expected to address these critical gaps and accelerate the development of the seed sector in the region.

Short term training on seed sector governance for seed professionals

The seed sector plays a pivotal role in shaping the agricultural landscape of Ethiopia. Recognizing the need to address challenges and enhance the capacity of professionals within the seed sector, SWR Ethiopia ESP project collaborated with Haramaya University and organized a short-term training program "Governance for Seed Sector Development." This targeted training took place from December 22 to 27, 2025, at Haramaya University, and was tailored to meet the specific needs of professionals in Ethiopia's seed sector.

The training program was conceptualized with a clear goal: to empower professionals with the latest developments in the seed sector's legal frameworks, foster attitudinal and practical changes, and build the capacity of key stakeholders. By addressing gaps in governance, coordination, and knowledge, the initiative aims to create a robust and sustainable seed system that can meet the growing demands of Ethiopia's seed sector.

Dr. Yibekal, the training coordinator, expressed his gratitude to the dedicated participants who travelled from across the country to attend the program. He also acknowledged SWR Ethiopia for providing funding and resources, as well as Haramaya University for facilitating the partnership and delivering a high-quality training experience. Dr. Yibekal highlighted the involvement of senior university staff who meticulously designed and organized the program to ensure its relevance and impact.

Professor Mengistu Urge, Vice President of Haramaya University, delivered an inspiring opening speech to welcome the participants. He extended a warm reception to those visiting the university for the first time and emphasized Haramaya University's commitment to offering a world-class training experience. In his address, Prof. Mengistu underscored the critical importance of agriculture in Ethiopia. He highlighted its role as a cornerstone of food security, livelihood generation, employment creation, and GDP contribution. However, he also acknowledged the challenges faced by the sector, including low productivity, reliance on small-scale subsistence farming, insufficient inputs, limited knowledge dissemination, and weak market linkages. When discussing the seed sector specifically, Prof. Mengistu noted that it remains largely informal and unable to meet national demands. To address these challenges, he emphasized the need for measures such as improving seed systems, enhancing coordination among stakeholders, providing timely training programs, and fostering active participation from all actors in the sector.

Professor Mangistu Urge, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Haramaya University, making opening remark.

Dr. Mohammed, Project Manager of the SWR Ethiopia ESP Project, delivered a

(*continue reading on page 8*)

Ethiopian Seed Partnership and Alage Agricultural TVET join forces to create young entrepreneurs

To foster entrepreneurship and development of the seed sector, the SWR Ethiopia ESP project has joined hands with Alage Agricultural TVET College to support the college's Business Incubation Centre. This collaboration is set to change the way young trainees are prepared for entrepreneurial ventures in the seed sector and related agricultural businesses.

The primary goal of this collaboration is to enhance the resources available at the college and help how trainees get practical skills. By doing so, the initiative aims to provide hands-on business training to trainees, equipping them with the knowledge and practical experience needed to become successful entrepreneurs.

As part of this collaboration, SWR Ethiopia has taken a significant step by supporting the maintenance of a greenhouse at Alage ATVET College. This greenhouse will serve as a critical resource for the college's Business Incubation Centre, enabling trainees to gain practical experience in seedling production and agricultural business management.

Habtam Tilahun, Deputy Head of the Technology Transfer and Enterprise Development Directorate, emphasized the importance of this initiative. "The ATVET has been given the mission to become an entrepreneurial college that trains youngsters to become entrepreneurs. For this purpose, we have been working to establish a business incubation centre. This is where ESP has stepped in to support our mission. Their contribution is a massive boost for the college to realize its objectives," she stated.

This collaboration is not just about improving infrastructure; it's about creating a ripple effect in the community. The newly constructed greenhouse will enable trainees to learn practical business skills in the seed sector. Additionally, it will provide seedlings to the surrounding community, thereby fostering a sustainable model of growth and development.

Habtam Tilahun, Deputy Head of the Technology Transfer and Enterprise Development Directorate

This collaboration stands as a shining example of how partnerships can empower communities, foster innovation, and create opportunities for sustainable growth. ESP hopes the joint effort will lay a foundation for young trainees who aspire to make a difference in the seed sector. With access to enhanced resources, expert training, and practical experience, these future entrepreneurs are set to transform Ethiopia's seed sector.

keynote address that provided valuable insights into the objectives and scope of the ESP initiative. Dr. Mohammed emphasized that one of ESP's primary objectives is to bridge existing gaps in Ethiopia's seed sector by addressing capacity-building needs and fostering professional engagement. He identified a lack of leadership and expertise among professionals as a significant bottleneck in achieving progress within the sector. He stressed that without active leadership roles taken by skilled professionals, systemic issues would persist.

In the training, 21 of individuals from 10 region bureau of agriculture and the Ministry of Agriculture participated. It is believed that the trainees will be equipped with the newfound knowledge and skills in seed system governance, and operational improvements, and ultimately, they will improve their way of doing things and contribute more significantly to the development of the seed sector in the country. When they go back to their respective duty stations, participants are encouraged to address professional gaps within their respective areas of expertise while actively contributing to the development of a more efficient and sustainable seed system.

The collaborative efforts between SWR Ethiopia ESP project and Haramaya University highlight a shared commitment to addressing skilled manpower shortage in the Ethiopian seed sector through long and short-term capacity building programs and experience sharing. This training program serves as a way to address the skilled manpower availability challenge and encourage professionals to play their appropriate roles in the sector. It is hoped that participants will return to their respective roles, equipped with renewed knowledge, confidence, and determination to drive progress in Ethiopia's seed sector.

Contact us:

For more information, questions and comments you can contact us through:

Email: enspseed@gmail.com

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:

Facebook: ESP/Ethiopia
Twitter: @ESPseed
LinkedIN: linkedin.com/in/esp-ethiopia

Contributors: Dandena G., Ansha N., Wubshet B, Kemal K., Nasir s. and Andualem T.

Editor: Andualem Tadesse

Contact address of ENSP

Abishkar Subedi

ESP project coordinator
Email:abishkar.subedi@wur.nl

Mohammed Hassena

ESP project manager
Email: mohammed.hassenabeko@wur.nl

ESP is a project hosted by
Stichting Wageningen Research (SWR) Ethiopia

WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH
www.wur.eu