

Second phase of the SBN support project starts in January 2016

The SBN support project began its second phase in January 2016. In the second phase the project will continue working according to the principles followed during the first phase. It continues to graft its support to the sesame sector, wherein the stakeholders of the Sesame Business Network (SBN) determine the priorities, objectives and action plans to be addressed. The main goal of the project is the development of a competitive, sustainable and inclusive sesame sector, leading to improved farmer income and spill-over effects. The project aims to achieve this by pursuing three primary outcomes:

- 1) sesame production cost price reduction,
- 2) sesame product and market development,
- and 3) strengthening an enabling environment for the sesame sector.

As of January 2016, the support project presents itself by the name BENEFIT-SBN. It has become

one of the projects under the Bilateral Ethiopia Netherlands Efforts for Food, Income and Trade (BENEFIT) partnership. The partnership includes three other projects, namely: Integrated Seed Sector Development in Ethiopia (ISSD Ethiopia); Capacity Building for Scaling Up of Evidence-Based Best Practices (CASCAPE); and Ethiopian- Netherlands Trade Facility for Agribusiness (ENTAG). The BENEFIT partnership launch event was organised on December 16th, 2015 in Addis Ababa. The Directorate General for International Cooperation (DGIS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Netherlands funds this partnership and its projects through the Embassy in Addis Ababa. Wageningen University and Research (Wageningen UR) is a coordinating unit. (www.wageningenur.nl)

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Workshop on marketing of Ethiopian sesame

A two-day awareness creation workshop on marketing Ethiopian sesame was organised for Framers Cooperative Union leaders and marketing experts in Gondar from January 30-31, 2016. The workshop was organised by BENEFIT-SBN in collaboration with the Centre for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI), SNV's Cooperatives for Change (C4C) and Agriterra.



Participants, attending presentations

The objectives of the workshop were: to build awareness on the European and international sesame market requirements; to explore discrepancy between unions' capacities and the requirements for successful

participation in domestic and export markets; and to explore solutions that will enable unions to overcome these challenges, including capacity building and/or the facilitation of linkages to exporters through the CBI programme.

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About this newsletter

The purpose of the SBN newsletter is to provide relevant and timely information on the Sesame Business Network and BENEFIT-SBN support project

In this issue we highlight the major activities that have been taken place between January and March 2016

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Geographic focus areas of BENEFIT-SBN

BENEFIT-SBN has a clear focus on sesame as a commodity and is geographically concentrated in the northwest of Ethiopia. It also gives special attention to important rotation crops, including: sorghum, mung bean, soya bean and cotton. The project's intervention area matches that of the Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) identified regional sesame Agricultural Commercialization Clusters (ACCs) and priority *woredas* of the Agricultural Growth Program (AGP) in Tigray and Amhara regions.

During its first phase, the support of the project covered eight *woredas* across Western Tigray (namely: Kafta Humera; Tsegede; and Wolkaiet) and North Gondar Zones (Metema; Quara; Tach Armachiho; Tegede; and Mirab Armachiho). From 2016, BENEFIT-SBN extends its support to four more *woredas*, namely: Tahtay Adiyabo, Tselemti and Asgede Tsimbla in North West Tigray zone and Jawi from Agaw Awi zone of the Amhara region. Also in Amhara, there is strong demand for services to sesame producing areas of Tsehaye Cooperative Union (among others in West and East Belesa *woredas*).

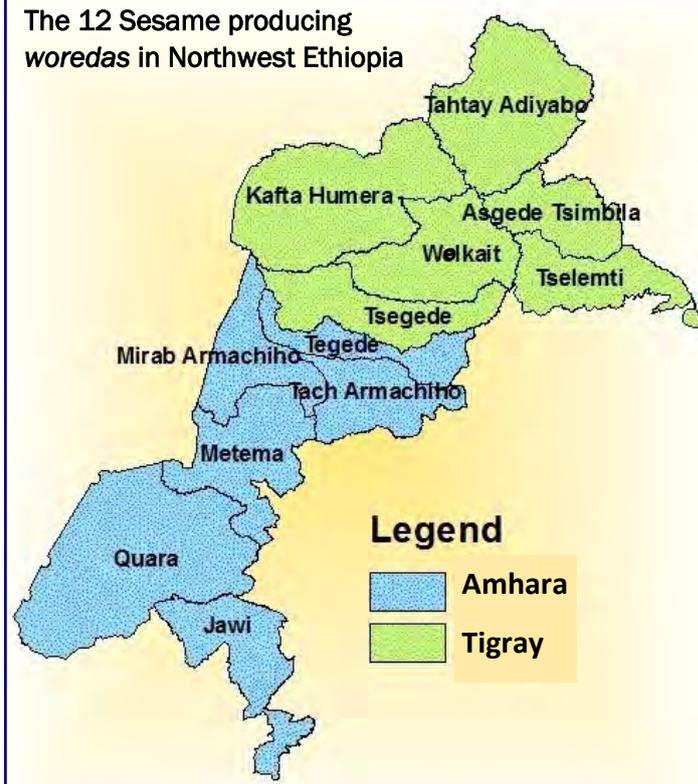
BENEFIT-SBN's collaboration with other BENEFIT projects

In January 2016, representatives of the four BENEFIT projects came together and discussed how they could better collaborate. It was suggested that an important practical entry point for BENEFIT collaboration could be based upon the identification of promising product and place combinations. An analysis has been made taking into account the priorities of different ACCs across the country and AGP targeted *woredas*. Existing intervention areas of the CASCAPE and ISSD Ethiopia projects were overlaid and correlated with important production areas of ENTAG priority commodities. The analysis clearly reveals which products are prioritised in which places.

The four projects under BENEFIT will give due attention to quality seed production and marketing, the development and scaling of best-fit agricultural practices, both production-push and market-pull value chain dynamics and stakeholder collaboration at local and strategic levels. Together the different BENEFIT projects support and work with different stakeholder groups.

CASCAPE and ISSD Ethiopia will be active in some of the *woredas* that fall within BENEFIT-SBN's reach and, therefore, sesame and important rotation crops will be given priority. ENTAG will look for opportunities to strengthen trade and agribusiness coming out of sesame growing areas of north-west Ethiopia. The four BENEFIT projects thus find common ground and/or meeting points in the northwest of the country. On the production side, the projects respond to the

The 12 Sesame producing *woredas* in Northwest Ethiopia



plans and priorities of Gondar and Humera Agricultural Research Centres, zonal Offices of Agriculture of North Gondar, Agaw Awi, West and North West Tigray zones, and those of farmers, cooperatives and cooperative unions. On the market side, the projects respond to the demands of cooperative unions, small and medium scale enterprises, traders and both domestic and international companies in agribusiness.

On March 29th and 30th, 2016, representatives from the four projects under BENEFIT came together and planned activities which will be done in collaboration in Amhara and Tigray regions. The planning meeting was organised in Bahir Dar. Sesame, potato, malt barley and wheat are commodities selected for collaboration among the four projects in the two regions. In the two-days meeting, participants identified what activities to work on towards what outputs and desired outcomes, specifically where, when and with whom. They also made provisional allocations of budget to different activities.

BENEFIT-SBN priorities for 2016

In 2016, BENEFIT-SBN will give priorities for the following topics: tailoring the '20 Steps' recommendations of good agricultural practices to the realities of investor and organic farmers; training and supporting the activities of women and young farmers in particular; adapting the strategies of the rural finance sector to create access to finance for small, intermediate and large farmers; and, in addition, giving specific attention to practical cases for in-country value addition and market linkages.

ToT workshop on sesame production package held at Woreta, Amhara region

Amhara Region Bureau of Agriculture (BoA), in collaboration with the Amhara Regional Agricultural Research Institute (ARARI) and BENEFIT-SBN, organised a four-day ToT workshop on sesame production and marketing for over 300 agricultural professionals from March 12-15, 2016 in Woreta, South Gondar zone. Participants were drawn from Metema, Quara, Tegede, Mirab and Tach Armachiho *woredas* of the North Gondar zone and Jawi *woreda* of Agaw Awi zone.

The objective of the training was to increase agricultural professionals' knowledge of the sesame production package and sesame marketing with the intention that trainees will go to respective *woredas* and *kebeles* and provide similar trainings to sesame farmers.



Dr. Teshome Wale, giving opening remark

While officially opening the ToT workshop, Dr. Teshome Wale, head of Amhara BoA, said that the regional



Agricultural experts receiving orientations before the training

government gives special attention to the production and marketing of sesame. He said: "For long, the sesame production has largely been done in a traditional way. Many farmers have not yet been applying improved agricultural technologies. We have not yet exerted our efforts exhaustively. At present, the regional government is determined to change this situation. We set out to improve the productivity of sesame and be more competitive in the world market."

Following Dr. Teshome's opening remark, presentations and discussions were made on last years' experience of sesame production and marketing in the region and the sesame production package.

On the 12th and 13th of March, participants were trained on sesame production, pest and disease management,

marketing, soil fertility management and sesame extension. After completing the training sessions, participants thoroughly discussed on the implementation of the regional plan in their respective *woredas* and *kebeles*.

The ToT is part of the regional BoA's plan. For the 2016 production season, the Amhara region BoA plans to cover 260,959 hectares of land with sesame and to produce 2.4 million quintals. It is also planned to increase the average productivity of sesame up to 10 quintals per hectare. To achieve this, more than 90,000 small-scale and 2,000 investor farmers across the six sesame producing *woredas* of Amhara will participate. Trainees, therefore, will get back to their *woredas* and will roll-out similar trainings for development agents and thousands of farmers.

Workshop on marketing of Ethiopian sesame

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The workshop helped participants to learn about world market trends and Ethiopia's position in the international arena. Issues such as world market demand and supply trends; the competitive advantage of Ethiopia; factors influencing sesame price

volatility; opportunities for value addition and processing; food safety; traceability; certification; environmental sustainability and others were presented and discussed.

Participants practiced how to deal with buyers in business meetings. Tsehaye and Dansha Aurora farmers'

cooperative unions shared their experience in direct exporting.

A total of 19 participants, drawn from six unions (Metema, Setit, Selam, Dansha Aurora, Tsehaye and Lemlem), BENEFIT-SBN, C4C, Agriterra and CBI attended the workshop.

Benefits of mung bean

In this column we have been sharing with you important information on sesame cuisine and research findings about the important health benefits of sesame. We will keep on sharing with you what we have read about the benefits of sesame and major rotation crops.

BENEFIT-SBN supports sesame farmers to rotate sesame with other crops. Among the major crops that are suggested for rotation, mung bean has been recently introduced to sesame farmers in northwest Ethiopia. Many farmers are unfamiliar with it. Those who produce mung bean are producing it at a very small scale and for marketing purposes only. However, mung bean has great nutritional properties for farmers and others. In this issue of our newsletter, we would like to share with you what we have learned from various sources about the nutritional value of mung bean. We hope you will enjoy reading this piece.

Mung beans are nutritional powerhouses

Mung bean, also known as green gram, is loaded with nutritional health benefits. It is a high source of protein, fiber, antioxidant and phytonutrients. It has low fat and low calories and is packed with vitamins and minerals. The following are some important properties of mung bean.

Good source of vitamins and minerals: Mung bean is a very good source of vitamins and minerals. Vitamins C, A, K, E, B-6, thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid, and others are found in considerable quantities in mung bean. In addition to vitamins, mung beans contain a lot of minerals such as calcium, iron, magnesium, potassium, phosphorous, zinc and sodium. Mung bean helps to enhance the strength of bones and teeth.

Good source of protein: Mung bean is also a great source of protein. About 23g of protein is present in 100g of mung bean. This is a very high amount which is comparable with eggs, fish and chicken. The presence of protein facilitates quicker development of muscle and organs in infants.

Easy to digest: Mung bean is easy to digest and is anti-inflammatory. It is ideal for those with digestive issues and sensitive stomachs. Traditionally in India, infants, elder people and the ill are given a mixture of boiled yellow mung bean and rice called *khichdi*. This is very beneficial when the digestive system is still not mature enough or when it has weakened due to age or illness. Unlike other beans it contains oligosaccharide which prevents gas and bloating.

Stimulates the immune system: Studies have shown that mung bean is a good stimulant of the immune system. This means that the production and activity of white blood cells and the antibodies improve. Thus, it will help eliminate infection-causing bacteria, viruses, yeast, fungus, etc.

Good source of dietary fiber. Mung bean contains a high amount of fiber. Eating mung beans helps control the amount of cholesterol content in our body. It also prevents constipation. A single cup serving has 15g of fiber. Fiber in food helps create the effect of fullness and satiety.



Green mung beans exhibit powerful antioxidant properties that help fight disease and protect the body. Consumption of green mung beans has been studied in the treatment of conditions such as blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, celiac disease/gluten intolerance, anaemia, osteoporosis, digestion, inflammation etc.

Sources

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Documentary- Supporting the sesame sector in Northwest Ethiopia

BENEFIT-SBN produced a short documentary entitled "Supporting the sesame sector in northwest Ethiopia". The documentary depicts the major activities and results of the SBN and its support project during the first phase (2013-2015). It also highlights the future focus areas of the project. We would like to invite our reader to watch this and other short documentaries that have been produced by BENEFIT-SBN. The movies are available on the SBN Ethiopia YouTube page: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdnGSvBVjjjDyVYxgD55Cg>

2015: a challenging season for sesame farmers and traders

The 2015 sesame production and marketing season was challenging for farmers and traders in northwest Ethiopia. Many sesame farmers, especially those producing sesame in and around Humera and Mirab Armachiho *woredas*, were worst affected by both the late rain and the premature end to the rainy season. As sesame is the major source of revenue for many farmers, the impact of the weather on farmers' livelihoods was adverse.

It was not only the weather that affected farmers adversely, last marketing season's depressingly low prices also added to the misery. Despite the laborious task of production, the reward that most farmers got from their sales seems tentatively negligible. Many farmers did not seem to make a profit out of their sesame business last season in these areas.



Model farmer Jejjaw Chekol

Jejjaw Chekol, 27, is a model farmer from Abrehajira *woreda*, who produced sesame on his three hectares of land. He applied improved sesame production technologies on half a hectare of his land. He reports: "Employing the '20 Steps' increases production costs. For a half a hectare of land, for example, I spent 4,280 birr. Shortage of rain affected my plot. I got only three quintals from that investment, which I could sell for a mere 1,500 birr each.

The 220 birr I earned from that half a hectare is not worth my effort." Jejjaw is convinced that applying the improved technology increases yield. He states: "I won't lose my hope in my agriculture. I won't give up. I will keep on producing sesame using the '20 Steps' improved production technologies. But I will not trust the market." He has his concerns about the sesame price and marketing potential of his area. He feels that the declining price is very worrying for him and other farmers.

A woman model farmer by the name of Letekiros G/Egziabeher and her husband Addisu Birhanu, from Tirkan cluster near Humera, planted sesame on two hectares of their land. They applied the '20 Steps' and harvested 10 quintals in total. Letekiros said: "At its early stage, our sesame was in a very good shape. Agricultural experts liked our sesame and our plot was visited by surrounding farmers. It was chosen as one of the best sesame fields and visited by more than 200 people during a field day organised at *woreda* level. Unfortunately, the rain stopped at a mature stage of the sesame. That is why we only got 5 quintals per hectare." Letekiros and her husband sold their produce for 1,600 birr/quintal. Without considering their family labour used, their production costs reached as much as 10,000 birr. The husband and wife said that although they produced relatively good quality, they did not get the profit that they expected. The couple made some profit, but they are not happy with the sesame market price. Mr. Addisu said: "The market price is way lower than we expected. Whether we like it or not we sold it in the available market price. The situation forced us to sell our sesame soon after it was threshed."

Spot market traders were also negatively affected by the low price of sesame. Following the previous year's trend of price increment in the late marketing season, some spot market traders started to buy sesame at a



Model farmers: Letekiros G/Egziabeher left and her husband Addisu Birhanu

relatively higher price. Mr. Yedegeye Aynalem, a sesame trader at Dansha spot market said: "We paid a higher price at the beginning of the marketing season. But later on, the market price went down. It is not possible to predict what will happen next in the market. We are not getting the right information which could help us do our trade properly."

Market price volatility

The sesame market price has dropped dramatically since the trade of the new crop started. The lowest quintal price at the ECX was just 1,520 birr in December 2015. Over a period of two years, the price dropped by more than 60%. The sesame market price fall was not only experienced in Ethiopia, there was also a decline globally. The reasons attributed are the high volume of production and supply from emerging African countries. Nigeria produced around 150,000 tonne in 2010, but has subsequently increased its supply to 430,000 in 2014. Likewise, Burkina Faso has increased its production from 90,000 - 320,000 tonne over three years. In comparison, Ethiopian supply has decreased from about 325,000 tonne in 2010 to 285,000 tonne in 2014.

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In the picture

In the picture entertains the profile of individuals, cooperatives, unions, and/or any other service provider organisation for the sesame business clusters in northwest Ethiopia. For this edition, we cover a story on the activities of ACSI, North Gondar branch.

ACSI supports sesame farmers to boost their agricultural activities

Ever since the Amhara Credit and Saving Institute (ACSI) started providing formal financial service in Kokit kebele of Metema woreda; Mr. Enyew Adane, 54, has become one of the farmers who makes use of ACSI's services regularly. Mr. Enyew often acquires input-finance around June each year. This is a peak period in the agricultural seasons when sesame farmers are in desperate need of money to start production. He said: "The credit that I get from ACSI greatly supports me, although not enough due to the increasing price of inputs and labour, especially to do weeding. Last production season, I produced sesame on three hectares of land of which one was managed using improved sesame production technologies. I took a 10,000 birr loan from ACSI. I spent it on agro-inputs including quality seed and fertiliser, and I paid labour to help prepare and weed my fields." The money from ACSI ran out before the end of the production season. As a result, Mr. Enyew had to borrow some money from his relatives during harvesting and threshing times.



Mr. Enyew Adane

In northwest Ethiopia, small-scale sesame farmers' demand for finance has long gone unmet by formal financial institutions. These farmers do not usually get credit from banks as they do not have the collateral to secure loans. ACSI is perhaps the first and the only microfinance institution that provides formal credit services to

small-scale farmers like Mr. Enyew in North Gondar zone, Amhara region. Their products are affordable and flexible. ACSI accepts group-based collateral (group guarantee). The collaterals commonly used are properties such as houses/buildings, cars, etc.

Just like Mr. Enyew, over 13,000 small scale sesame farmers use financial services of ACSI in the sesame producing areas of North Gondar zone. With the mission to improve the economic status of low-income, productive people, ACSI is striving to support sesame farmers in the lowlands of Amhara region by providing access to credit and saving services since 1998. Mr. Birara Beze, manager of North Gondar zone ACSI branch, said: "In the sesame producing areas of North Gondar zone, ACSI has 14 centres from which it provides its service to sesame farmers. Centres are located in Quara, Dubaba, Shinfu, Metema, Kokit, Metema-Yohannes, Negade Bahir, Muse Bamb, Sanja, Masero Denb, Seroka, Kerakir, Abrehajira and Abderafi areas.

Mr. Birara said that, to support smallholder farmers, ACSI is raising the ceiling of its loan limit from time to time. At present, regular customers can borrow up to 30,000 birr and the new customers up to 15,000 birr. He said: "We sense the crucial financial problem in the sesame sector. We have been doing research regularly and we have also been getting inputs from the workshops and meetings organised for the sesame sector. We know that we have not yet satisfied our customers' needs. We will do our best to support sesame farmers." He added that, very recently, ACSI has come up with a modality of providing loan service for investor farmers. Large scale farmers can get up to 4,500 birr loans per hectare. This loan is released to borrowers in three phases: during land preparation, weeding and threshing periods.



Mr. Birara Beze

Asked about whether ACSI is reducing the informal money lending practice, Mr. Birara said that the informal money lending practice has been one of the major challenges in the sesame sector. It is difficult to stop this practice at once. Considering the financial needs of farmers, the credit service that ACSI is providing currently is very limited. "ACSI does not want farmers to get exploited by informal moneylenders. We are working hard so that farmers can get a better credit service. Though limited, ACSI is contributing its share in the efforts made to reduce this practice."

ACSI is striving to fill the gap of input credit for smallholder sesame farmers, but its service does not seem to quench many farmers' financial thirst. Mr. Enyew said ACSI's support helped him and his friends partly overcome their financial shortages. They do not usually approach informal moneylenders for running the first steps of their agricultural activities. However, the amount of money that Mr. Enyew and other farmers get from ACSI seems to be limited. Also, they do not usually get credit access during other production seasons. Mr. Enyew suggested that if ACSI can improve its loan limit and provide loan service during weeding and harvesting times, it would help reduce the problem.

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Stock carry-over predominantly in China, which is the biggest importer of Ethiopian sesame, and currency devaluation in other sesame producing countries, are believed to be additional causes.

Whatever the reason might be, the situation calls for farmers and other stakeholders to take different actions. Farmers and their organisations have little or no influence to mitigate price volatility. They can, however, try to get

the lowest cost per quintal possible. Tentatively, the application of '20 Steps' seems to make this possible. Last years' experience of some farmers, show that they managed to reduce their quintal costs to 1,100 birr, compare to 1,800 birr applying conventional practices. Working on value addition activities and producing rotational crops are also options to be considered.

BENEFIT-SBN's support

BENEFIT-SBN, in collaboration with stakeholders and partners, is trying to

make contribution to tackling the production and marketing challenges. Together with CommonSense, BENEFIT-SBN has been doing data collection and field monitoring using satellite images so as to use the result for weather forecasting. As regards to the market, BENEFIT-SBN regularly collects and monitors spot market, ECX, export and international market prices and shares the information with stakeholders via different channels and different occasions. It analyses world market dynamics in collaboration with CBI and SNV.

HuARC producing pre basic sesame seed

Humera Agricultural Research Center (HuARC) is producing pre basic sesame seed using irrigation. The main purpose of the seed multiplication activity, according to Mr. Fiseha Baraki, crop process coordinator at the research center, is twofold: first the activity is underway to show sesame farmers that it is possible to produce sesame using irrigation. The second is to solve the shortage of quality pre-basic seed in the area.

The seed multiplication work is conducted on six hectares of land at HuARC's compound. Mr. Fiseha said; "It is possible to produce up to 20



quintals per hectare using irrigation. As we are doing this for the first time and it is also in its early stage, it is difficult to predict the result right now; but we hope we will harvest more than 10 quintals per hectare."

Farmers around Humera do not have the experience of producing sesame using

irrigation. Later, in its maturity stage, the sesame plot will be demonstrated to the investor farmers in the area so that they can learn to produce sesame twice per year; one during the rainy season and the other during the dry season using irrigation.

Sesame farmers' cooperatives formed in North Gondar zone

Over 1,600 sesame farmers, who own more than 11 hectares of land each, in Mirab Armachiho, Quara, Metema and Tegede *woredas*, organised themselves into four 'crop production and marketing cooperatives', within their respective *woreda*. All four newly established investor farmers' cooperatives organised launch events and have received their legal license from relevant *woreda* authorities.

These cooperatives have designed short and long term action plans and have already started doing some activities. Input delivery, purchasing members' products, constructing offices and warehouses, recruiting

staff, providing credit for their members are among short term plans. In the long run, these cooperatives plan to work on the promotion and delivery of new and modern agricultural machineries services; availing agricultural input services; providing up-to date and sustainable market information services; engaging in agricultural output marketing and sesame product value addition activities and providing production and marketing credit and warehouse rental services to their members.



Launch event in Abrehajira *woreda*

BENEFIT-SBN provides technical and financial support for the establishment of these crop production and marketing cooperatives.

ToT on sesame, sorghum and mung bean production held in Tigray region

More than 50 agricultural experts drawn from Tsegede, Kafta Humera, Wolket and Tahtay Adiyabo *woredas* received training on improved sesame, sorghum and mung bean production packages from March 28 - April 4, 2016 at Wukro, Tigray region. The objective of the training was to increase the knowledge of *woreda* experts on improved production technologies of sesame and rotation crops.

The training had both practical and theoretical components. The theoretical part comprises contents on agronomy, pest and disease management and post-harvest handling techniques. After the training, discussions were held on model farmers' experiences applying the '20 Steps' improved sesame production package. During discussions, *woreda* and zone experts raised major challenges faced in the previous production seasons towards further scaling the '20 Steps', including shortage of rainfall, absence of suitable row planters, limited support from development agents, and incomplete application of the '20 Steps'. They discussed on how to solve these challenges. The discussion on



Participants on practical training session

farmers' practice of the '20 Steps' revealed that there are possibilities for expanding the experience to other farmers. The model farmers will also continue to employ the '20 Steps' production techniques in the coming season.

The practical training was mainly on ploughing, row making and row planting. Expertise from Tahtay Adiyabo *woreda* said sesame is

thus far produced in their area using conventional practices and they would like to apply the '20 Steps' in coming season. They said that they will conduct demonstration plots to teach farmers about the improved technologies.

The training was organised by the Tigray BoA in collaboration with the Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA) and BENEFIT-SBN.

Upcoming activities

- * Conducting baseline survey for the new *woredas* and SBCs
- * Following up the training on '20 Steps' improved sesame production technologies
- * Training on financial literacy
- * SMS trial for spot market price information
- * Signing MoU with ARARI/TARI on producing innovations and improved technologies and scaling up activities
- * Signing MoU with Amhara and Tigray Region Bureaus of Agriculture for the roll-out of '20 Steps' improved sesame production technologies
- * Training on internal capital mobilisation for unions and cooperatives

Contact us:

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More information about the SBN and its support project- BENEFIT-SBN can also be found on the SBN website:

<http://sbnethiopia.org>

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