

Sesame Business Network Newsletter



Issue 7 July 2015

The third sesame sector stakeholders' national meeting held at Mekelle



The third sesame sector stakeholders' annual national meeting was successfully held at Mekelle from April 20-21, 2015. The annual meeting, with the theme: "Invest more to earn more!" was jointly organised by the SBN Support Programme, C4C/SNV, Agriterria and Tigray Regional Agricultural Research Institute and Bureau of Agriculture. The annual meeting brought together over 150 participants drawn from SBN stakeholders such as primary cooper-

atives; farmers' cooperative unions; *woreda*, zone, regional and federal governmental organisations; private companies and partner projects.

The main objectives of the meeting were: sharing experiences and learning lessons from activities that took place in 2014; exchanging on the strategic agenda and action planning for 2015 and beyond; and creating a platform for stakeholders of the sesame sector.

(See details on page 3)

Preparations for the 2015 production season

In order to support the sesame sector in northwest Ethiopia, the SBN Support Programme has been doing different activities ever since it has started its support in 2013. As, it did in the last two years, the Support Programme plans to further roll-out the '20 Steps' best sesame production technologies in the coming production season. The main objective of the roll-out of the recommended sesame production package is to improve sesame production, yields and quality and thereby increase farmers' income. To achieve this objective, the Support Programme has undertaken different activities. It has already signed collaboration agreements with the Tigray and Amhara Bureaus of Agriculture. It has trained over 1,850



ToT workshop at Seroka, Tegede *woreda*

model farmers and development agents as trainers. It has also been giving financial and technical support to model farmers and *woreda* offices of agriculture.

(See details on page 2)

About this newsletter

The purpose of the SBN newsletter is to provide relevant and timely information about the overall activities of the SBN and its Support Programme.

In this issue we would like to highlight the major activities that have been taken place between April and June 2015

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ToTs on '20 Steps' held

More than 1,850 model farmers, development agents and agricultural experts participated in Training of Trainers (ToT) workshops on '20 Important Steps to Double Yield and Improve the Quality of Sesame' ('20 Steps' in short). The ToTs were arranged by the SBN Support Programme in collaboration with Tigray and Amhara Bureaus of Agriculture and Agricultural Research Institutions.

The training sessions were arranged in two stages. In the first stage the core team, which includes 42 individuals, were trained on the '20 Steps' in Gondar. Participants of the training were convened from North Gondar and West Tigray zones; bringing individuals from *woreda* Offices of Agriculture, zone Agriculture Department or Development Corridor, farmers' cooperative unions, Gondar and Humera Agricultural Research Centres and experts from private investor farms together.

During this training, the trainees prepared detailed action plans on how they could conduct further ToTs, select model farmers and distribute logistical responsibilities at the *woreda* and *kebele* levels. In their action plans, participants specifically indicate the time, place and responsible bodies for specific actions.

In the second stage, the core team was dispersed to different *woredas* to put their plan into practice. They trained 1,337 model farmers and 469 development agents and agricultural experts. These trainees on their part have gone to their areas back home and trained other farmers using formal and informal channels.

ToTs participant's reflection

Mr. Yirga Berhe, Kebele Chairman of Mogue, Maygaba cluster said, there was no good agricultural



practice to improve the productivity and quality of sesame earlier. Now, I have taken an experience on how to use agricultural inputs, recording of all activities and practical and theoretical demonstration on sesame technologies, especially land cleaning and preparation, weeding, thinning, pest and disease control and post harvesting managements. He said he will share what he got from the training to his fellow farmers. He stated that the training alone may not be enough to

do the scaling up and there should be follow up and technical support.

Model farmer Woldegabriel Keleta, from Tegede *woreda*, who participated in last year's rolling-out activity, recounts to participants that the performance of the sesame he planted using the improved technologies was special. He said he planted one quarter of a hectare following the '20 Steps' production guide and the rest of his field with traditional methods. He said; "The result was incomparable. I harvested two quintals from the demo plot, but I could harvest only one quintal from the rest of my sesame field, which took my entire season." He advised his fellow farmers that instead of planting a lot of area, which they cannot manage, it is better to plant a hectare or less following the '20 Steps'.



Model farmer Woldegabriel, sharing his experiences to the trainees

SBN Support Programme awarded

The SBN Support Programme was awarded a certificate of appreciation for its participation in the Post-harvest Agricultural Technologies Exhibition, which was held from 19 - 21 June 2015 in Mekelle.

The Support Programme displayed its communication materials that show the goal, objectives, activities and achievements of the SBN. At the exhibition, a considerable number of visitors, including authorities from Tigray region, visited the SBN stand. Explanations were given about the different activities that the SBN



The Support Programme was awarded by the organisers of the exhibition; Tirgray Agricultural Marketing Promotion Agency together with Peacock Data Base Application, Graphics and Media PLC and Tehale Trade and Promotion.

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Demonstrations

Demonstration of improved sesame production technologies that could increase productivity and quality will be conducted in a total number of 1,946 plots out of which 1,817 will be conducted in model farmers plots. The remaining 84 and 45 will be conducted in Farmer Training Centres and in investor farmers' fields respectively. The area of the demonstration plots range from 0.5 to 2.5 hectares. These activities will create awareness, build knowledge and improve skills among the surrounding farmers and communities through field days and training visits. Through the demonstration activities, it is planned to reach over 213,650 farmers.

Currently, the land preparation work has been completed in many areas and sowing is on progress.

The third sesame sector stakeholders' national meeting held at Mekelle

The annual meeting officially began with a warm welcome by Mr. Feseha Bezabeh, Deputy Head of the Tigray Bureau of Agriculture and Director of the Extension Directorate. In his welcoming speech, Mr. Feseha expressed his sincere appreciation for the remarkable works that the SBN Support Programme and partner projects have been doing for the sesame sector. He also expressed his happiness that this year's annual national meeting has been organised in Mekelle, Tigray region.

In the first day of the meeting, representatives from the Western Tigray and North Gondar zone agriculture departments presented the 2014 sesame technology rolling-out activities, achievements and lessons learned. After the presentations, some model farmers reflected on their experiences applying the '20 Steps' sesame production technologies. This was followed by participants' discussion on key issues for further rolling-out best agricultural practices. Next, the main findings of the credit and production cost study were shared. Participants were quizzed on production and credit cost related issues. Their answers were compared with the finding of the action research study. Mr. Zaid Berehe, from Humera, became the high scorer and he was awarded basketful of processed sesame products.

Afterwards, participants watched a short dramatisation of the relationship between farmers and microfinance institutions and/or banks. This led to the discussion on addressing rural finance challenges. Specific discussion points were raised, including: the risks impeding agricultural lending; replacing informal money lending with formal credit; getting more money in the sector to finance best agricultural practices; and stakeholders' collaboration in addressing challenges. After thorough discussions, representatives of unions, banks and microfinance institutions reflected on their experiences in dealing with the aforementioned challenges.

Day two of the meeting started with participants sharing their reflections on the most important points of the previous day. This was followed by the introduction of



Partial view of the workshop

CommonSense, a partner project working to bring 'Communities' and 'Sensors' together for improving food security in Ethiopia. It aims to bring relevant information to the communities based on geo-data.

Next, presentation was made on the world sesame outlook and Ethiopia's position in the world market by Demelashe Seifu, from C4C/SNV. Demelashe highlighted Ethiopia's sesame traded volume from 2008/09 - 2013/14. He also briefed the audience on current dynamics in the sesame market such as the global sesame price declined from 2,200 USD to 1,200 USD/MT. Ethiopia sesame market also declined from 2,600 USD to <1,400 USD/MT). Among the possible reasons why the prices of Ethiopian sesame have dropped in 2015 are: unexpected high growth in sesame production in most African countries, good harvest in India, a month of delays in the harvest and marketing of Indian sesame, the concentrated harvest and marketing of sesame in East and West African countries, quality problem compared to previous years.



Participants discussing in groups

What is more, brief presentations were

made on the topics of: in-country value addition; direct supplier-buyer relations; farmer and cooperative entrepreneurship; and labour management in the sesame sector. Participants discussed these issues thoroughly in four different groups in two rounds. The results of the discussions were later presented to the larger audience by group representatives. Subsequently, participants discussed major risks in the sesame sector. They specifically discussed on production, credit and market risks and suggested possible mitigation methods such as proper application of the '20 Steps' using mass media for timely production and market information, developing farmers awareness, upgrading to mechanisation, having crop insurance, creating and developing good relationship between farmers and financial organisations etc.

Dr. Adugna Wakjira's, deputy director general of Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), officially closed the two-day meeting. In his speech, Dr. Adugna said; "In order to get more profit from the sesame sector and become competitive in the world market, we should use up-to-date information and research based knowledge." He added; "a lot is ahead of us. If we work hard, we will bring the expected change within a short period of time." He called upon research institutes, universities and all other stakeholders to exert their utmost effort in improving the sesame sector.

Detailed account of the report is available on the SBN website.

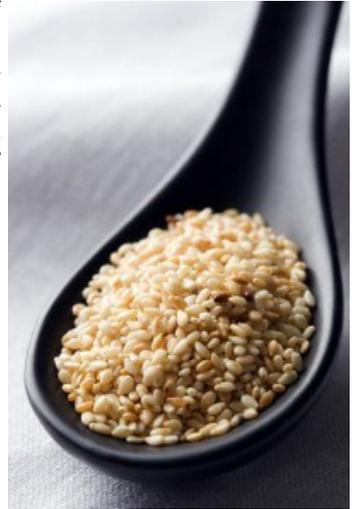
10 Reasons to Eat Sesame Seeds Today!

In our previous publications, we shared with you what we have read about the health benefits of sesame. In this issue, we also share with you what we have read from the internet about the 10 reasons why people should eat sesame.

On a salad, in a tahini hummus, or spread throughout a delicious roasted vegetable meal, sesame seeds offer a nutty depth that contrasts with other types of seeds. Not only do they taste great and are easily found for an affordable price, but these tiny seeds are also incredible for supporting bone health, longevity, and overall happiness.

- 1. Abundant in minerals.** Sesame seeds are incredibly rich in life-promoting minerals, such as phosphorous, lecithin, magnesium, potassium and iron. These are all anti-inflammatory and enriching minerals that have been shown to strengthen one's body and regenerative capabilities. As indicated in our previous publications, a considerable number of studies currently indicate that consuming sesame on a regular basis can be beneficial for preventing diabetes, dental plaque, high blood pressure, infant mortality, multiple sclerosis and atherosclerosis.
- 2. Reduces risk of cancer and aids detoxification.** Being a great source of methionine, sesame seeds have been shown to improve liver detoxification, reduce radiation-induced DNA damage, and even safeguard against certain cancers, because of their fat-soluble lignin properties.
- 3. Rich in vitamin-E.** Vitamin-E is essential for the growth and maintenance of glowing skin, hair and nails, and it is potent in sesame seeds! Consuming the anti-oxidant also reduces the risk of developing preventable diseases such as heart disease, atherosclerosis, stroke and many more.
- 4. Vitamin-B powerhouse.** Many plant foods lack B vitamins, making a vegetarian or vegan diet a concern for the health-oriented. But sesame seeds (and many leafy greens, legumes, and other nuts/seeds) are rich in B vitamins. Sesame seeds especially contain higher amounts of B1, B2, B3, B5 and B15. For brain health and nerve function, these vitamins, along with healthy fats, are essential.
- 5. Prevents anaemia.** Just a ¼ cup of sesame seeds provides almost 30% of one's daily need for Iron. This mineral is essential for oxygen transport and energy production. Found also in leafy greens, these two plant sources ensure those abstaining from meat experience vibrant health.
- 6. Great source of protein.** The flat, oval seeds give a mighty boost for their tiny size. In that same ¼ cup of sesame seeds, about 5 ½ grams of protein are delivered. They are rich in amino acids (the building blocks of protein), therefore support the vital growth and maintenance of a healthy body and balanced mind.

- 7. Treats arthritis pain better than Tylenol.** A recent study shows that regular consumption of sesame seeds reduces the pain of knee arthritis better than Tylenol. Conducted by medical researchers working out of Tabriz University, it was discovered that even a small amount (a little over one and a half ounces) helped subjects greatly reduce their pain.



- 8. High in good fats!** Sesame seeds are abundant in monosaturated and polyunsaturated fats (good fats), which support a balanced weight, help lower bad cholesterol and improve blood flow. While too much fat can be an issue, it is not one of huge concern, because these tiny seeds offer a number of benefits with moderate consumption.
- 9. Incredible source of calcium.** Contrary to popular belief, those whom experience osteoporosis may indeed consume enough calcium, but just not in the right source. In order to buffer the acidic ash produced from breaking down dairy and meat (dairy being a commonly promoted 'source' of calcium), the bone-building mineral must be removed from the bones to neutralise blood pH. This can tax organ systems and, in the long-term, contribute to bone brittleness. By consuming plant-based sources that are high in calcium (leafy greens, chia seeds, sesame seeds, and others), a balanced pH is ensured and bones can remain strong. Per tablespoon, whole sesame seeds contain about 88 mg of calcium. Compared to a whole cup of milk, one only needs a quarter of a cup to gain the same amount of calcium, and this is without the added mucus and cholesterol that results from consuming pasteurised dairy products.
- 10. High in Fiber.** Colorectal cancer is one of the most common cancers to debilitate and contribute to early death in the United States. By consuming more fiber-filled foods (all fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds), one's gastrointestinal tract will expel digested foods more often, and in effect, a healthier colon will result.

The incredible seed offers many benefits. One can easily include more of this super food into their diet in different ways.

By Amanda Froelich

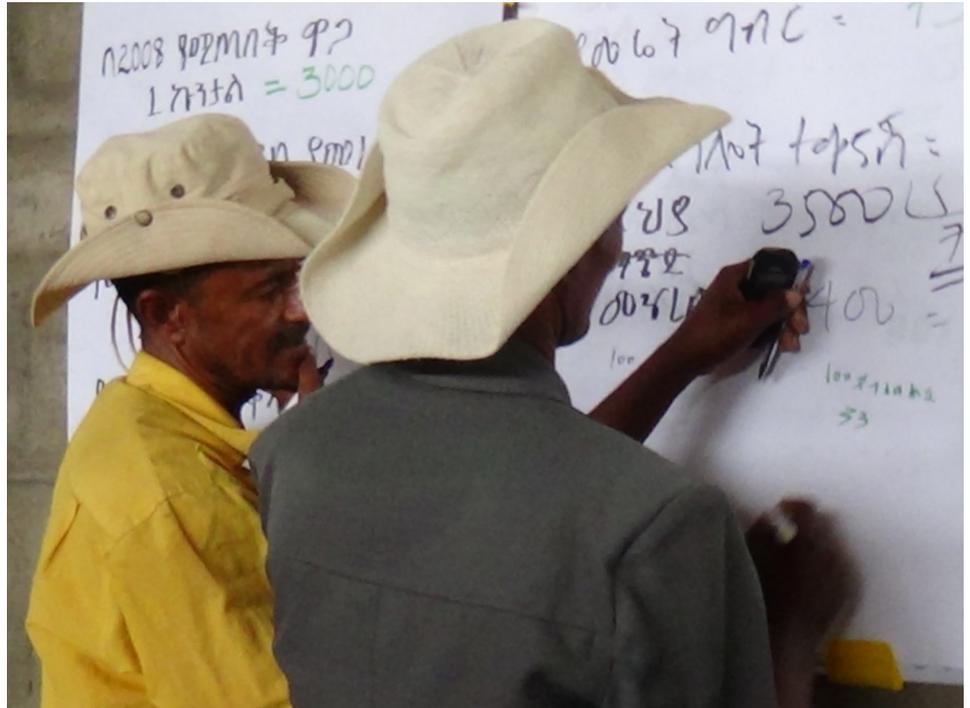
www.trueactivist.com/10-reasons-to-eat-sesame-seeds-today/

Training held to improve farmers' financial literacy and record keeping

During the 2013 and 2014 production season, the SBN Support Programme studied the production costs of sesame in northwest Ethiopia. One of the findings of the production cost study is that not all farmers record their costs well and hence are not inclined to make well-informed management decisions. Most farmers do not seem to assess a production season on its calculated profitability. In an attempt to support farmers in this regard, the Support Programme arranged financial literacy training sessions for some selected farmers.

Between June 6th and 9th 2015, 121 model farmers from across the eight sesame producing *woredas* of northwest Ethiopia were trained on basic economic principles and economic data recording. Of these, 83 farmers were trained on basic data recording of financial transactions for one day. This training focused on sesame only. The remaining 38 model farmers took an in depth look at financial calculations and focused on total farm production. The training sessions were organised at Metema, Seroka, Gondar, Dansha and Humera towns.

During the training, manuals and logbooks were given to farmers. The trainees are expected to register the costs that they



Trainees, calculating costs during the training

incur for different activities in their economic logbooks in the upcoming production and marketing season, and to do their cost benefit analysis at the end, following the manuals. The main objective of the training material was to improve farmers' financial skills so that they can calculate basic financial figures and make well-informed decisions of economic importance.

By providing these trainings, the SBN Support programme hopes to enhance farmers' financial literacy to navigate decision-making and stimulate entrepreneurial thinking. The SBN Support Programme coaches and facilitators will follow-up the progress of the trainees in recording and calculating their costs and profits

Trainees' impression

Model farmer Negestat Sintayehu who is from Gelego cluster Quara *woreda* said; "It is really an interesting training.



We have been doing our work without having a proper plan. Due to this we sometimes experience losses. I have got interesting information from the training. I have learnt that before I start ploughing, I have to plan my future costs. Doing so will help me to do my cost benefit

analysis." He added; "I sometimes spend too much money, but I did not clearly know the profit that I made. I did not do cost benefit analysis. From now on, I will clearly decide on the amount of money that I allocate for sesame, sorghum and cotton. I will register everything and try to do everything as I have learned here."

Brehin Berhe, a woman model farmer from Division, village three, said; "In the past I did not clearly know how much I spent for my sesame farming and how much profit I made out of it. I did not know that the farm equipment that I used for different

activities and horses and donkeys should also be considered as costs. Today I have learnt that I should



take these costs into account." She added that she is now well aware of variable and fixed costs and she is confident that she will register all her costs and do an analysis of her profit at the end of the season.

In the picture

In the picture shares the profile of individuals, cooperatives, unions, and/or service provider organisations in sesame business clusters in northwest Ethiopia. For this edition, we cover the profile of Cooperative Bank of Oromia (CBO); one of the banks that support the sesame sector in northwest Ethiopia.

CBO: a bank striving to satisfy its customers needs

The Cooperative Bank of Oromia (CBO) has got five branches in northwest Ethiopia, of which the Humera and Gondar branches are giving financial service to farmers and different stakeholders in the sesame sector. The Humera branch of CBO has been operating in and around Humera since February 2013. Currently, this bank has 14 employees, including clerical and non-clerical staff members. This branch has been providing different services to sesame sector stakeholders ranging from providing credit service to that of supporting export trade.

Sesame farmers are specifically targeted beneficiaries of the services that CBO provides to farmers' cooperative unions in the area. Ever since it has started its branch in Humera, the bank provides over 55 million ETB to its different customers including farmers' cooperative unions, investor farmers and traders. Mr. Getachew Andualem, manager of the Humera branch of CBO, stated that the bank is closely working with three farmers' cooperative unions, namely Setit Humera, Kafta Humera and Dansha Aurora LTD. He said that through these unions the bank is reaching a considerable number of smallholder farmers.

What makes CBO interesting is the fact that it provides input finance for smallholder farmers through their cooperative unions. CBO is providing this service together with projects and organisations which are active in the sesame sector. It collaborates with Agriterra, C4C/SNV, USAID and SBN Support Programme. With a 50% risk sharing agreement with Agriterra, the bank provides input finance to the aforementioned three farmer cooperative unions and investors. Mr. Getachew said; "Together with partner projects we support cooperative unions which have serious financial problems. Our support creates opportunities for unions and primary cooperatives to provide credit



Mr. Getachew Andualem, manager of the Humera branch of CBO

services to their members during crucial agricultural periods, such as weeding and harvesting." This means a lot for smallholder farmers.

CBO gives the input credit in a relatively short period of time. During the annual sesame sector stakeholders' meeting in April 2015, Mr. Teklemichael Tadesse, manager of Dansha Aurora Multipurpose Union LTD, said that the Union's experience with CBO is very encouraging. He said; "The bank together with Agriterra trained us on how to prepare a business plan. This helped us develop a convincing business plan and get credit from CBO within a very short time."

In its endeavour to support farmers' cooperative unions, CBO has given training on finance and the preparation of bank statements for the management members of Kafta-Humera, Dansha, Setit and Tsehaye farmers' cooperative unions. Getachew said; "Our primary focus is mainly on cooperatives, but this does not mean that we are not providing service to individuals. We provide credit service for investor and individual farmers too." For example, very recently, with 50% surety from the SBN Support

Programme, the bank is about to provide 350,000 ETB to Mersha Awoke, a promising young farmer from Mogo, Wolkayiet, through Nega Chere Primary Cooperative, to which he is a member.

What is more, CBO is trying to encourage export trade from Humera. The bank finances those who are exporting to countries other than China. This is because exporters to China are mainly working with the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia.

The CBO Humera branch was awarded twice by the main bank for its outstanding performance in producing foreign currency for the country. In the future, the bank plans to expand its reach by providing credit for more farmers and primary cooperatives in the sesame sector. It also has a plan to start new sub branches in Dansha and Abderafi, which could support sesame farmers and other stakeholders in the areas.

With the slogan; 'committed to breakthrough', CBO is striving for higher standards by providing support to the agriculture sector in particular and the country's economy at large.

North Gondar zone celebrates sesame day

North Gondar zone Trade and Transport, in collaboration with the zone Administration Office, organised the first sesame day of the zone. Using the expression; 'sesame: our white gold', the sesame day was held on April 17th 2015 in the historic town of Gondar. Over 300 stakeholders of the sesame sector, including producers, farmers' cooperative unions, traders, governmental and non-governmental organisations, exporters, input dealers, and officials from *woreda*, zone, regional and federal government attended the celebrations.



Participants of the sesame day ,following presentations

The zone celebrated the sesame day with the objectives of: improving productivity and quality of sesame; motivating investors to start processing industries and create job opportunities; encouraging people to invest in sesame business; promoting post-harvest value addition activities for making Ethiopia competitive on the global sesame market.

During celebrations, H.E. Mr. Gedu Andargachew, president of the Amhara National Regional state, stated that the north Gondar zone sesame producing area is suitable for irrigation. He said; "We need to try to produce sesame two or three times per year through an irrigation system." He added that the regional government would support all the endeavours that have been made by the various stakeholders to improve the

production and marketing of sesame.

During the event, sesame and other products of North Gondar zone were displayed and viewed by participants. Also, paper presentations concerning sesame production and marketing were made. Dr. Geremew Terefe, SBN Support Programme national coordinator, and Tewodros Tesfay, Sesame Business Cluster Coach coordinator and researcher at Gondar Agricultural Research Center, presented papers on "Sesame Value Chain and Agro-Processing" and "Improved Sesame Production Technologies Package" respectively.

SBN Support Programme and other bodies that have been doing outstand-

ing work in the sesame sector were awarded. During the sesame day, the work of the Support Programme was recognised for its important contribution for the advancement of the sector.

The event helped to encourage stakeholders to give more attention to sesame production, marketing and value addition activities so that the country can earn more foreign currency.

Higher officials from federal and regional government including H.E. Mr. Tefera Derebew, Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development and H.E. Mr. Kebede Chane, Minister for Trade, Mr. Gizat Abiyue, head of North Gondar zone administration, and others attended the sesame day.

Sesame production can be highly profitable!

In 2013, most small-scale sesame farmers were not introduced to the '20 Steps' sesame production techniques. Some may have heard about good agricultural practices and they might have used some improved techniques back then. Yet, the lion-share of small-scale producers applied practices in 2013 that they were familiar with. In that year, the weather was good and the yields were also good enough but most importantly, the farm-gate price was extraordinary high with some farmers getting more than 4,000 birr per quintal.

Early 2014, the Support Programme interviewed 476 farmers on their production and credit costs over the 2013 production season. It showed that conventional practices were very profitable with break-even prices estimated to be around 1,400 birr per quintal; which could mean a 2,600 birr profit per quintal!

But this was only for one year. The level of investment farmers made in 2013 was minimal. To apply all the '20 Steps', a much higher investment is needed, as was found from more than 500 model farmers who applied '20 Steps' in 2014. Ultimately a higher investment per hectare should lead to lower costs per quintal; even less than 1,400 birr per quintal. Under the current volatile market conditions, this is how sesame farmers will benefit most.

The interviews held with 476 farmers has resulted in "Financing Sesame Production in Northwest Ethiopia". In this report it is outlined how sesame farmers financed their production in 2013 under conventional practices. The report can now be accessed from the SBN website through:

www.sbnethiopia.org/resources/study-reports

Training held on SMS

SBN Support Programme in collaboration with CommonSense project organised training on digital data collection methods using Short Message System (SMS) for sesame farmers in northwest Ethiopia. Over 75 model farmers drawn from sesame producing *woredas* participated in the training sessions organised at Humera and Gondar on June 8th and 9th 2015, respectively.

The objective of the training was to improve the data collection for monitoring and evaluation by the SBN Support Programme through the use of more advanced technologies. The training sessions mainly focused on the practical use of cell phones to send SMSs. Almost all the trainees practiced sending SMSs during the training.



Participants while sending SMSs

The SMS data collection method is used as a tool to collect farm household and agronomic information. It can also be used to send specific messages to farmers about specific activities. Mr. Eskender Andualem, a PhD candidate from Wageningen University, who gave

the training for farmers, said; "This is just a pilot and the data that will be collected from farmers this production season using SMS will be further linked to satellite data or images." He added; "Data will also be gathered using smart phones and tablets using Akvo Flow."

Akvo Flow is a tool built specially for international development teams to monitor and evaluate initiatives while working in diverse locations that are often remote or lacking reliable basic infrastructure, like the sesame fields in northwest Ethiopia.

Upcoming activities of the SBN Support Programme

- * Monitoring demonstration plots and giving technical back up to model farmers and DAs;
- * Organising field days;
- * Field data collection
- * Following-up on the progress of farmers in recording and calculating their costs and profits;
- * Facilitating trade mission organised by Netherlands-African Business Council;

Contact us :

For more information, questions and comments you can contact us through: sbnethiopia@gmail.com

More information about the SBN and its Support Programme can also be found on the SBN website:

<http://www.sbnethiopia.org>

You can also find us on our facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/SBNEthiopia>

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Inputs from Andualem T., Aregawi G., Oscar G. and the rest of the SBN Support Programme team

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