

7 Site description for Chefe Donsa, Ethiopia

Genene Gezu Shiferaw^a & Habtamu Seboka Tura^b

^a Ethio-Organic Seed Action (EOSA), Addis Ababa

^b Haramaya University, Haramaya, Haraghe

7.1 Context

The CBM site of Chefe Donsa is located in the central highlands of Oromia. Small-scale subsistence agriculture is the common livelihood, characterised by traditional practices of mixed crop-livestock farming. Agriculture is also the major generator of revenue in the area. Livestock, wheat and legumes provide the main cash earnings. Animal husbandry is a prominent feature at this site. Farmers utilize livestock for plough power to minimize labour costs and to conserve resources in general. A few farmers engage in the meat industry and other cattle business. Other commercial activities that farmer at this site are oriented towards include grain trade and rural shops. The nearest grain market (and the largest) is Addis Ababa.

The consequences of genetic erosion in agricultural crops, including tetraploid wheat varieties, are significant. Likewise to the other study sites in Ethiopia, reintroduction of traditional wheat and sorghum varieties and re-establishment of traditional cropping patterns are the main agenda.

7.2 Institutional and project setting

The organization responsible for the inclusion of the Chefe Donsa site in the global CBM study is Ethio-Organic Seed Action (EOSA). They are the lead organization coordinating the study in Ethiopia. In partnership with other Ethiopian public organizations (district offices of Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD) and Cooperative Promotion (CP); zone offices of ARD and NGO Coordination offices; and Debre Zeit Agricultural Research Centre), EOSA is supporting the Integrated Agrobiodiversity Management and Seed Security Programme by:

- providing technical, material and financial resources;
- coordinating all on- and off-farm agrobiodiversity development activities;
- building capacities of local farmers and strengthening local farmers' institutions; and
- creating links to local, regional and international forums.

The first phase of the programme initiated in 2002 with the support of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), and after phasing-out, EOSA has been maintaining programme activities with the support of USC-Canada. Since 2006, with the full support of the CBDC Africa programme¹ funded by DF of Norway, SwedBio of Sweden and Hivos/Oxfam of the Netherlands, the programme set out to achieve the following objectives:

- promoting community based management and enhancement of agrobiodiversity;
- strengthening local seed supply systems to ensure security at the community level;
- promoting market and non-market incentives for socio-economic gains to the farming communities; and
- minimizing the conflicts between modern agricultural technologies promotion and traditional practices whilst sustainably managing natural resources and crop diversity.

¹ CBDC is a regional programme involving Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Sierra Leone, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

7.3 Key project activities

The main activities of the Integrated Agrobiodiversity Management and Seed Security Programme are as follows:

- realising the conservation and sustainable use of agrobiodiversity *in-situ*, involving major activities such as: on-farm management; community seed banking; participatory varietal selection; seed production and capacity building;
- Improving value addition through the creation of market access, installing seed processing units and introducing additional facilities for seed processing; and
- rehabilitating the agro-ecology of the area by promoting crop rotation and appropriate management of gullies.

7.4 Social and institutional organization

Similarly to the activities at Ejere site, major efforts have been made to reintroduce lost genetic diversity at Chefe Donsa site and restore traditional cropping patterns, balancing the distribution of cereals and legumes in farmers' fields. To sustain this, farmers have organized themselves into seed producer cooperatives, acting as both producer and marketing groups and also conservators of genetic resources. Accordingly, these seed producer cooperatives own and manage a community seed bank complex, to which EOSA provides technical support.

Farmers involved in on-farm conservation, seed banking and seed production activities are composed of representatives from 14 kebeles of Gimbichu district. The farmer association that owns the community seed bank complex is made up of household representatives, which are for the most part men. Women farmers, in one form acting as a separate women's association, are involved in income generation, in participatory knowledge sharing events like PVS and food fairs or exhibitions. Young and old farmers are involved in the knowledge sharing practices for the conservation, enhancement, marketing and utilization of the diverse plant genetic resources. The labour exchange and wage labour systems are also common practices in the site.

The farmers are more inclined to conserve the local varieties as guardians of agrobiodiversity. The reason for focusing on these wheat types is that such valuable resources are totally neglected by the formal research, extension and seed supply programme. Regardless, the site appears to have better connections with extension services than the other two in Ethiopia. On-farm seed multiplication includes enhanced and basic materials obtained from the national agricultural research centres and the national seed enterprise. The enhancement of local materials is carried out in a participatory process where partners i.e. experts from research and teaching institutions, as well as agricultural development workers, team-up with farmers, the latter playing a dynamic role in the activity. Such integration promotes synergy between the formal and informal knowledge systems. Seeds of some varieties are distributed both formally and informally beyond the community. Seed marketing is one such means for distribution.

With the support of FAO, the seed producers' cooperatives own a seed cleaning facility to improve their marketing potential. The institutional linkage with EOSA is also, like it is in Ejere site, valuable for awareness raising and capacity development. EOSA organizes forums for networking and experiences and lessons sharing, arranges field days and diversity fairs for seeds and foods.

7.5 Plant genetic resources

The area is a source of diversity for durum wheat and sorghum. Currently, the main agricultural crops include wheat and legumes such as chick pea, lentil and grass pea.

7.6 CBM practices

1. Generating awareness and an understanding of local diversity:
 - seed fairs and food-tasting;
 - field days;
 - inventorying and documenting crop diversity, conducting baseline surveys, tracing back historical records through the national genebank and documenting elderly farmers knowledge on traditional patterns and practices;
 - promoting diversification for food, nutrition and livelihood security.
2. Establishing community institutions, developing their capacities and consolidating CBM in their working modalities:
 - formation of farmers' associations;
 - multi-stakeholder forums;
 - formal and informal training.
3. Developing conservation practices (including entrepreneurship and marketing of agrobiodiversity), monitoring and evaluating practices, promoting social learning and scaling-up:
 - participatory approaches to enhancing local diversity;
 - PVS;
 - reintroduction of wheat varieties through crop rotation practices;
 - seed production and marketing;
 - value addition programmes promotion for enhanced wheat varieties;
 - seed banking;
 - seed extension services;
 - technical backstopping;
 - donation of the seed cleaning machine by FAO;
 - scaling-up and strengthening the community seed bank complex.