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SNAPSHOT

Better Management Practices Make Big Impact

Time needed for data analysis has been cut in half, leading to faster response to pest outbreaks



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Tenaw Mekonnen, Director of the Planning Office of the Amhara Bureau of Agriculture, helped save farmer livestock from lice and ked damage by implementing more efficient management practices he learned from USAID-CIAFS leadership training.

“Our ability to mobilize is strengthened after USAID-CIAFS training.”

-Tenaw Mekonnen,
Director of Amhara BOA Planning Office

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In Ethiopia, the Bureaus of Agriculture can provide a lifeline to inputs, extension services, and animal health services to farmers operating in the regions. Tenaw Mekonnen, Director of the Planning Office of the Amhara Bureau of Agriculture, is working to ensure that farmers receive these services efficiently.

The Capacity to Improve Agriculture and Food Security (CIAFS) program, supported by USAID, empowers agents of change through leadership trainings to help transform the Ethiopian agriculture sector. In 2011, Mekonnen participated in his first USAID-CIAFS leadership training, which focused on Ethiopia's food security status, global food security and agricultural growth strategies, and how to leverage human resources in the public and private sector for greater impact. Since then, Mekonnen has delivered the training to his own staff and instituted new workforce management practices to improve efficiency.

The Planning Office now uses the planning and management tools that Mekonnen learned, including action plans and long-term workplans, to increase personal, group, and department efficiency. To increase cohesion and accountability, Mekonnen reorganized his staff into five-person teams with responsibility for implementing specific activities and for achieving well defined targets. He also instituted an incentive program to motivate his staff and recognize the groups' successes.

Mekonnen's changes have already resulted in positive impacts for the Bureau and the farmers that they serve. The time required to process and analyze production data collected by wordea-level extension agents has been cut in half. This July, the new efficiency of processing time saved farmers from huge livestock losses and a substantial hit to their incomes. When isolated cases of lice and keds were reported by Amhara livestock producers, the Bureau was able to quickly process and analyze the data, rapidly mobilize treatment, and therefore minimize what could have been a widespread outbreak leading to loss of livestock and income for farmers. Similarly, in August, when the first reports of locust swarms were received, Menkonnen's department quickly analyzed the data and began distributing reserve pesticides in order to contain crop losses.

The operational changes made by the Planning Office after USAID-CIAFS training have been so successful that they're spreading throughout the region: both the Amhara Agricultural Research Institute and the Amhara Environmental Protection Agency have sent staff to observe and learn from Mekonnen's reorganized department to improve their own internal efficiency.

By increasing operational efficiency within public and private sector agricultural support institutions, USAID-CIAFS and Feed the Future are increasing resources available for Ethiopian farmers to deal with environmental, technological, and marketing challenges for improved agricultural growth and food security.