Together for a Food Secure Ethiopia

At the time when food security is a major global challenge the Ethiopian Government has ambitious goals to transform its economy and to create a prosperous and food secure nation. In support of this, a coalition of NGO’s including Oxfam, PANE, PFE CCF-, PHE-E, SEDA, SLUF, FfE, Plan Ethiopia and NEWA, is embarking on a new initiative called Together for a Food Secure Ethiopia. The founders recognize the continuing importance of food security as a major global and national challenge and would like to support the Ethiopian government’s effort as well as other development partners working towards ensuring sustainable food security in the country. With shared recognition of challenges and joint aspiration, the initiative builds on the activities of each member organization on the ground and aims to add value to the existing and future investments in national food security.

Food Security: Global Challenge

Soon there will be 9 billion mouths to feed around the world. Global food production needs to increase by 70% before 2050 in order to sustain these increases in the world’s population¹. After decades of slow decline, global hunger began to rise in the mid-1990s and soared during the 2008 food price crisis, and in 2011, 925 million people are undernourished, of whom the overwhelming majority (98%) of the world’s undernourished people live in developing countries, with two thirds of them concentrated in seven nations (Bangladesh, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia and Pakistan)².

Global inequality and unjust global food systems mean that as resource pressures mount and climate change gathers pace, poor and vulnerable people are likely to suffer first – from extreme weather, from spiralling food prices, and from degrading natural resources.

Food Security in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, the importance of the agriculture sector cannot be overemphasized as it contributes about 41% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 90% to the country’s exports (2009/10) and upon which about 85% of the population depends³. Agricultural production is overwhelmingly based on small scale farming, accounting for about 95% of total crop area and agricultural output⁴. Livestock production is also vital, with Ethiopia having the largest livestock population in Africa, 25% of which is found in dryland areas⁵.

Since the mid-1990s, Ethiopia’s agricultural performance has been encouraging. Central Statistical Agency figures show that the agriculture sector has grown at a rate of about 10% per annum, exceeding the target set in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP). In addition, Ethiopia’s investment in agriculture stands at over 15% of the national budget, surpassing the CAADP target of 10%⁶. This shows that whilst there are numerous global challenges, the Ethiopian Government is making significant efforts to ensure the agriculture and food security sectors receive adequate investment and that long-term solutions are found for sustainable development in food insecure areas.

¹. UN, World Economic Social Survey 2011
². UN, World Economic Social Survey 2011
⁴. FDRE, 2010, Growth and Transformation Plan, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
⁶. Source: calculated from IMF, http://www2.imfstatistics.org/IFS/
However, despite these huge efforts, a number of challenges remain. The Ethiopian Government has made poverty and hunger reduction its top priorities. The Together for a Food Secure Ethiopia initiative exists to support the Government in its efforts to transform the agricultural system whilst identifying the bottlenecks for ensuring domestic food security.

The Opportunities & Limitations

Ethiopia's ambitious plans, impressive Agricultural Programme and Investment Framework (PIF) and existing achievements in hunger reduction present a huge opportunity to capitalize on the global interest in agriculture and increased funding flows that were sparked by the global food crisis. This will be vital in overcoming the challenges facing the country's agricultural and food systems.

In particular, global food price rises will likely have a greater impact on Ethiopia in the future, given that reliance on food imports will continue in the medium-term and prices for key staples globally are predicted to increase between 120 to 180 per cent by 2030. At the same time, climate change is expected to impact production domestically, given existing vulnerability to drought and floods as well as predicted temperature rises, seasonal changes and increased extreme events.

Ethiopia's population also continues to grow and in highland areas, high population density has meant farm sizes are getting smaller and smaller. Around 40% of smallholders have less than half a hectare, on which typically they must support 6-8 family members. In dryland areas, increased competition for land and water resources have pushed individuals to enclose land (for private grazing or renting to other pastoralist, or for conversion to agriculture) making it unavailable to other rangeland users and leaving communities more vulnerable to drought.

The lack of a commitment and attention paid to women small farm holders and pastoralists remains key challenges of reducing hunger and food security goals. Because of their multiple roles, women are key players in overcoming food insecurity. Despite the crucial role of the agricultural sector in the Ethiopian economy as well as favourable policies in the agriculture sector, studies on gender aspects of agriculture shows gender gap in access to land, rural labor market, financial services, social capital and technology. Closing these gender gaps will be vital to efforts to achieve food security.

Ensuring that funds from Government and donors, as well as from new sources of climate finance and the commercial investors in agriculture can contribute to domestic food security presents both challenge and opportunity.
A New Opportunity to Work Together

The **Together for a Food Secure Ethiopia** initiative, intends to work in collaboration with the Government and other development actors to add value to the existing efforts underway. The goal and objectives of the initiative are as follows:

**Goal**
To improve the contribution of policy and programs in the agricultural and food security sectors maximize the food security and resilience of the Ethiopian people, especially poor women and men.

**Objectives**

1. To support and promote the effective utilization of climate adaption finance, in particular to strengthen the resilience of poor farmers and pastoralists and the implementation of Disaster Risk Management approaches at the woreda and kebele level.
2. To empower small scale women food producers (farmers and pastoralists) to increase their production and incomes by promoting the implementation of policies that allow women food producers to have equal opportunity to access land, financial resources, agricultural extension services and encourage them to take leadership roles in producer or marketing organizations.
3. To promote public, private and smallholders investments in agriculture and pastoralism which enhance the ability of people to feed themselves and their families.

Ethiopia faces interlinked challenges in an age of growing crisis: feeding 120 million people by 2025, finding an equitable solution to increase our collective resilience to climate shocks and volatility, global food and fuel crisis as well as domestic food price inflation.

We believe these challenges are manageable, but that they need to be understood in more detail and practical solutions rolled out at scale. The vision of **Together for a Food Secure Ethiopia** Initiative is that government and citizens, public and private sectors, NGOs and donors will harness their resources and energy to realize the goal of a food secure Ethiopia.

Together with our members, we already work on direct implementation, research and policy dialogue at local, regional and national level on these issues.

**Do you share our vision for a food secure Ethiopia? Please join us!**

The **“Together for a Food Secure Ethiopia”** Initiative aims to bring development actors working on food security issues to work together to address some of the challenges outlined in this brochure. The **Together for a Food Secure Ethiopia** Initiative has 10 member organizations that so far include: **Oxfam, PANE, PFE, CCF-E, PHE-E, SEDA, SLUF, FtE, Plan Ethiopia and NEWA**. To find out more about the initiative or how you can get involved, please contact Sofia Ahmed. (SAhmed@OxfamAmerica.org).