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## Farmer's innovation for improved rainwater management in the Nile Basin

**TILAHUN AMEDE<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>CPWF Basin Leader, Nile  
[t.amede@cgiar.org](mailto:t.amede@cgiar.org)

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A WOMEN FARMER MANAGING HER IRRIGATION FARM IN TIGRAY, BLUE NILE BASIN.

### **Key Message**

In SSA farmer innovations using water as an entry point can improve food security and resilience. We present two farmer innovation stories that demonstrated how this can be achieved by transporting manure and rehabilitating degraded lands for improved farm productivity.

# Summary

We are presenting two case studies, whereby local innovation in water management at farmer level contributes to increased income and improved food security of poor households in SSA.

1. Given high price of chemical fertilizer, farmers commonly apply manure and household refuse to their plots, preferably around homestead fields. But transporting the large volume of organic fertilizers to far away fields demands more labor. One innovative farmer in the Nile basin, residing on the hills and farming on the valley bottoms used irrigation canals to transport the large volume of manure from the homestead to the valley field by spreading the manure on the irrigation water. By introducing this innovation Ato Hailu G/Micheal from Tigray (Chelekot), Ethiopia won a regional innovators' prize (about USD 1,100) awarded in a regional assembly in the presence of high government officials. Local people from about 10 villages visited the winner's farm and witnessed the innovation.

2. Mrs Romas Haile Silasie is a widow, 67, without additional family labour. She did not previously have land but inherited a plot after her daughter passed away a few years ago. Moreover the land she inherited was not part of the traditional irrigation command area and thus she was not a beneficiary. The construction of the water diversion and lining canal completely destroyed her farm, completely covering it in stone, sand and silt. However, she didn't get any compensation. On the other hand, she was happy that the water canal was crossing her farm. She decided to remove the large amount of debris from her farm and, using buckets of water crossing her farm, she developed it into a fruit and vegetable garden thus replacing the wheat fields. She is currently producing high value vegetables by irrigating the field using buckets and getting a net income of about 12,000 birr per annum. Her field has become a demonstration site for the whole community.

These case studies show that given the opportunity, poor rural farmers could develop interventions that would be able to improve agricultural water management. There is a need for policy support for poor farmers to access resources (land and credit) to try and adapt technologies and practices.