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From 'incentivized' to demand-driven rainwater management programs: Lessons and next steps in Ethiopia and beyond

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Can his family feed itself from this field? *A food secure region of Ethiopia*

FROM DEGRADATION TO INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (PHOTOS BY 1) DOUGLAS MERREY, MAY 2010; 2) TADELE GEBRESELASSIE, NO DATE)

Key Message

Ethiopian land and rainwater management programs have evolved from being top-down to being relatively consultative and participatory. The government should now move to demand-driven implementation, encouraging partnerships with local communities and engaging them in a creative locally-driven technological and institutional innovation process.

Summary

The N1 project reviewed information on 40 years of Ethiopian land and rainwater management programs. It developed a database of over 400 references on both implementation and research, focusing on policies, implementation strategies, institutions, and technologies. Land degradation was perceived as the major cause of famine and chronic food insecurity. The early programs were coercive, promoting technologies that were often not accepted by farmers. Recently, government has adopted a more consultative and participatory approach. However, participants are often motivated by food or cash for work, not by expected benefits from water management; and technologies are often promoted through quota-driven campaigns, not by farmer demand. The productivity and food security results are frequently disappointing. Ethiopia should complete its transition to programs driven by farmer demand, support local innovative problem-solving initiatives, and strengthen collective management capacities. This finding is relevant to the Limpopo and Volta basins in Africa.