Ministry highlights market-oriented agricultural dev't role in GTP realization

BY BELETU BULBULA

ADDIS ABABA — The Ministry of Agriculture said that market-oriented agricultural development is fundamental to the realization of the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP).

Opening a workshop on "Market-Oriented Smallholders Development in Support of the Growth and Transformation Plan", on the premises of ILRI Compound, Thursday, State Minister Wondered Mekdeso said through his representative that the government has taken various initiatives to support more market-oriented agricultural development in response to the PASDEP policy.

The State Minister further indicated that the development of roads, electricity and telecommunication infrastructure, which are pre-requisite for market-oriented development, were given high priority.

Apart from establishing Agricultural TFETs in various parts of the country to revitalize the extension programme, the government has deployed over 50,000 development agents to assist millions of farmers in their day-to-day activities.

According to him, the project has achieved a number of successes in methods, approaches and processes involved in market-oriented agricultural development. Lessons learnt would be immensely helpful in designing strategies to upscale them so as to assist the process of agricultural transformation, he added.

"Therefore, market-oriented agricultural development is central to the realization of GTP which re-emphasizes the commercialization of smallholder agriculture", Wondindo said.

ILRI Deputy Director General John McDermott, on his part said the project is all about organizing people in value chains, increasing production and income on specific commodities, training and capacity development and knowledge management processes.

"The Improving Productivity and Market Success (IPMS) project is not business as usual. Often, when things are being implemented in different manner than business as usual, there are a lot of practical challenges. Involving people in the IPMS, which is a new idea, was among the key challenges that need to be appreciated and fight together," the Deputy Director added.

Project Head Dr. Azage Tegene also said that the project was developed and being implemented in ten selected pilot learning woredas in Tigray, Amhara, Oromia and SNNPS as testing grounds for a participatory market-oriented commodity value chain development approach since July 2004.

Dr. Azage further indicated that the main objective of the workshop is to share project experiences, achievements, lessons learned and good practices on participatory commodity value chain development.

According to him, the Canadian Government decided to contribute to sustainable growth in the agricultural sector over five years ago when it funded the IPMS project to enable the nation to carry out different interventions in participatory market-oriented development. He also emphasized the role and importance of the country's 13 million smallholder producers in meeting the GTP objectives.

The five year CIDA-funded project is implemented by ILRI on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture.