

In Ethiopia, collaboration by CGIAR and national partners is delivering integrated development solutions



More effective collaboration the focus of a national workshop in December 2015 (Photo: Desalegne Tadesse - IWMI)

Background

Agriculture accounts for an average of 47% of Ethiopia's GDP over the last decade. It employs approximately 75% of the labour force, and smallholder farmers cultivate 94% of arable land in the country. With population growing by nearly 3% per annum, substantial increases in agricultural production and productivity are needed to feed everyone. Research is a key input to achieve this and it is a key aspect in the country's transformation goals.

The second phase of multi-partner CGIAR research programs (CRPs) are being developed to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the CGIAR's three system-level objectives: to reduce poverty, improve food and nutritional security for health, and improve natural resource systems and ecosystem services.

These objectives and goals are well-aligned with the aspirations of Ethiopia's Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) II which aims to reduce poverty, achieve food security and contribute to economic growth, exports and attaining climatic sustainability.

With agriculture still performing a central role in Ethiopia's nation building, with the Ethiopian government committed to developing its agricultural sector, and with 11 CGIAR centres working for a food-secure future in the country, Ethiopia is an ideal environment in which to build highly productive research for development partnerships.

A CGIAR hub in Ethiopia

Within the wider CGIAR phase 2 portfolio development process, 'site integration' and country coordination plans are being developed by CGIAR centres and their partners and stakeholders in 20 developing countries. The aim is to ensure that CGIAR efforts contribute to national, as well as international, priorities and goals and ensure that the CGIAR programs and centres coordinate their efforts in each country.

Eleven¹ of the 15 CGIAR centres and 12 CRPs² work in Ethiopia. They have rich and diverse partnerships with national institutions that focus on agricultural research, natural resources management, nutrition, public health, extension, implementation and policy.

National coordination

Under the auspices of the International Livestock Research Institute, the hosting CGIAR institute in Ethiopia, a group of CGIAR centres held regular meetings in 2015 to discuss ways to better cooperate, collaborate and integrate their efforts. This grew out of December 2014 discussions with Ethiopia's Agricultural Research System when synergies were explored.

With the wider CGIAR process providing an additional boost to these efforts, the agenda of quarterly meetings has been expanded and other steps have been taken, including:

- Setting up an email group of the heads of CGIAR centres and CRP focal points working in Ethiopia.
- Creating a collaborative website (wiki) to host reports, plan meetings, and support communication among all CGIAR and national parties.
- Forming an ad hoc coordination team to drive this process to become a key joint national-CGIAR mechanism to drive country collaboration and site integration.

It is also planned to organize an annual consultation with representatives of the research institutes and governmental agencies, as well as representatives from non-governmental organizations and regional institutions.

Beyond these specific mechanisms, CGIAR representatives contribute to various 'sharing, learning, planning and implementation' platforms, most notably the Agriculture Research and Technology Task Force of the Rural Economic Development and Food Security Sector Working Group (RED&FS), a government-donor coordination platform for agriculture, natural resource management and food security. The objective of RED&FS is to review the implementation status of development activities, and coordinate and harmonize the work of key development partners in the country.



Farmers and community representatives engage with researchers and other partners in innovation platforms (Photo: Kindu Mekonnen – ILRI)

Site collaboration

CGIAR centres and CRPs collaborate closely with numerous partners in a wide range of research projects in the field. Two projects illustrate this work:

1. Africa Research in Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation project (Africa RISING) in the Ethiopian Highlands
2. Humidtropics CRP—Western Ethiopia Action Site

These two projects align their 'research for development' interventions at their six research sites through local innovation platforms. Both are contributing to increased production and productivity of crops and livestock, and increased incomes of participating smallholder farmers. Nine CGIAR centres in Africa RISING and four CGIAR centres in Humidtropics, as well as numerous partners, work together in the field sites.

Africa RISING

This research for development project, funded by the USAID Feed the Future initiative, operates in eight **kebeles** (the lowest administrative units in Ethiopia), in four districts in Amhara, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples, and Tigray regions.

The eight kebeles were selected using specific criteria, including areas presenting opportunities for sustainable intensification, sites undertaking crop, livestock, tree and NRM activities, and the previous experiences of partners. CGIAR centres are engaged in different research protocols that contribute to sustainable agricultural intensification of mixed crop-livestock systems.

Together with local partners and community members, Africa RISING identified seven thematic research areas based on community research prioritization. The research for development activities or research protocols are undertaken on farmers' fields by the nine CGIAR centres in collaboration with national partners, including universities, research centres, private companies, farmers and government line ministries.

Innovation platforms have been established and are operating at all the research sites, mainly as a space to bring together CGIAR research centres, farmers and all sorts of local partners. The platforms aim to nurture linkages among farming communities, the Africa RISING research teams, and other public and private actors working in the areas. The platforms operate at three levels in each site:

- At district (*woreda*) level, strategic platforms aim to catalyze learning and wider adoption of innovations emerging from action research. They provide technical support to the *kebele* platforms and farmer research groups.

- At kebele level, operational platforms oversee local research activities, foster integration among the farmer research groups, and promote alignment of local on-farm research with district priorities.
- Farmer research groups comprise farmers involved in specific clusters of research, such as forage production, water delivery or varietal improvement. They particularly promote scaling of innovation to wider groups of farmers.

Nationally, the ILRI-led project organizes monthly learning, information exchange and follow up meetings among CGIAR centres. Partners and other key stakeholders also participate in annual review and planning as well as learning events.

Humidtropics Western Ethiopia Action Site

The Humidtropics CRP Western Ethiopia Action Site works through two field sites in Diga and Jeldu districts. These built on already-existing innovation platforms established by the Nile Basin development Challenge project (a third site was adopted by the Water, Land and Ecosystems CRP). A national-level R4D platform was also established to engage with national partners in guiding and scaling up activities at the two field sites.

Under this initiative, IWMI, ILRI, CIP and ICRAF came together and joined the local platforms to integrate NRM interventions under the Humidtropics agenda of sustainable intensification of mixed crop-livestock-tree farming systems. With support and facilitation from CGIAR researchers, the local innovation platform partners identified gaps and designed a four-year sustainable intensification strategic plan. In 2014, new strategic intensification interventions designed to increase the production and productivity of major crops, while sustaining the production system by integrating NRM, were initiated. Clear roles and responsibilities of key partners were identified for each of the activities and for the integration of NRM interventions at innovation platform level.

CGIAR researchers lead the research components and backstop local partners leading the design and implementation of agreed interventions on the farms. The national-level R4D platform supports learning events, including joint design of the overall CRP project proposal and 2015 evaluation of activities. It also engages related intensification projects, fostering synergies, learning and potential scaling up. Thus, a well-integrated enhanced faba bean seed with an improved crop rotation management practice was introduced from the Legume CHOICE project and improved feed troughs and feed storage facilities were introduced from Africa RISING research sites and it is likely that opportunities will come out of the proposed second Phase of Africa RISING project.

Keeping up the momentum

Progress so far provides stepping stones to strengthened cooperation, collaboration and coordination among CGIAR centres and programs and Ethiopia's national agricultural research and development system. The willingness of all actors to maintain this cooperation and allocate sufficient funds and other resources will be essential for its continued success.

Discussions to date between CGIAR and its Ethiopian counterparts about site integration planning suggest that CGIAR is well placed to contribute to the country's national agenda, particularly through enhanced collaboration and coordination together with better understanding of, and alignment with, the national priorities.

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Notes

¹ Bioversity International; Center for International Forestry Research; International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas; International Center for Tropical Agriculture; International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics; International Food Policy Research Institute; International Livestock Research Institute; International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center; International Potato Center; International Water Management Institute; World Agroforestry Centre.

² Agriculture for Nutrition and Health; Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security; Dryland Cereals and Legumes; Humidtropics; Forests, Trees and Agroforestry; Livestock and Fish; Managing and Sustaining Crop Collections (Genebanks); Maize; Policies, Institutions and Markets; Roots, Tubers and Bananas; Water, Land and Ecosystems; Wheat.

CGIAR centres in Ethiopia



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