

Omo-Ghibe Living Landscape: Launch Updates, Field Mission Insights, Coordination Modalities and Strategic Focus areas

07 May 2026, ILRI campus, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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A country coordination meeting held on 07 May 2026 at the ILRI campus in Addis Ababa brought together CGIAR centers to align priorities and strengthen coordination for the Omo-Ghibe Living Landscape under the CGIAR Multifunctional Landscapes Program. Discussions highlighted key challenges, including low agricultural productivity, soil degradation, deforestation, landslides, limited market access, and climate risks, while identifying opportunities to scale agroecological and integrated landscape management practices. Participants emphasized shifting toward a focused, phased implementation approach, strengthening coordination, evidence-based planning, and promoting inclusive value chains to achieve sustainable and scalable impacts..



Contents

1. Executive Summary	2
2. Participants	2
3. Key meeting agenda	3
4. Overview of the launching workshops and field trip	4
5. Updates from contributing centres	4
6. Strategic focus areas of the MFL SP	5
7. Coordination modalities and the way forward	6
8. Key entry points	7
9. Key agreed points	7

1. Executive Summary

The meeting was held on 07 May 2026 at the ILRI campus in Addis Ababa, brought together representatives from CGIAR centers to discuss progress, align priorities, strengthen coordination, and the strategic direction of interventions in the Omo-Ghibe Living Landscape within the framework of the CGIAR Multifunctional Landscapes (MFL SP). Discussions drew on insights from national and sub-national launch events as well as a joint field mission, which helped to understand key challenges and priority issues in the landscape, including low agricultural productivity, soil degradation, landslides, deforestation, limited market access, and climate-related risks. At the same time, these engagements highlighted strong opportunities to scale various agroecological practices, promote integrated and multifunctional landscape management approaches tailored to local conditions, and to collaborate with local partners.

Updates from contributing centers on their respective package of deliverables (PoDs) demonstrated that foundational activities are underway, including baseline assessments, stakeholder engagement, pilot interventions, and capacity-building efforts. These early actions have established a solid basis for coordinated implementation while also enabling cross-learning and alignment among partners. Building on this progress, participants emphasized the need to move from a fragmented, activity-based approach toward a more focused and phased implementation model that prioritizes high-impact action areas and ensures coherence across PoDs.

The meeting further identified key technical and strategic priorities, including integrated approaches to landslide and flood management, strengthening soil and water conservation practices, and promoting inclusive value chains around commodities such as agroforestry products. The importance of evidence-based planning, including suitability mapping and learning from global best practices, was also highlighted. In parallel, strong emphasis was placed on improving coordination mechanisms through the existing multistakeholder platform, supported by clear workflows, dedicated focal persons, and regular progress updates. Overall, the meeting established a shared direction for more coordinated, adaptive, and results-oriented implementation, providing a strong foundation for delivering sustainable and scalable impacts in the Omo-Ghibe Living Landscape.

2. Participants

The Omo-Ghibe LL country team meeting with the MFL Science Program Director was attended by a diverse group of scientists/researcher represented from MFL SP contributing CGIAR centres. The composition of participants reflects strong cross-centre collaboration

and multidisciplinary technical representation, ensuring a well-rounded and comprehensive discussion on program implementation and strategic alignment at the country level.

Participants included

1. Lulseged Tamene, (MFL SP Director, CGIAR)
2. Zenebe Adimassu (Country Coordinator, Alliance of Bioversity & CIAT)
3. Wolde Mekuria (IWMI)
4. Gizaw Desta (ICRISAT)
5. Gizachew Legesse (ICRISAT)
6. Kindu Mekonnen (ILRI)
7. Aynalem Haile (ICARDA)
8. Moti Jaleta (CIMMYT)
9. Birhan Abdulkadir (CIMMYT)
10. Getachew Tesfaye (Alliance of Bioversity & CIAT)
11. Meron Eshete (Alliance of Bioversity & CIAT)
12. Habtamu Sewunet (Alliance of Bioversity & CIAT)
13. Degefie Tibebe (Alliance of Bioversity & CIAT)
14. Mohammed Ibrahim (Alliance of Bioversity & CIAT)

3. Key meeting agenda

The meeting focused on several strategic and operational priorities and challenges to advance the implementation of activities within the Omo-Ghibe Living Landscape.

1. First, participants *reviewed progress and key insights from the launch meetings and the recent field mission* to the Omo-Ghibe Living Landscape (LL), highlighting initial achievements, emerging opportunities, and implementation challenges.
2. The meeting also included *updates from contributing centres*, allowing each center to share progress, ongoing activities, and areas of collaboration
3. Discussions were held on the *strategic focus areas of MFL-SP in the Omo-Ghibe LL*, with a focus on clarifying future directions and setting priorities for implementation.
4. Finally, participants discussed *coordination and stakeholder engagement modalities and agreed* on the way forward, including mechanisms to strengthen collaboration, improve information sharing, and enhance joint planning and implementation across partners.

4. Overview of the launching workshops and field trip

The meeting began with updates and presentations about the national launch, sub-national/regional launch and field trip to Omo-Ghibe LL. The team thought that these events were marked by the successful launch of the Omo-Ghibe Living Landscape through a series of multi-stakeholder meetings that brought together representatives from government institutions, research organisations, and development partners. These engagements facilitated a shared understanding of the project's objectives, expected outcomes, and implementation approaches, and clarified initial roles and responsibilities among partners. In addition, a joint field mission to the Omo-Ghibe Living Landscape was conducted, providing an opportunity for direct engagement with local communities and stakeholders. The mission enabled ground-truthing of assumptions and revealed key challenges, including low crop/animal productivity, low soil fertility, soil erosion-initiated landslides, deforestation, land shortage, unemployment, climate variability, malaria, uncontrolled grazing, limited skill in the design of soil and water conservation practices, lack of seedling/nurseries, limited access to markets, and gaps in coordination among actors. At the same time, the field observations highlighted significant opportunities to promote and scale agroecological practices well suited to the local context.



Figure 1. Participants during the discussion

5. Updates from contributing centres

The meeting placed strong emphasis on updates and presentations from contributing centres on the PoDs they are leading, providing a comprehensive overview of current progress, emerging challenges, and planned next steps. These exchanges served not only as a reporting mechanism but also as a platform for cross-learning, reflection, and strategic alignment among

partners. Participants underscored the importance of sustaining such regular knowledge-sharing forums to strengthen collaboration, identify synergies across interventions, and address implementation bottlenecks on time. Accordingly, the team agreed to have such an update meeting every month. It was widely agreed that continuous learning and adaptive management should remain at the core of the program's approach, ensuring that implementation remains flexible, context-responsive, and grounded in field realities.

In terms of progress, contributing centres have initiated a range of foundational activities that are essential for effective and scalable implementation. These include baseline assessments and data collection to inform evidence-based planning, as well as comprehensive stakeholder mapping and engagement processes to ensure inclusivity and local ownership. Pilot interventions have been rolled out in selected sites to test and refine approaches under real conditions, generating early lessons for scaling. In parallel, targeted capacity-building efforts have been undertaken to strengthen the technical and institutional capabilities of local actors, enabling them to actively participate in and sustain program interventions. Collectively, these efforts provide a solid foundation for advancing coordinated, impactful, and adaptive implementation across the landscape.

6. Strategic focus areas of the MFL SP

Discussions were held on the strategic focus areas of MFL-SP within the Omo-Ghibe living landscapes, with particular emphasis on clarifying future directions and setting implementation priorities. Participants reflected on how to better align ongoing interventions with overarching program objectives, identify high-impact action areas, and ensure coherence across the PoDs.

The discussion highlighted several priority technical areas requiring integrated and context-specific interventions. Flood-related challenges in the lowland areas of the basin were noted, alongside the presence of agro-industrial actors such as sugar factories, which present both risks and opportunities for landscape management. Landslide issues emerged as a key concern in upper catchment areas, with participants emphasising the need for a holistic approach that goes beyond biophysical factors to incorporate social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Particular attention was given to understanding root causes of land degradation and disasters, while strengthening recovery, mitigation, and resilience-building measures. Additionally, the importance of demonstrating the tangible benefits of soil and water conservation interventions to farmers was emphasised, especially in terms of improving productivity, enhancing resilience to floods and droughts, and fostering wider adoption of sustainable practices.

Participants identified several priority areas for strengthening the program's knowledge base and supporting evidence-driven decision-making. The development of suitability maps for forage tree interventions was highlighted as a key opportunity, particularly in collaboration with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), to guide the strategic establishment and scaling of nursery sites and seedling distribution. In parallel, the identification of promising commodities—such as pigeon pea, avocado, and other agroforestry products—was discussed as a pathway for developing inclusive and market-oriented business models that enhance livelihoods. The importance of learning from global best practices, particularly in areas such as landslide risk management and ecosystem restoration, was also emphasised, with a view to adapting relevant approaches to the local context.

The discussion further highlighted the need to transition from a fragmented, piecemeal PoD approach toward a more focused and phased implementation model, concentrating efforts in priority areas with the greatest potential to deliver tangible and demonstrable results, while allowing space for adaptive learning. Overall, the discussion helped establish a shared understanding of strategic priorities and provided clear guidance for more coordinated, efficient, and impact-oriented implementation moving forward

7. Coordination modalities and the way forward

Participants highlighted the need for a clear, practical, and commonly understood workflow to guide joint implementation efforts among partners and centres, noting that strengthened coordination mechanisms are essential to ensure interventions are complementary and mutually reinforcing. In this regard, the existing MFL SP multistakeholder platform structure was identified as a key mechanism for enhancing governance efficiency and streamlining collaboration. The discussion also emphasised the importance of allocating adequate resources to support the functionality, coordination, and long-term sustainability of these platforms, recognising that effective governance is fundamental to achieving landscape-level outcomes. In particular, allocating dedicated resources to partners and assigning focal persons for each action area were considered critical to facilitating coordination and minimising operational costs. Furthermore, the team agreed that regular monthly or bimonthly updates are essential to track progress, foster communication, and address critical implementation challenges promptly.

8. Key entry points

The team also discussed the following four entry points. Based on the national and sub-regional stakeholder meeting and field visit, we formulated four entry points from various parts of the Omo-Ghibe Living Landscape

Entry point 1: Conflict between conservation/protected zones (extensive moist Afromontane forests), commercial production systems (forest-based coffee systems, sugar, etc.), and agricultural production areas/zones of high agricultural pressure (smallholder, extensive, etc.). (Upper Omo-Ghibe)

Entry Point 2: Landslide initiated massive soil erosion, human and livestock death, livelihood loss and biodiversity loss, reservoir siltation. [Middle Omo-Ghibe]

Entry Point 3: Parks/protected areas - rangelands/pastoral – agropastoral - extensive irrigation – commercial agriculture – fishery systems. [Lower Omo-Ghibe]: Integrated dryland and river Basin production systems management across conservation, pastoral, irrigation, and fishery landscapes (Lower Omo-Ghibe)

Entry point 4: Forest – Food – Fish interaction/linkage along the highland-riverain system. [Cross-Cutting]: Integrated Forest–Food–Fish Nexus Management Along the Highland–Riverine Continuum

9. Key agreed points

As a summary the discussion was concluded with the following points

- ✚ Landslide issues should be addressed from environmental, social, and economic dimensions, not only biophysical aspects.
- ✚ Emphasis on understanding root causes of landslides and strengthening recovery and resilience measures.
- ✚ Learning from global best practices on landslide management.
- ✚ Flood-related challenges and the availability of sugar factories in the lowland areas of the basin were highlighted.
- ✚ Importance of demonstrating the impacts of soil and water conservation (SWC) interventions to farmers.
- ✚ Implementation strategies will be further refined as work progresses.
- ✚ Need to align PoDs with selected action areas.
- ✚ Focus on operationalising PoDs for joint implementation and synergy.
- ✚ Recommendation to concentrate resources on one or two priority action areas.
- ✚ Proposal to define PoDs under thematic areas for better synergy.

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- ✚ Identification of priority commodities (pigeon pea, avocado, agroforestry products).
 - ✚ Need for suitability mapping for forage trees to guide scaling.
 - ✚ Identification and linkage of local NGOs with PoDs.
 - ✚ Development of a clear workflow for joint planning and implementation.
 - ✚ Integration of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) platform within the existing MFL-SP structure.
 - ✚ Strengthening collaboration with ICARDA and its partners in relation to the integration of small ruminants into MFL SP focus areas
 - ✚ Ensuring adequate and systematic resource allocation for platforms.



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Back Page

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