# InfoNote

# Enhancing AICCRA's Impact in Ethiopia through Feed and Forage Research and Scaling Innovations

*Kindu Mekonnen and Million Gebreyes*

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**Key messages**

- Over 31,900 smallholder farmers benefited from feed and forage interventions across North Shewa, Hadiya, Kembata, Siltie, and Guraghe zones, with 23–25% being women farmers.
- A total of 998 farmers, development agents, and experts received theoretical and practical training on feed and forage production, management, utilization, and seed systems.
- Scaling challenges include limited access to certified seeds, land scarcity, weak market linkages, high input costs, inadequate coordination, policy gaps, lack of monitoring tools, and insufficient resource allocation.
- Planned actions focus on expanding forage seed commercialization models, collecting cost-benefit evidence, mapping priority forage species, and sharing lessons from scaling initiatives.

Crop-livestock systems across Ethiopia face a wide range of interconnected challenges that span socioeconomic, financial, biophysical, ecological, climatic, institutional, and policy dimensions. These challenges collectively limit the productivity, resilience, and sustainability of agricultural systems, resulting in significant gaps in food, feed, and energy availability. The scarcity of quality livestock feed continues to constrain livestock productivity and income generation, while also contributing to the degradation of natural resources and reduced system resilience to climate variability.

*Figure 1. Farmer showcasing his livestock feed field in Central Ethiopia. Photo Credit: AICCRA/ Brook Makonnen*

Addressing these multidimensional constraints requires holistic and climate-smart interventions that integrate feed and forage innovations within broader farming systems. Developing and implementing integrated feed and forage solutions designed in both spatial and temporal arrangements can play a critical role in restoring degraded farms and landscapes, enhancing soil health, and improving water and nutrient cycles. Such approaches not only help close the feed gap but also contribute to increased livestock

productivity, improved food security, and more sustainable and climate-resilient agri-food systems.

In Ethiopia, substantial research and scaling efforts are underway to promote these innovations across diverse agroecological zones. Collaborative initiatives led by national and international research institutions, development partners, and local stakeholders focus on the adaptation and dissemination of improved forage species, feed management practices, and sustainable land use models. These efforts have been instrumental in advancing the objectives of the *Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA)* project.

*Figure 2. Field day with farmers, local experts and researchers at project site in Central Ethiopia. Photo Credit: AICCRA/ Brook Makonnen*

## Major areas of contributions to the AICCRA project in Ethiopia

The major areas of contribution to the AICCRA project in Ethiopia include several key activities aimed at improving feed and forage systems. The major focus areas include:

- On-farm demonstrations of validated feed and forage innovations help farmers adopt proven technologies in real-world production settings.
- Strengthening partnerships with various stakeholders to ensure collaborative implementation and sustainability. To facilitate the scaling of feed and forage innovations, several strategic actions are undertaken, such as
    - Organizing and providing need-based training programs.
    - Arranging revolving seed supply systems, and
    - Engaging the media through community radio broadcasts and mobile blast approaches.
- Additionally, the project supports the multiplication of quality forage seeds in collaboration with federal and regional research institutions.
- Another important area of contribution is piloting commercial forage seed business models to promote private sector participation and ensure long-term availability of improved forage seeds.

## *Achievements on feed and forage innovations, research, and scaling in 2025*

### Area coverage for forage seed multiplication

In 2025, farmers in the Amhara and Central Ethiopia regions dedicated a total of 68 hectares of land to forage seed multiplication.

*Table 3. Feed and forage seed multiplication areas and size*

| Producers | Area used for multiplication (ha) | Seed type | Multiplication sites |
|---|---|---|---|
| WARC | 38.62 | Pre-basic | Main and sub-research stations and clustered farmers' field |
| DBARC | 17.5 | Pre-basic | Main and sub-research stations and selected individual farms |
| Licha Union | 12 | Pre-basic seed | Clustered farms |
| Total | 68.12 | | |

### Beneficiaries gained access to quality forage seeds and adopted and applied feed and forage innovations

Across the project areas, a total of 31,913 farmers have benefited from the interventions. In the North Shewa Zone of the Amhara Region, 13,911 farmers were reached, with 23 percent of them being women. Meanwhile, in the Central Ethiopia Region, covering the Hadiya, Kembata, Siltie, and Guraghe zones, the project supported 18,002 farmers, of whom 25 percent are women. These figures highlight the project's broad reach and its

continued commitment to promoting gender inclusion in agricultural development.

### Reach of farmers through media

Through communication and outreach initiatives, the project has reached a total of over 130,000 beneficiaries. Of these, more than 100,000 people were reached through community radio programs broadcast in four local languages, enabling wide access to information on improved agricultural practices. In addition, 30,000 beneficiaries were reached through mobile-based audio messages (audio blasts), providing timely and accessible guidance directly to farmers' phones. These efforts demonstrate the project's strong emphasis on inclusive and innovative knowledge dissemination.

### Beneficiaries on capacity development

In the Central Ethiopia Region, a total of 434 beneficiaries participated in capacity-building trainings focused on the bundling of feed and forage innovations. Similarly, in the Amhara Region, 554 participants took part in five-day training sessions on feed and forage production, organized in collaboration with local partners. Altogether, the theoretical and practical training programs on feed and forage production, management, and utilization, including the forage seed system, directly benefited a total of 998 participants. These training efforts have significantly strengthened farmers' technical capacity and enhanced the adoption of improved feed and forage technologies across both regions.

## Challenges for scaling feed and forage innovations

Despite notable progress in promoting feed and forage innovations, several challenges continue to constrain their effective scaling and widespread adoption. These challenges stem from systemic, institutional, and resource-related limitations that affect the sustainability and impact of ongoing initiatives. The following points outline the key bottlenecks that hinder the expansion and long-term success of feed and forage innovation efforts across target regions:

- Limited access to certified and quality forage seeds
- Scarcity of land and competition for feed resources
- Weak market linkages, fragmented value chains, and inadequate infrastructure
- High input/ seed costs coupled with unsustainable free input distribution
- Lack of strong coordination among key stakeholders
- Absence of robust policies, regulatory frameworks, and incentive mechanisms for certified forage seed production
- Lack of tools and staff for tracking beneficiaries from the scaling work
- Limited resources

## Way forward

To build on the progress achieved and address existing challenges, several strategic actions are planned to strengthen the scaling of feed and forage innovations. These actions aim to enhance sustainability, improve efficiency, and ensure broader impact across different regions. Key focus areas include:

- Expanding the piloting of the forage seed commercialization business model across diverse geographies in collaboration with SNV and other stakeholders to foster private sector engagement and market-driven seed systems.
- Collecting and analyzing evidence on the cost-benefit aspects and production challenges of feed and forage innovations to generate data-driven insights that inform scalable and sustainable solutions.
- Enhancing efforts in developing suitability mapping for priority forage species enables the precise identification of optimal growing areas, promoting sustainable forage production and utilization.
- Learning from ongoing feed and forage scaling initiatives and sharing insights widely to inform future interventions and strengthen knowledge exchange across partners and regions.

## Further reading


- Tessema, F., Amare, F., Mekonnen, K., Gebreyes, M. and Seifu, H. 2025. Cultivated Forages Production, Utilization and Digital Communication Innovations: A Training Report in Central Ethiopia. Nairobi, Kenya: ILRI.
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- Mekonnen, K., Bezabih, M., Thorne, P., Gebreyes, M., Hammond, J. and Adie, A. 2022. Feed and forage development in mixed crop–livestock systems of the Ethiopian highlands: Africa RISING project research experience. Agronomy Journal 114(1): 46-62.
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This series of briefs summarizes findings of AICCRA's Impact in Ethiopia through Feed and Forage Research and Scaling Innovations.


**Kindu Mekonnen** (K.Mekonnen@cgiar.org) is a Senior Scientist - Crop Livestock Systems, Livestock, Climate and Environment, at the International Livestock Research Institute.

**Million Getnet** (m.gebreyes@cgiar.org) is a Social Scientist, Livestock, Climate and Environment, at the International Livestock Research Institute.



## ABOUT AICCRA

Accelerating Impacts of CGIAR Climate Research for Africa (AICCRA) is a project that helps deliver a climate-smart African future driven by science and innovation in agriculture. It is led by the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT and supported by a grant from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank. Explore our work at aiccra.cgiar.org

aiccra.cgiar.org info@cgiar.org CGIARAfrica