



## INTRODUCTION FROM FARM AFRICA'S ETHIOPIA COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Farm Africa's interventions in Ahferom Woreda, Tigray Region, drew to a close in 2017.

We are very proud of our achievements there. In the course of delivering this impact, we have learnt a lot of lessons, which can generate a blueprint for good practice in food security programming in Tigray, and hopefully more broadly in Ethiopia. We have compiled this package of materials to share the lessons we have learnt with other development partners and to inform future investments in Ahferom Woreda.

Farm Africa's commitment to Ahferom Woreda is a longstanding one, dating back to our first intervention in Sero Tabia in 1992. We have included personal testimonials from some of the most inspirational community members there, helping them to tell their own stories. I hope these materials prove useful and that they inspire others that permanent change is possible with simple applicable solutions.

I would like to dedicate this package to Stephen Sandford, who pioneered our earliest work in Ahferom, and is still remembered fondly by community members. In 2017 he steps down as a member of Farm Africa, and this small dedication is a simple 'thank you' from the Farm Africa team. With thanks, as always, to the Embassy of Ireland in Addis Ababa, and UK Aid for their support.

**Yasmin Abdulwassie**, Addis Ababa, June 2017

## SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE FOR IMPROVED FOOD SECURITY AT A GLANCE:

**Location:** Ahferom Woreda, Tigray National Regional State

**Target group:** Food-insecure households, identified by their communities as 'the poorest of the poor'.

**Total programme budget 2012-17:**

Phase I (2012-2014) £200,000

Phase II (2014-2017) £676,000

The programme included the following key components:

- **949** hectares of land placed under integrated watershed management
- **119.6** hectares of farmland irrigated under small-scale irrigation
- **3,593** households (and counting) benefited from a revolving fund for goat keeping
- **540** households received support in beekeeping
- Support with fruit and vegetable production for **301** households
- **1,321** households received a package of support for poultry production



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sustainable Agriculture for Improved Food Security project was originally conceived as an injection of support to households graduating from the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ahferom Woreda. At the time, the Regional Government was providing support via the Household Asset Building Programme, and Farm Africa intended to generate additional lessons that could help with future refinements of packages and technical support delivered to households.

The impressive gains achieved by the region on restoring watersheds had not yet been translated into household level prosperity. Building on Farm Africa's extensive experience in natural resource management in the woreda and elsewhere, the project was designed to support initiatives that relied upon good watershed management, such as fruit production and beekeeping, so that poor households could see the benefit from their environmental management efforts in their pockets and daily lives.

Specific lessons for each of the interventions are outlined in greater detail in the attached papers. Broad conclusions and recommendations for future actions are outlined below:

We see enormous potential in value chains in the Tigray region for honey, mangoes (and other fruits), tomatoes, chickens and goats. Future food security interventions in the region must take account of market potential, how communities can add value to their agricultural crops, and how programmes can be implemented in an integrated way with the private sector.

The importance of integrating community-owned high-quality management of natural resources and stimulating income generation opportunities for the poor cannot be over-emphasised. In a resource-constrained, drought-prone environment like Tigray, ensuring soil health and integrity, and sustainable water management are critical to future prosperity.

Nutrition was always core to the project, but future programmes need to strengthen the nutrition-agriculture link. Already we have testimonies of children eating better as a result of irrigation, and some practice of consuming goats' milk. But more can and should be done to encourage this further.

Ensuring the revolving goat mechanism was sustained and managed well has not been without its challenges. Institutional ownership by the woreda has required a lot of negotiation and awareness-raising by Farm Africa staff. For cash-based revolving resources (such as loans for beekeeping) this is even harder for the woreda to manage, and arguably not appropriate. We have negotiated with the Rural Savings and Credit Cooperatives (RUSACCOs) in the woreda for them to manage the funds for future food security package investments. The goat insurance fund has been a helpful way for them to better understand the risks and opportunities of providing financial services to the poorest.

More can also be done to organise farmers for pooled investment funds/loans to engage in the specific value chains, aggregate, and cooperate in marketing, and this provides an additional opportunity for the RUSACCOs to engage. A priority for future investments should be to build the capacity of the RUSACCOs, tailor the procedures to the needs of the clients, and iron out any challenges in how they will collaborate with the woreda and communities.



## FARM AFRICA

Investing in smallholder farming is the number one way to combat poverty in rural Africa. Farm Africa is a leading NGO specialising in growing agriculture, protecting the environment and developing businesses in rural Africa.



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