

The Forests for Sustainable Development programme

Stories of impact

 Ethiopia



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Cover: The Gadisa Participatory Forest Management Cooperative, established in 2009 with 450 members, now has 1,720 members and manages 5,250 hectares of forest.

About

The Forests for Sustainable Development (FSD) programme aims to contribute to the sustainable conservation of the ecologically critical forests in the Bale Eco-region and its associated landscape of East Bale Zone in Oromia regional state, Ethiopia.

Since its inception in April 2022, the programme has made significant strides in combatting deforestation, reducing carbon emissions, protecting biodiversity and improving the livelihoods of local communities.

The forests of the Bale Eco-region provide ecosystem services that are crucial for Ethiopia’s sustainable development, including biodiversity preservation, climate regulation and water reserves that sustain the livelihoods of nearly 30 million people living in the region and downstream across Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya.

Implemented by Farm Africa and SOS Sahel Ethiopia with funding from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Ethiopia, the four-year FSD programme seeks to balance the urgent need to sustainably manage and conserve these vital forests with the region’s growing demand for food and resources.

The programme focuses on several key areas, including the rehabilitation of degraded lands through strategic reforestation and improved land management. Beyond tree planting, it aims to

create sustainable livelihood opportunities and strengthen ecosystem management, fostering a resilient, self-sustaining landscape that benefits people, nature and the climate.

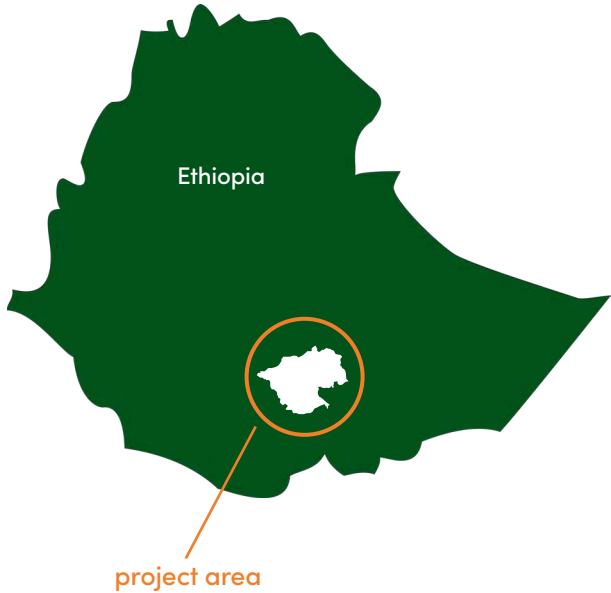
This booklet summarises the progress of this innovative programme, bringing its impact to life with a collection of stories from the community and reflecting on some of the key lessons learnt along the way.

Programme aim

To contribute to the sustainable conservation of natural forests, biodiversity and ecosystem services in the Bale Eco-region and its associated landscape of East Bale Zone.

Target reach

55,677 forest-dependent households to directly benefit.



Context

Reconciling the need to produce more food for a growing population with an urgent need to protect natural forests, conserve biodiversity and mitigate climate change is arguably the most critical challenge facing the Bale Eco-region.

As demand for food continues to rise, existing farmland faces increasing strain. Depleted soils can gradually push farm boundaries into forest edges as communities seek fertile ground. Over time, this encroachment leads to loss of forest, reduced biodiversity and destabilisation of water resources.

For close to 20 years, with funding from the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Ethiopia, Farm Africa and SOS Sahel Ethiopia have been working in the Bale Eco-region to conserve and protect natural forest and ecosystem services while developing sustainable livelihood opportunities.

The past successful implementation of the Bale Eco-region Sustainable Management Programme (BERSMP) and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) Phase I and II projects laid a strong foundation for the sustainable management of natural forest resources using a participatory forest management (PFM) approach.

Building on this foundation, the four-year FSD programme, launched in 2022, is promoting locally-led initiatives that protect the forest, mitigate biodiversity loss, decrease carbon emissions and enhance incomes for forest-dependent communities.

Participatory forest management cooperatives (PFMCs) help organise local communities into structured groups that can effectively manage forest resources. They provide training and capacity building on sustainable forest management practices, nursery establishment, tree planting and harvesting techniques to ensure communities can independently sustain forest management efforts over the long term.

In essence, PFMCs serve as vital community-based institutions that link ecological sustainability with social equity and economic opportunity, thereby fostering democratic, inclusive and effective forest governance.

Approach

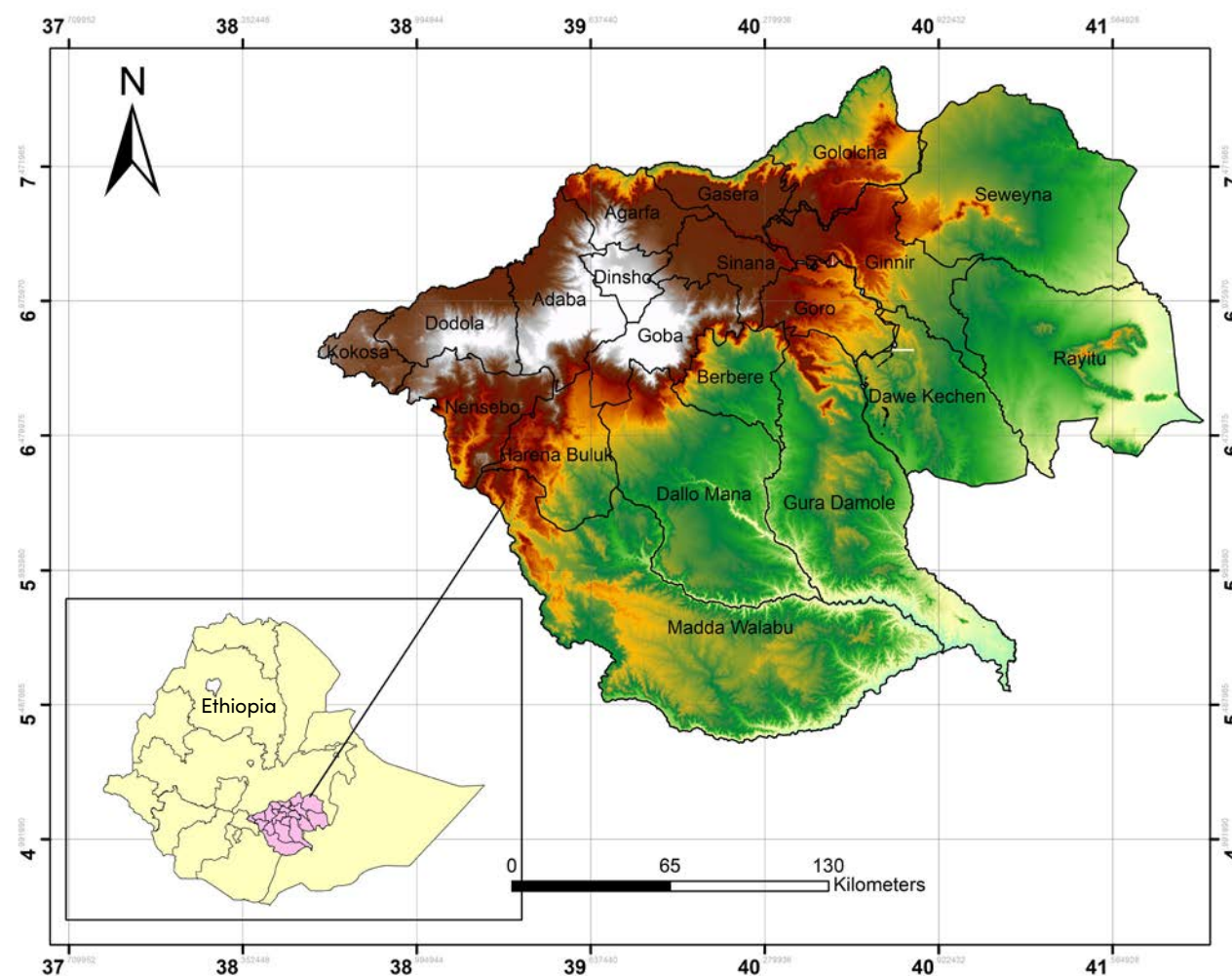
The FSD programme is applying an integrated landscape management approach that recognises that forests, agriculture, water resources and human communities are interconnected elements within a broader landscape.

By addressing social, economic and environmental dimensions simultaneously, the landscape approach promotes coordinated management of land and resources across multiple sectors and stakeholders.

The programme supports government agencies, local communities, the private sector and civil society to work collaboratively in coordinating land and resource management, ensuring

cohesive and effective strategies that balance conservation, livelihood improvement and sustainable development goals.

Through this holistic perspective, the programme enhances ecosystem resilience, supports biodiversity, reduces deforestation and improves the wellbeing of forest-dependent communities, ensuring that development is both inclusive and environmentally sustainable.



The FSD programme area. The complex social, economic and environmental dimensions of the region call for a landscape approach that promotes coordinated management of land and resources across multiple sectors and stakeholders.

Objectives

The FSD programme is working to:

- improve management of natural forests, rangelands and watersheds
- reduce threats to biodiversity
- establish integrated landscape change tracking systems
- establish and strengthen mechanisms for integrated landscape management
- establish viable green business partnerships and diversify non-agricultural livelihood options
- increase agricultural livelihood opportunities of local communities

Actions

A wide range of interventions is being implemented to achieve these interconnected objectives, including:

- increasing the number of PFMCs in the area to increase the area of protected forest
- connecting PFMCs to carbon markets to increase economic incentives to reduce deforestation
- promoting climate-smart agriculture techniques to restore fertility and increase productivity on existing farmland
- establishing Village Savings and Loan Associations to give women access to the finance needed to start their own income-generating enterprises
- promoting green energy technologies like fuel-efficient stoves, biogas and solar panels to reduce the heavy reliance on forests for fuel
- implementing workshops and international learning visits to support the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms, implement landscape change tracking systems and improve governance for integrated landscape management.

Many of the interventions advance multiple objectives simultaneously, highlighting the interdependencies involved and the importance of aligning efforts across sectors and communities to achieve impactful and sustainable outcomes.

Participatory Forest Management Cooperatives (PFMCs) empower local communities to lead in ensuring sustainable use of forest resources.

Scaling community stewardship for sustainable forests

To tackle forest encroachment, the Forests for Sustainable Development programme is scaling up a community-led conservation model, leveraging carbon credit income to magnify impact.

The participatory forest management approach empowers the communities who live closest to, and depend most directly on, the forest, to take responsibility for the stewardship and sustainable use of forest resources.

At the heart of this model are Participatory Forest Management Cooperatives (PFMCs): legally recognised groups formed from members of local communities who collectively agree with local government to manage defined forest areas sustainably. In return, PFMCs are granted rights to use resources from those forest areas in accordance with agreed bylaws.

The model not only supports forest conservation and biodiversity but also introduces new income streams and livelihood options for forest-dependent communities.

Scaling up the benefits

By applying this decentralised management approach at scale, the FSD programme has created an expanding network of stewardship. A total of 100 new PFMCs have been established, bringing the total number of cooperatives supported by the programme to 164. Together, they are now

“Whether we earn money from carbon trade or not, our community is committed to protecting our forests. Tree cutting without the supervision of the PFMC is totally prohibited.”

Mohammed Yusuf
Member, Gadisa PFMC

protecting over 805,353.83 hectares of forest, an increase of 544,300.83 hectares from the project start.

For participating communities, the approach is delivering both environmental and economic gains, which are accelerating with the integration of carbon finance.

Through mechanisms like REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), communities that preserve forest carbon stocks can earn revenue from global carbon markets, providing direct financial incentives for conservation. These funds are often reinvested in forest management, livelihood diversification and infrastructure, ensuring long-term sustainability of conservation efforts and generating broader climate benefits through reduced emissions and improved ecosystem resilience.

Farm Africa’s REDD+ Phase I and II projects helped PFMCs link to these carbon markets for the first time. The FSD programme is now building the

“We support the children of widows and elders with school materials, money for their food and we are able to rebuild their old houses.”

Misra Mohammed

Member, Gadisa Participatory Forest Management Cooperative

capacity of 64 of these PFMCs to invest their carbon income to generate income and provide services for their forest cooperative members.

Gadisa PFMC

One remarkable example is the Gadissa PFMC in Harana Bulk Woreda. Established in 2009 with 450 members and modest capital, it now has 1,720 members, many of them women and young people, and manages 5,250 hectares of forest. With support from Farm Africa and local government, Gadisa has grown its capital to ETB 15 million and earned a significant income from carbon credit revenue.

Using this revenue, the group have funded the installation of a transformer and the construction of grain grinding mills and a shared storage facility for the use of PFMC members. These crucial facilities give service to about 1,600 women, provide electricity for 65 households and have created six jobs for young people. By reducing travel time for women and alleviating physical labour, this investment has dramatically improved quality of

life, demonstrating how strategic reinvestment of money from sales of carbon credits can directly address community needs.

“We used to travel by foot for more than six to eight hours in search of flour mills. Our children used to skip sessions at school so that they could help us”, explains Jemilla Sheih Tahir, “We are really happy with the carbon income as we are able to address this problem.”

Berche PFMC

Berche PFMC, established in 2012, is also using carbon credits to unlock benefits for the local community. With a 41% female membership, Berche manages 7,801 hectares of forest and promotes forest-friendly practices such as distributing fuel-efficient cookstoves to vulnerable households and encouraging homestead coffee planting through a community nursery. Using revenue from carbon sales, the group has invested in grain storage facilities, a grinding mill and rainwater harvesting systems.

Together their success stories point to a future where protecting forests can also mean powering homes, feeding communities and creating jobs.

A few of the 1,720 members of Gadisa Participatory Forest Management Cooperative. The organisation protects 5,250 hectares of forest.



164

community-led forest management cooperatives now operating
up from 64 at programme start

805,353.83

hectares now under protection of forest management cooperatives
up from 261,053 at programme start

Clean cooking and women's empowerment

To reduce demand for forest-sourced firewood, the Forests for Sustainable Development programme is promoting the use of fuel-efficient stoves with an approach that empowers women at the same time.

One way to protect forests in the Bale Eco-region is to change the way households cook.

Traditional cooking methods rely heavily on firewood sourced from the forest, driving forest degradation and contributing to greenhouse gas emissions.

Collecting firewood is also time consuming and cooking with traditional stoves fills homes with smoke. These domestic tasks fall primarily on women and children, negatively affecting their health and limiting time for more productive pursuits.

Promoting the use of low tech, fuel-efficient stoves reduces firewood consumption, easing pressure on the forest while providing multiple benefits for local people too, especially women.

Below: Chairperson Sannait Hailu (fourth left) with members of the Hajara, Aykal, Mekdas and Their Friends Cookstove Producer Enterprise. The group produces fuel-efficient cookstoves, made from cement, which reduce firewood consumption.



Talile Dabele, who has now switched to a fuel-efficient chimney stove, explains the difference: "The stove has saved me fuelwood by 50%. A donkey load of fuelwood lasts a month and sometimes more. It releases little heat into the kitchen and produces almost zero indoor smoke."

Household benefits, livelihood opportunities

The benefits go beyond the kitchen. Rising demand is creating new livelihood opportunities in stove production. The FSD programme is working hard to ensure these economic opportunities reach those who need them most.

For example, in Melyu town, Goro woreda, a group of 12 previously unemployed women have become proud members of the Hajara, Aykal, Mekdas and Their Friends Cookstove Producer Enterprise.

"Before this enterprise, all members used to work as daily labourers, on construction sites, washing clothes, planting seedlings or baking injera. It was a big challenge searching for daily work and the pay was low. Then the Farm Africa and Goro woreda job opportunity office organised us on fuel stove production. None of us had any experience," recalls chairperson Sannait Hailu.

The group received technical training, start-up materials and support with marketing. Their first batch of 183 stoves sold for 146,400 ETB. They've since produced and sold over 1,200 Mirt stoves



(simple, fuel-saving stoves made of mortar) and 50 chimney stoves (with an added chimney to further reduce smoke), generating more than ETB 1.2 million in revenue.

"Because the technology is new for the area, we faced marketing challenges in the first three months," Sannait recalls, "but Farm Africa helped us connect with forest cooperatives and other buyers." Now the group's stoves are sold up to 200 kilometres away across Bale and East Bale.

Talile has also observed a surge of interest. "The neighbours are asking where to get this user-friendly technology. Some of the women purchased them after I directed them and confirmed they are happy and appreciate their efficiency, simplicity and health benefits."

Empowering women, strengthening communities

With growing demand, the Hajara, Aykal, Mekdas and Their Friends Cookstove Producer Enterprise is now producing up to 200 stoves a month. Members receive 30% of the income as monthly dividends and save the rest in a group account.

"With the income I made, I bought household goods and chickens. I also opened a small restaurant jointly with my husband. We now also gain daily income from the restaurant and sale of eggs," says Sannait.

The group's joint savings have also been enough to launch a loan scheme to help members start side businesses. "Since our organisation facilitates loan access to group members, almost all of us do petty trading in our free time. We've overcome our financial struggles," says Sannait.

This initiative shows how practical technology, paired with targeted support, can deliver triple wins: economic empowerment, forest conservation and better health. The success of these improved cookstove enterprises demonstrates that locally led, scalable solutions can make a lasting impact – not just in the Bale Eco-region, but across Ethiopia.

13,257

households now using fuel-efficient stoves

"The stove has saved me fuelwood by 50%. A donkey load lasts a month and sometimes more."

Talile Dabele



Coffee export success

To support the growth of forest-friendly enterprises, the Forests for Sustainable Development programme has facilitated a landmark agreement connecting forest coffee producers to international markets.

In 2024, with support from the FSD programme, forest management cooperatives in the Bale Eco-region secured a landmark deal for the sale of forest coffee to Zensho Trading Co in Japan. The partnership has already led to the despatch of 19,200kg of specialty-grade organic coffee and lays the groundwork for consistent, high-volume exports in the years ahead.

Coffee for conservation

How does the partnership promote forest conservation? Arabica coffee, now endangered in the wild, still thrives in Bale’s forests. For many households, harvesting and selling forest coffee is a vital source of income. However, profits are low.

By transforming the profitability of their enterprises, forest management cooperatives have created an economic incentive to protect the forests where wild coffee grows.

Coffee for livelihoods

Through the Zensho deal, three cooperatives achieved their second international export, negotiating directly with their international buyer for the first time. Zensho agreed to pay a premium for coffee meeting Japanese Agricultural Standard certification.

The 55 farmers who supplied coffee for the three cooperatives to sell have earned a net average of ETB 544,624 (approximately £3,208) each.

The three cooperatives have also each earned a net average of ETB 600,682 (approximately £3,538) in commission, which will be invested in local livelihood development and conservation.

Selling at international prices has unlocked opportunities that were out of reach under local market conditions. For Nuredin Hussien, the gains are unmistakable:

“I purchased two bajajs (small, three-wheeled vehicles). Now I can take my children to kindergarten. I also offer transportation services to the public, which allows me to earn additional income. If it were not for the income generated from the coffee sold in the international market, I would not have been able to afford these vehicles.”

Building quality and sustainability

Earlier Farm Africa projects, funded by the EU and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Addis Ababa, established strong cooperative structures and legal forest management mandates. The FSD programme builds on those foundations.

Within this context, in partnership with the local government agricultural office and with support from Forests of the World, funded by Danida, Farm Africa has also been working with selected cooperatives on a targeted project to improve

the quality and quantity of Bale’s forest coffee. Once graded at levels four and five, their coffee has now climbed to grades one and two – internationally sought-after standards. The three cooperatives who supplied the coffee for the Zensho sale were participating in this project.

“The training opened my eyes”, says Abdurahman Kul. “Because of it, I’ve learnt to produce high-quality coffee and improve my post-harvest handling. With the money I’ve earned, I plan to buy furniture and send my children to school. The more training I receive, the more changes I can make to my life.”

Opening export pathways

To secure the Zensho partnership, the FSD programme helped the three cooperatives navigate the complex process of obtaining Japanese Agricultural Standard (JAS) certification for organic coffee. The programme also facilitated the acquisition of an export licence for the Garen Bale Forest Cooperative Union, enabling smooth future transactions and long-term market engagement for its 40-strong membership of cooperatives.

Global reach

The benefits of the partnership extend beyond individual farmers: profits are strengthening the local economy, supporting education and infrastructure, and motivating communities to protect the forest. By proving that sustainable practices can deliver strong returns, Bale’s forest coffee is setting a precedent for ethical and environmentally-friendly coffee farming worldwide.

ETB 544,624

average net income earned per farmer contributing to the sale.

ETB 600,682

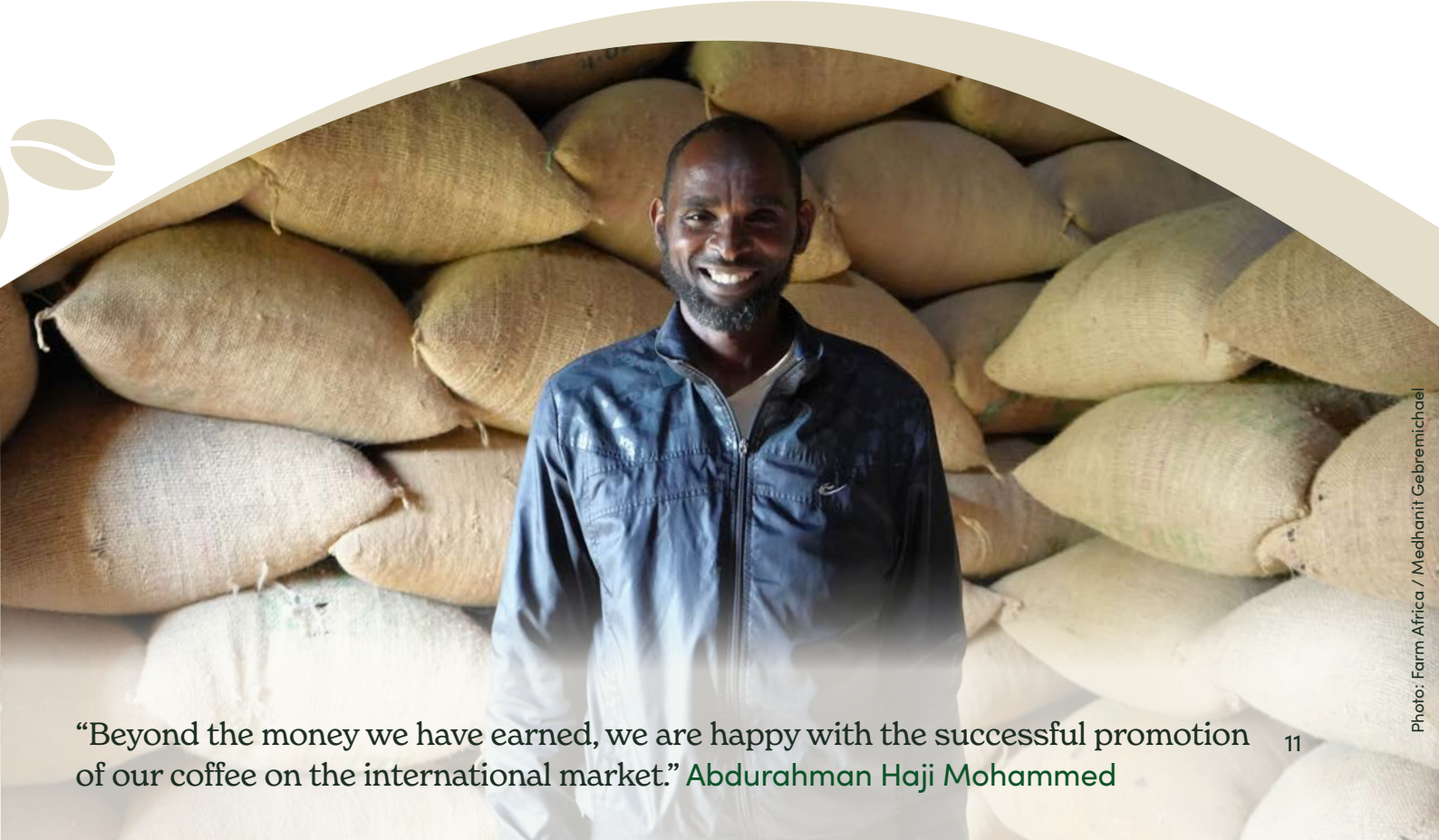
average commission earned per cooperative for local livelihood and conservation development.



“Our bylaws prohibit intensive coffee cultivation inside the forest. Instead we are increasing our incomes by producing high quality coffee that can be sold at premium prices. I believe this kind of practice enhances conservation of biodiversity”.

Abida Gutu (centre)
coffee producer

Photo: Farm Africa / Medhanit Gebremichael



“Beyond the money we have earned, we are happy with the successful promotion of our coffee on the international market.” Abdurahman Haji Mohammed

Climate-smart agriculture: reducing deforestation, increasing opportunity

When farms lose productivity, it's hard to spare the fertile soils of nearby forests. To reduce the clearing of forests to access fertile land, the Forests for Sustainable Development programme is helping farmers improve productivity of their existing farmland.

The Forests for Sustainable Development programme is promoting climate-smart agriculture (CSA) as a way to ease pressure on forests while improving livelihoods at the same time. Techniques such as small-scale irrigation, tree planting and use of improved crop varieties boost yields on existing farmland, reducing the need to clear forest for agriculture.

Ahimed Adem is one of many farmers benefiting from this approach. A former construction worker, Ahimed turned to irrigation farming in 2023 in search of a better income to support his family.

"Before starting irrigation farming, I used to work on construction sites as a daily labourer. But the return was not enough. Then I quit that job and started irrigation on a very small farmland. For the last three years, Farm Africa significantly supported me in my irrigation farming. They

have been supporting me with training and close follow-up. I received seedlings of coffee, banana, watermelon and papaya.

"The papaya variety is new for me. I learnt it's called 'Red Lady' and is from Thailand. It stays fresh longer and doesn't perish during loading and transport. I planted more than 700 heads of this papaya variety on a half hectare of land. Though my customers are from towns more than 400 kilometres away, they receive fresh fruits."

Ahimed's dedication is paying off, with watermelon, papaya, banana, maize and haricot beans all giving strong returns. His vermicompost enterprise is also showing promise. Vermicompost is a rich, fertile compost produced from natural organic waste using worms to speed up the composting process. Ahimed received training on the method from Farm Africa. "More than 24 farmers have bought my vermicompost. I have a plan to expand it more."

"With the income I made, I bought two oxen and a motorbike. I am also able to support my children who are studying at high school and colleges."

Encouraged by his success, Ahimed now plans to expand his commercial farming activities to his remaining land.



1,100

tonnes of agricultural and non-timber forest products sold in local markets



Empowering women through saving and enterprise

To promote sustainable economic empowerment of women in all 20 woredas, the Forests for Sustainable Development programme has supported the establishment of 118 women-only Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs).

These community-led groups bring marginalised rural women access to savings and affordable credit, enabling investment in small enterprises, farming and education. In areas underserved by formal banking, VSLAs foster financial inclusion, strengthen resilience and reduce reliance on harmful coping strategies. Members also gain training in budgeting and record-keeping, equipping them to make informed financial decisions and diversify their income sustainably.

The Tokuma VSLA in Goro woreda has 23 members, including Balaynesh Kitaw. Like many women in the region, she joined seeking a way to improve her family's income in the face of uncertain farming conditions.

"Before, my livelihood was fully dependent on rain-fed farming. The yields were unpredictable and I was unable to meet my family's needs. I needed to engage in other income-generating activities."

Maskerem Tadesse, the group's chairperson, is enthusiastic about the entrepreneurial focus of the VSLA model that the programme is promoting. "I had experience of saving into groups before but it was completely different. We could only access the savings for home materials, not for other economic activities based on individual interest.

There was no loan facility and no grants for social problems faced by members.

"The saving approach brought by the FSD programme has flexibility within agreed rules. Members have equal access to loans and social grants. The loan credit and share-out can be used based on individual interest. And the regular meetings help us share our challenges. It creates strong bonds between us."

Zara Mohammed, the group's secretary, shares how she benefitted: "Before I joined the Tokuma VSLA, I worked in banana trading but the return was not enough." Within a month, she received a loan of ETB 1,050 to buy school supplies for her daughters, which she repaid. After a year she received an ETB 4,100 share pay-out, which she used to buy a goat and a mobile phone. Later, she took a loan of ETB 2,000 to buy poultry, returning the loan in three months. "The chickens have started laying eggs and I now earn a regular income selling them", she says.

Across the FSD programme area, 2,822 women are getting similar support through their VSLA membership. So far, the 118 established VSLAs have mobilised over ETB 10.97 million and disbursed ETB 7.91 million as loans to members wishing to engage in enterprise, illustrating how a community-based approach can sow the seeds of broad-scale change.

2,822

women have gained access to finance.



Progress

Here are some key achievements achieved by the Forests for Sustainable Development programme between its launch in 2022 and March 2026:



Improving management of natural forests, rangelands and watersheds

- **47% reduction in deforestation rate*** in the programme area, from a baseline projected rate of 0.132% per year for 2025 to an actual rate of 0.070% per year
- **47% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions*** in the programme area, from a baseline projected total of 2,088,510.6 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e) for the period of 2022–2025 to an actual total of 1,100,341 tCO₂e
- **544,300.83 additional hectares of natural forest brought under protection** of programme-supported participatory forest management cooperatives, bringing the total to 805,353.83 hectares
- **100 new participatory forest management cooperatives (PFMCs) established**, increasing the total number of programme-supported coops to 164
- **64 PFMCs supported to invest carbon income** in community development, eco-friendly enterprises and conservation initiatives.
- **13 participatory rangeland management cooperatives established**, protecting 131,307.91 hectares of open rangeland
- **1,176 hectares of land brought under integrated watershed management** including 589 hectares of degraded land rehabilitated through programme-implemented soil and water conservation measures
- **520 hectares of degraded land assisted to regenerate** naturally to enhance biodiversity
- **five fuel-efficient stove producing enterprises established**, providing income opportunity for 77 women and young people, resulting in 13,527 households now using fuel-efficient stoves and reducing firewood consumption by an estimated 5,815 tonnes a year compared to traditional cookstoves
- **two youth- and women-led solar supplier and maintenance enterprises established**, generating ETB 590,300 revenue from sales and supplying 2,017 households with sufficient power for mobile charging and night lighting



*As part of the larger Oromia Forested Landscape Program (OFLP), the FSD programme applies the same technical methodology and parameters adopted by OFLP to calculate both the rate of deforestation and the level of emission reduction achieved. **The deforestation rate (r)** is calculated using the logarithmic formula: $r = 1 / (t_2 - t_1) \times \ln(A_2 / A_1) \times 100$ where t1 and t2 represent the initial and final years of measurement, respectively, and A1 and A2 denote the forest area in the initial and final years, respectively. This formula allows estimation of forest loss during the baseline period to determine the 'business-as-usual' (BAU) scenario. The same approach is applied to assess changes over subsequent programme years, enabling comparison of actual deforestation against the BAU trend. **Emission reduction (Er)** is derived from the difference in deforestation between the BAU scenario (A-BAUs) and the actual project scenario (A-ps). The formula is expressed as: $Er = DV \times Ef$ where $DV = (A-BAUs - A-ps)$ represents the deforestation variation and Ef is the emission factor, which for Oromia (including FSD programme areas) is 368.5 tCO₂e per hectare. This method quantifies the avoided emissions resulting from FSD programme interventions.

Reducing threats to biodiversity

- **two international experience-sharing visits conducted to learn more about Payment for Ecosystem Services (Kenya) and practices in park management (Tanzania)** with delegates including: West Arsi Zone, Bale Zone and East Bale Zone Administrators; a representative from the Federal Parliament (House of Peoples Representatives); a representative from Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, Oromia Forest and Wildlife Enterprise (OFWE), Vice president of Oromia Regional State, Bale Mountains National Park, Farm Africa Ethiopia and FSD Programme partners

Establishing integrated landscape change tracking systems

- **international experience-sharing visit facilitated** to learn more about integrated landscape change tracking systems with delegates including the deputy head of Oromia Bureau of Agriculture, Deputy General Director of Oromia Environmental Protection Authority, a representative from Oromia Forest and Wildlife Enterprise, Farm Africa , SOS Sahel Ethiopia and Population, Health and Environment consortium- Ethiopia
- **innovative digital landscape change tracking system developed**, monitoring crop land, forest land, grassland, wetland, shrubland, settlement, other land use and vegetation gain and loss. Developed in partnership with Hawassa University, Wondo Genet College of Forestry & Natural Resources
- **guidelines for Integrated Landscape Management developed** to provide guidance on monitoring of landscape change on the ground

Establishing and strengthening mechanisms for integrated landscape management

- **Three zonal-level and 20 woreda (district)-level multi-stakeholder coordination platforms (MSPs) established** to develop and implement integrated landscape management interventions across the target landscapes. Represented stakeholders include Oromia Environmental Protection Authority (OEPA), zonal and woreda-level administrations and government sectoral offices, Oromia Forest and Wildlife Enterprise (OFWE), NGOs, municipalities and private sector actors

Establishing viable green business partnerships and diversifying non-agricultural livelihood options

- **35 youth and green business enterprises established**, providing opportunities for 444 people (171 young women and 273 young men)
- **118 women-only Village Savings and Loan Associations established**, giving 2,822 women access to finance, mobilising ETB 10,972,111 in total and disbursing ETB 7,913,880 as loans for members to engage in different businesses
- **653 men and 3,546 women secured jobs** through opportunities created by programme support: 3,047 jobs secured in total
- **1,138 tonnes of product, including cereal crops and non-timber forest products, sold in local markets** through programme support
- **international green business partnership established** between Garen Bale Forest Cooperative Union and Zensho Trading Ltd in Japan facilitating export sale of 19,200kg of specialty grade organic coffee in its first year, yielding a gross total of \$145,152 and laying the groundwork for future high-volume exports

35

youth and green business enterprises established

4,199

people secured jobs through programme-generated opportunities

118

women-only Village Savings and Loan Associations established, mobilising ETB 7,913,880 in loans for small enterprise

“With the money I earned from the coffee sales, I purchased two small three-wheeled vehicles. In addition to transporting my children to kindergarten, I offer transportation services to the public, which allows me to earn additional profits. These vehicles have become another source of livelihood for my family.”

Nuredin Hussien

coffee producer

19,200 kg

specialty grade coffee exported

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Increasing agricultural livelihood opportunities of local communities

- **144% increase in average annual household incomes**, from ETB 43,638 at project start to ETB 114,996
- **Coping Strategy Index reduced from 5.8 at baseline to 3.84**, indicating an improved food security situation and a better capacity for households to manage food-related challenges
- **34% increase in the Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)** across the five domains of production, leadership, resources, income and time. A rise to 90% compared to 67% at project start
- **average annual revenue from agricultural activities rose** to ETB 81,250 – already achieving 98% of the project’s final target (ETB 82,500) – showing positive economic growth

144%

increase in household incomes

42%

increase in Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index

“With the net income I earned from my coffee sales, I have managed to grow my additional small business. I used to sell clothes in an open market. Now I have managed to rent a shop so that I can stay healthy and attract more customers.”

Abida Gutu

coffee producer



Lessons learnt

The approach taken by the FSD programme is successfully achieving improved forest conservation outcomes while enhancing local livelihoods and resilience. As the programme has progressed, several valuable lessons have emerged that can inform the planning of future forest management initiatives:

➤ Engage communities effectively

Engaging communities effectively and applying sustainable forest management practices can lead to improved conservation outcomes while also strengthening local livelihoods and resilience.

➤ Incorporate economic incentives

Incorporating economic incentives is a strong motivator for forest protection and supports long-term environmental and social benefits. For instance, by reducing deforestation and emissions, FSD programme interventions contribute to the goals of the Oromia Forested Landscape Programme (OFLP). Through OFLP's carbon finance and performance-based payment mechanisms, forest-dependent communities can gain income opportunities linked to forest conservation, creating a powerful financial incentive for sustainable forest management.

➤ Develop a comprehensive energy package

Developing a comprehensive green energy package that 1) raises awareness of how fuel use, especially firewood, impacts forests 2) improves efficient use of resources 3) improves health 4) promotes economic empowerment for women and young people and 5) enhances market access for green energy entrepreneurs provides a more sustainable and scalable approach compared to simply providing or subsidising energy devices like fuel-efficient cookstoves and solar panels.

➤ Integrate climate-smart agriculture technologies with improved market access

Integrating climate-smart agriculture (CSA) technologies with improvements in market access significantly enhances the productivity, income and resilience of smallholder farmers while reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Support to increase production needs to be accompanied by work to link producers to markets. Coupling CSA adoption with market-oriented interventions and local enterprise development can maximise farmer incomes, foster youth employment and offer a replicable model for sustainable rural transformation.

Going forward

The Forests for Sustainable Development programme is looking ahead with a clear vision centred on integrated, participatory and landscape-based forest management. Its future aspirations align closely with global goals for sustainable development and climate action.

In its final phase, the programme aims to significantly expand forest and tree cover to support climate mitigation and adaptation while also strengthening conservation efforts to restore degraded areas, improve inter-sectoral coordination and enhance ecosystem resilience to climate risks. These environmental goals remain paired with a commitment to improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities.

A key priority is deepening community participation, ensuring that members of forest-dependent communities, especially women and young people, benefit equitably and achieve significant improvements to their livelihoods.

The programme will continue to promote holistic landscape strategies that consider the interconnectedness of ecosystems, land use, water resources, local communities and governance. By balancing environmental protection with socio-economic development, it aims to deliver sustainable and equitable outcomes. To sustain this work, the programme plans to mobilise greater financial and technical resources, including expanded engagement with carbon markets and development of public-private partnerships.

Continued improvements in governance, law enforcement and cross-sector collaboration will further strengthen accountability and adaptive capacity in forest management, fostering resilient systems that can better respond to ecosystem changes.

This forward-looking strategy offers important insights for similar programmes: the importance of integrated landscape approaches, inclusive governance for landscape management, resilience-building and fostering innovation through multi-stakeholder partnerships. Through these strategic efforts, the Forests for Sustainable Development programme is well positioned to deliver lasting benefits for people, climate and nature, serving as a model for sustainable forest and landscape management worldwide.



Right: With training and support to implement climate-smart agriculture practices, Ahimed Adem is transforming the productivity of his farmland.

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