

Project factsheet

# Building a resilient wheat value chain and empowering smallholder farmers in Oromia (BRES project)

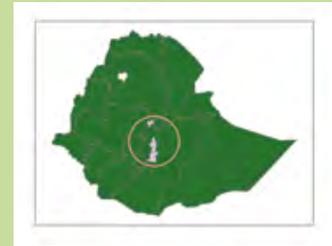
 Ethiopia  2024 - 2026

## Project aim

To increase food security and incomes for smallholder farmers in targeted districts of the Oromia Region of Ethiopia by enhancing the community resilience through sustainable production, productivity and marketing of wheat.

## Target reach

160,000 smallholder wheat farmers in Arsi, West Arsi and North Shoa zones of Oromia region, Ethiopia.



Ethiopia's wheat production faces complex challenges that undermine the resilience and livelihoods of vulnerable smallholder farmers. The BRES project addresses these challenges.

In Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia, soil degradation, poor agronomic practices and limited access to improved agricultural inputs depress wheat productivity. Substandard harvesting methods and storage equipment reduce yields further. Inadequate agricultural extension services and low access to financial services increase the challenges. Gender disparities in access to resources and decision making are also high.

The BRES project aims to help smallholder wheat farmers in Oromia Regional State overcome these challenges.

We're working to improve farmers' access to agricultural extension services and farming inputs, improve crop productivity and grain storage

methods, facilitate market linkages and increase opportunities for farmers and extension workers to share knowledge. Along the way, we're aiming to improve opportunities for women and young people.

Key activities include: providing training on climate-smart methods for wheat production, especially for young people; modernising post-harvest and storage technologies; supporting local women to start their own agricultural supply and advisory businesses, and also supporting women to establish and effectively run their own village savings and loan associations.

With the financial support of



"To my knowledge, this is the only project that works to create access to wheat seeds in our area. I believe that access to seeds is the most critical problem I have to address."

**Toyiba**  
Farmers' Training Center  
Development Agent



## Context

Ethiopia's wheat value chain faces a range of interlinked challenges that significantly undermine the productivity, resilience and livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

These issues are especially acute in wheat-growing regions such as Arsi, West Arsi and North Shoa zones. Key constraints include:

**Soil degradation and poor agronomic practices.** Soil fertility loss and acidity are major barriers, with wheat yield losses estimated at 20–60%. Continuous monocropping and the overuse of inorganic fertilisers have worsened soil health.<sup>1</sup>

**Inadequate access to improved seeds and agricultural inputs.** Farmers struggle to access high-quality seeds due to institutional gaps and the lack of private seed multipliers. Access to fertiliser and agro-chemicals remains unreliable and poorly timed, further affecting yields by limiting farmers' ability to manage pests, diseases and weeds effectively.

**Inadequate extension services.** The Ethiopian government has been exerting efforts to support farmers by expanding agricultural extension services. However, significant challenges remain in delivering customised services: the one-size-fits-all

approach does not address the diverse challenges faced by smallholders. Technical limitations among extension workers and a lack of tailored outreach strategies reduce the efficacy of these services.

**Inadequate harvesting and storage practices.** Up to 20% of wheat is lost due to outdated harvesting techniques, poor storage infrastructure and insufficient post-harvest extension support. These losses, along with poor input access and soil degradation, contribute to a significant wheat yield gap, with current yields representing just 20% of the potential.<sup>2</sup>

**Gender disparities and limited access to finance** further compound the vulnerability of smallholder farmers. Few are able to meet lending requirements of traditional banks. This is particularly the case for women and young people, who seldom own assets or have regular sources of income.

an estimated  
**20% yield loss**  
due to inadequate harvesting and  
storage practices

an estimated  
**20-60% yield loss**  
due to declining soil fertility

current wheat yields represent just  
**20% of potential**



## Approach

To enhance the resilience of the wheat value chain, the BRES consortium is taking an approach that combines technical innovation with the strengthening of institutions.

To ensure sustainability and scale, we are working in close collaboration with the national extension system and a wide range of government agencies, universities and institutions. Our objectives are to:

- strengthen inclusion, resilience and productivity for smallholder farmers producing wheat
- strengthen the capacity of small to medium enterprises to support increased production and aggregation of wheat, and create targeted market linkages
- build coordination and deliver capacity of agricultural institutions and agribusinesses at sub-national levels.

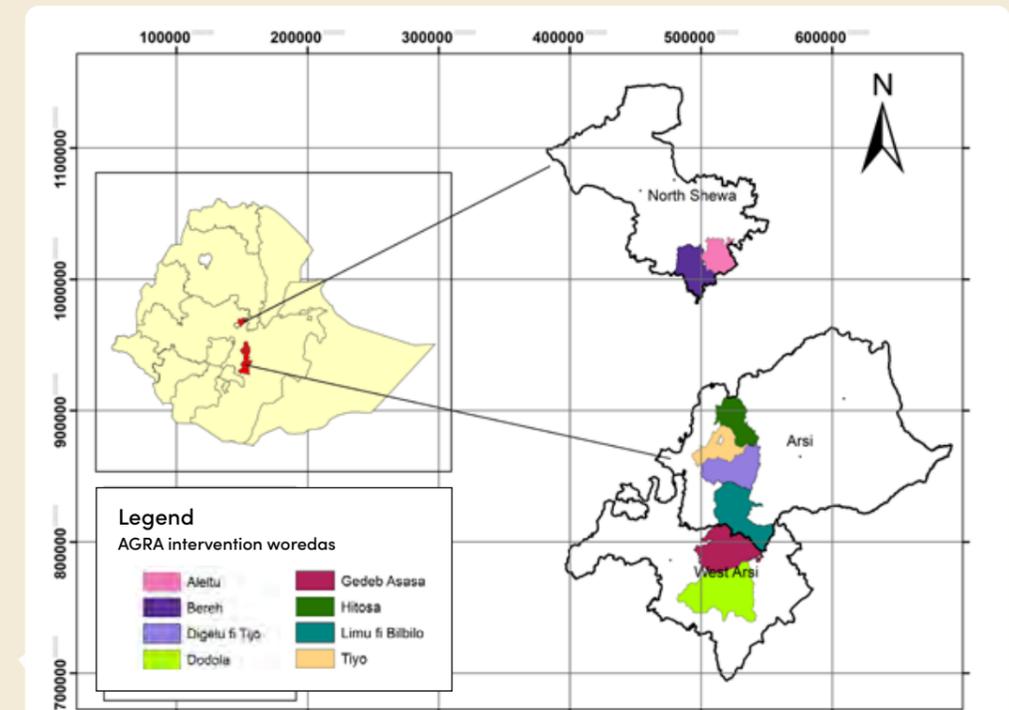
To achieve these, the project focuses on four core areas of intervention:

- **improving soil health and promoting climate-smart agricultural practices:** encouraging sustainable land use and integrated soil fertility management
- **enhancing access to inputs:** promoting timely and equitable access to seed, fertilisers, finance and mechanisation to improve productivity and resilience
- **reducing post-harvest losses:** introducing improved harvesting techniques, storage technologies and training to minimise grain loss and protect farmers' incomes
- **customising extension services:** designing demand-driven, inclusive extension approaches that better meet the diverse needs of smallholders, with a strong focus on women
- **strengthening market linkage:** enabling contract farming and structured market participation.

Through this integrated approach, the project seeks to close the wheat yield gap, improve household incomes, build resilience to climate change and empower women and young people within Ethiopia's agricultural economy.

## Project location

The BRES project is being implemented in the Oromia region of Ethiopia, targeting eight woredas across Arsi, West Arsi and North Shoa zones.



<sup>1</sup> <https://www.alliedacademies.org/articles/a-review-of-the-ethiopian-soil-acidity-causes-implications-and--management-mechanisms.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/items/7d6544ae-f6f4-4a41-ac8a-6e2f6d20157c>

# Target outcomes

The project aims to achieve tangible improvements for smallholder farmers, including women and young people, across several critical areas, including:

- increased planting of climate-smart early maturing wheat varieties
- increased use of climate-resilient practices and sustainable farming technologies
- improved access to extension services and sustainable farming inputs and technologies
- enhanced post-harvest practices and market access
- expanded access to finance and business development services
- increased access to training, finance and new technologies, especially for women and young people



A farmer receiving customised extension messages delivered by the BRES project.



# Who we're working with

The BRES project is designed to align with national goals, particularly Ethiopia's wheat strategy, by empowering smallholder farmers to contribute to national self-sufficiency and export readiness.

To support this, we are collaborating with a wide range of government agencies from local to national level, as well as government universities and institutions, including:

- **The Ministry of Agriculture**, who will provide crucial policy guidance and oversight
- **The Oromia Bureau of Agriculture**, who will ensure that planned project activities align with other regional initiatives and agricultural objectives
- **The Oromia Seed Enterprise, the Ethiopia Institute of Agricultural Research (Kulumsa Agricultural Research Center), the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics and Government universities**, who will support smallholder farmers in scaling tested technologies, sustainable farming practices and seed multiplication, adhering to quality standards
- **The Agricultural Transformation Institute (ATI)**, who will enable the project to promote best farming practices and cluster farming in the target woredas
- **The local woreda agricultural offices**, who will also play a key role in supporting farmers through integrating project interventions in the extension systems of the government, engaging in activities that enhance access to inputs, agri-technologies and improved practices.

## To learn more about this project contact:

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