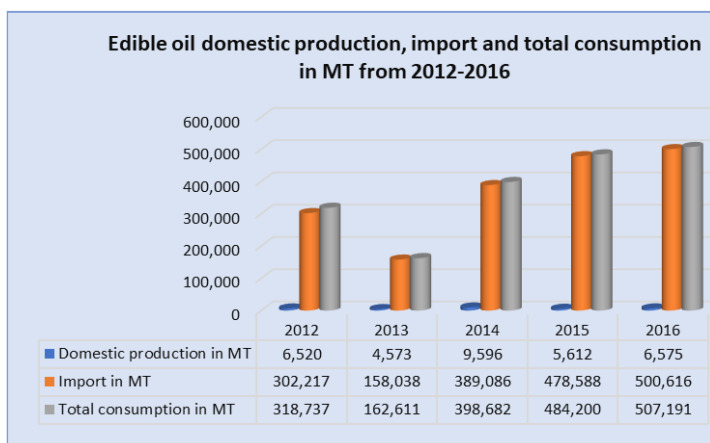


## The oilseed sector paradoxes in Ethiopia: exporting sesame and importing edible oils

**E**thiopia's major export earnings depend on the agricultural sector, of which coffee stands first and sesame stands second. More than 95% of the Ethiopian sesame is exported raw, without any processing activities for value addition. The situation for edible oils is the opposite: more than 98% of the domestic consumption is imported. Ethiopia invests a large amount of scarce hard currency to import edible oils, which is even more than the sesame export earnings. Data from Central Statistical Agency shows, 90% of the cooking oil used is imported palm oil, even though health experts warn that this oil is putting the peoples health at risk.



Data from CSA with own graphical representation

Looking at economic data, it can be said that export earnings from sesame are helping to import edible oils. The export earnings from sesame are around 400-500 million USD per year, while the cost of imported edible oils is also 400-500 million per year. The demand for edible oil is increasing. It is expected that it will reach the threshold of one billion dollar within five years from now.

Continued on page 2



**CDI-WUR manager pays a visit to the sesame production areas of Northwest Ethiopia**

**M**anager of Centre for Development Innovation at Wageningen University and Research (CDI-WUR), Hedwig Bruggeman, together with BENEFIT coordinator Dr. Irene Koomen, and BENEFIT manager Dr.

Dawit Alemu visited the sesame production area of Northwest Ethiopia from 3<sup>rd</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> of September 2019.

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## About this newsletter

The purpose of the SBN newsletter is to provide relevant and timely information on the Sesame Business Network and its support programme - Benefit-SBN.

In this issue we highlight the major activities that have been taken place between September and November 2019.

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## CDI-WUR manager pays a visit to the sesame production areas...

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The group first visited different activities that the SBN stakeholders have been doing with the support of Benefit-SBN and other partners.

In the two days, they visited a home garden site, sesame cluster farms, farmer training centres, seed multiplication and research sites of Agricultural Research Centres- HuARC and GARC at Abrahajira, commercial farmer field in which sesame, mung bean, soya bean, sun flower, cotton and sorghum were planted using good agricultural practice.

Visitors discussed with farmers, development agents, cooperative managers, researchers and Benefit-SBN staff members. The conversations helped them learn more about the performance of the Sesame Business Network (SBN) and the important supports provided to the stakeholders by Benefit-SBN.

Hedwig said: "I was very impressed to see the results... I was really excited. What I have seen was much more than what I expected. I have learned a lot about sesame in these two days. I understand a bit of what you are doing and what you are facing." She added: "I see that you are really working together- Agricultural Research Centres, Benefit-SBN, government. I can see that this collaboration is making a difference."

Dr. Irene, BENEFIT Coordinator on her part said: "It is really fascinating. You are doing in a different context. We have seen your achievements. We can learn a lot from that. We have half a year to go. It is time to think on how we can capitalize on the lessons we have learned thus far." Dr Irene reminded the Benefit-SBN staff to think out of the box; think about the game changers in the system; the next steps that they need to do.

*"I see that you are really working together- Agricultural Research Centres, Benefit-SBN, government. I can see that this collaboration is making a difference."*

Hedwig, manager of CDI-WUR

Dr. Dawit Alemu thanked Benefit-SBN for coming up with concrete evidences which can be brought to the national level. He appreciated the works that Benefit-SBN has been doing regarding nutrition, sesame and rotation crops such as mung bean, soya bean and sorghum. He also emphasized on the importance of thinking into a perspective of bringing systemic change in the sesame sub-sector. He added we should identify issues such as financial literacy, guarantee fund, compile and document the experience, make a story for a higher-level engagement.

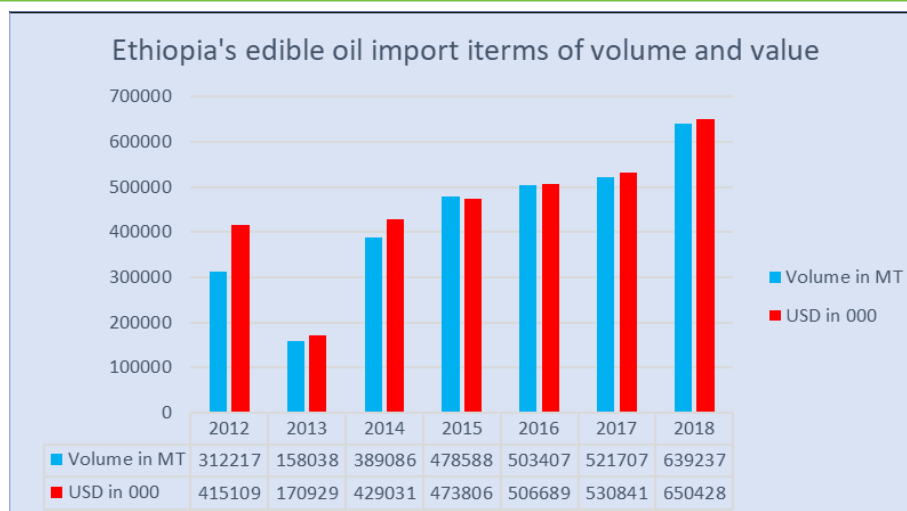
## The oilseed paradoxes ...

Continued from page 1

The domestic production of edible oils is very limited and only covers 2% of the national need. Oil processing industries are producing under their capacity. There is no level playing field in the edible oil sector. Locally produced oil is subjected to VAT, whereas imported palm oil is subsidized to facilitate access to this basic food product. As a result, locally produced edible oils are expensive and cannot compete with the subsidized imported palm oil.

The question is whether this situation can change for the better. Can the local production, processing and marketing of edible oils be promoted? A viable edible oil sector would have the following benefits:

- Creating employment opportunities along edible oil value chains
- using of the husk and cake (by-products of the oil industry) for animal feeding
- import substitution and higher national food sovereignty, and
- reducing dependency on international market of Ethiopian oilseeds by creating a domestic market.



Source: GAIN Report, 2018, with own graphical representation

There is thus a high demand for edible oils and there are perspectives. The big question is what to do to change the situation. Some elements would be the following:

- Promote the local production of oil seeds:
- Increase productivity and reduce the cost price of production of locally produced oil seeds
- Stop the subsidies on imported cooking oil
- Incentives and VAT exemption for locally produced edible oils
- Ensure food safety of locally produced seeds

Sesame oil is a high value product,

which is not likely to become a major cooking oil. In the sesame zone, there are options to support sunflower production, which is coming up in recent years. This can be linked to processing initiatives in agro-industrial parks. Also, in other parts of the country, specific attention for the production of edible oils can also be given, emphasizing other oil crops such as Niger seed and others.

Ethiopia has 32 agro-ecological zones and should be able to do better, covering a much larger part of domestic needs for edible oils with Ethiopian products.





### Couple benefited greatly from home gardening: The money from the sale of fruit covers the cost of sesame weeding

**M**r. Gashaw Mesafint, 37 and a father of four, is a sesame farmer who lives at the suburb of Dansha town. The sesame and sorghum that he produces during the production season is not enough for him to lead a better life. To supplement their income, Mr. Gashaw and his wife Mrs. Enanye Tizazu started cultivating vegetables and fruit in their backyard a couple of years ago.

When he explained how he started this business, Mr. Gashaw said: "I first dug the waterhole so that my goats could drink from it and partly for home consumption. I observed while a lot of water was wasted and then I asked myself why I shouldn't use the excess water for vegetable production. Then I planted some vegetables and started to realize the benefits. Gradually, I have learned that the water can last for a long time. Then I planted fruit and trees.



Mr. Gashaw Mesafint

Now, I'm not even spending the dirty water at home. I use it to water the vegetables in my garden."

In 2018, both the husband and wife received training and technical support from the *Woreda* Office of Agriculture and Benefit-SBN. They also got different types of seeds and seedlings and watering cane. The training armed the couples with the knowledge and skills of producing fruit and vegetables such as okra, watermelon, tomato, onion and papaya. They were trained on how to apply fertilizer, watering, land preparation, pest and disease managements. They also learned about the nutritional values of what they produce. After taking the training and having seeds of vegetables, the couple expand their home garden.

Building up on their experience and the training and technical support they get, they produce fresh vegetables using organic fertilizer like manure. "Not only I and my family, other people who happen to be here in our garden feel happy when they see the papaya, guava, lemon, mango trees and the vegetables such as okra, sweet potatoes, green paper, tomato..." said Mr. Gashaw. Their garden is always filled with fruit and seasonal vegetables except for two hottest months in the area - April and May. In these months there is water scarcity and high evapo-transpiration.

Gashaw's family largely uses the vegetables for home consumption.

They have sometimes more than enough produce. They said they share the okras to their neighbours. They also earn a good deal of money from the sale of fruit. Mr. Gashaw said: "Thanks to God! We are doing good. We have had enough for our family. We earn more than 3,000 ETB from the selling of mangoes. This money covered the labour cost of weeding sesame. I also got over 7,000 ETB from the papayas."

Mrs. Enanye said our kids get what they want from the garden. She thanked Benefit-SBN especially for the seeds. "We will never stop doing this work; we have seen the benefit and we will search for improved seed varieties and continue producing vegetables and fruit."She said.



Mrs. Enanye Tizazu

The couple are determined to continue growing seasonal vegetables and fruit in their garden, supplement their life and save money for their children's education and their sesame farming. They are ready to share their experience of home gardening for their fellow neighbouring farmers.

Mr. Gashaw's family do not usually have market price information for their produce. People come to their house to buy mangoes and papayas and they usually sell their produce at a low price. Some buyers sometimes give them extra money from the price they set. In this regard, the family should not only give attention for producing fruits and vegetables, they also need to sell their produce in a relatively good price. It is also better if they are linked with juice and vegetable shops.





### Labourers unaware of the labour law: Labour sensitization event organized

The sesame sub-sector in Northwest Ethiopia is creating job opportunities for more than 500,000 seasonal labourers who mainly come from the high land areas. Because of the harsh environment, working in the sesame sector is very hard; injuries and in some cases life-threatening. Occupational health and safety regulations in this sector are weak. Labourers suffer because of poor working and living conditions. This resulted in low labour efficiency which in turn affects the productivity and quality of sesame.

Labourers and farmers have very limited awareness of the Ethiopian labour law which governs employer and employee relationship. In the efforts made to meet this challenge, Benefit-SBN organized labour sensitization event in collaboration with West Gondar zone Labour and Social Affairs Department at Gendawuha and Kokit kebeles of Metema woreda on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> of September 2019. The objective of the event was to increase labourers awareness on Ethiopian labour law, potential health related risks and overall farming conditions in the sesame area. Experts from the zone

informed participants about the labour law, its importance, the duties and rights of labourers and farmers (employers); and major health related issues and the precautions that labourers should take.

The events at the two locations were attended by more than 500 laborers and some investor farmers.

Mr. Mohamed Aman is a labourer who came from South Wollo zone. He reflected: "I have been looking for an occasion like this to express my discontent. We are suffering due to the unfair treatment of farm managers of investor farmers. For instance, I was very sick and my body was full of sores. I asked my employers to give my wage. But they did not make it when I needed it badly. I couldn't go and sue them anywhere. Thanks to my friend he gave me some money for my treatment and I recovered from my sickness." He added: "It is not only farmers who are making problems; there are also some labourers who are not doing their tasks properly. Investor farmers and laborers should understand each other and work for our mutual benefit. The respective public organization should follow up and take corrective measures on time to make the relationship smooth."

### Gender disparities in SBN

Since sesame is grown in a low land area where the environment is harsh, there is a common perception that women's involvement in sesame production is very limited. But this does not seem to be true. In Northwest Ethiopia, not only are women involved in various farm activities but they also make significant contribution to the sesame value chain. The problem is that they usually have limited access to and control over important agricultural resources such as land, farm implements and assets, restricting their role in the production and marketing of sesame.

A gender analysis survey by Benefit-SBN confirms the disparities between women and men in the SBN of Northwest Ethiopia. The survey was conducted at six woredas, namely, Quara, Metema and Tach Armachiho of

Amhara and Wolkaiet, Tsegedie and Kafta Humera of Tigray regions.

The survey provides information on gender roles and responsibilities, focusing on access to extension, inputs, labour, credit, marketing, decision making and sharing of benefits.

The study employed a correctional survey design. A total of 296 respondents of which 204 from Male Headed Households (MHH) and 92 from Female Headed Households (FHH) participated.

The study revealed that there is a very high and varied involvement of all household members, including male and female heads, in various farm activities. Division of labour into what is considered 'women's work' and 'men's work' is culturally defined. Traditional domestic roles are still widely seen as women's work in the

study area. However, women also play a great role in farm activities. Across all woredas, land preparation was the responsibility of male members of both types of households. 51% of husbands in MHH and 46.67% of other household members (usually men) take care of ploughing activity of the family.

According to the estimated proportion of involvement in different activities, on average 13.8 % of women in MHH and 31.25% of women in FHH participate in weeding, 41.7% men in MHH and 18.7% women in FHH participate in harvesting.

The results showed that there is significant difference among women and men farmers both in FHH and MHH in terms of access to extension services, credit, input, and hired labour. For instance, 61% of MHHs said they accessed credit either

### Sesame farmers are making informed farm decisions

**M**rs. Zafu Kedawi, 41, is living in Dedebeit kebele, Tsegede woreda. She is a sesame farmer for 20 years and the head of her family. She owns 4.5 hectare of land and sesame production is the main source of income for her family. Zafu attended the financial literacy training in 2018.

Sesame farming, according to Zafu, was very challenging “For many years, I did not record my costs or calculate my profit or loss at the end of the season. I only knew how much I harvested. I used to invest family labour, get money from informal money lenders, repay in kind and sell my cattle as well to finance my farm activities”. Zafu was not able to make informed decisions. She did not realize the amount of costs that were related to these type of activities.

After taking the financial literacy training and starting to track her farm costs and measure her profits, Zafu realized that it was worthless to invest in this manner. She decided to change her farm business approach: “I decided to rent out two and half hectare and manage two hectare myself. It was a turning point in my farm business. I manage the two hectare and keep my cattle. Last year, I got some profit from the sesame production and earned my rent”.



Mrs. Zafu Kedawi, with her two children

The cost recording book provided her important insight that most of the money she had invested went to the informal money lenders. To reduce this expenditure she decided to only partly cultivate her land. She even found an alternative credit source from Egrimitkal Multipurpose Cooperative and Bahre-selam Saving and Credit Cooperative. She has a saving account in both cooperatives.

This year, she sold the sesame and sorghum to her cooperative and deposited part of the earnings. Zafu concludes: “The training helped me to think differently. I realize farming is a business which needs financial management”.

She explains that her children are involved in recording the costs of the farm. Her daughter, a 10<sup>th</sup> grade student, supports with recording and calculating the costs and planning on how much to plant, how much to rent out and what crops to plant.

This year Zafu was recognized for her strong recording habit and inspiring influence on neighbours and other female farmers.

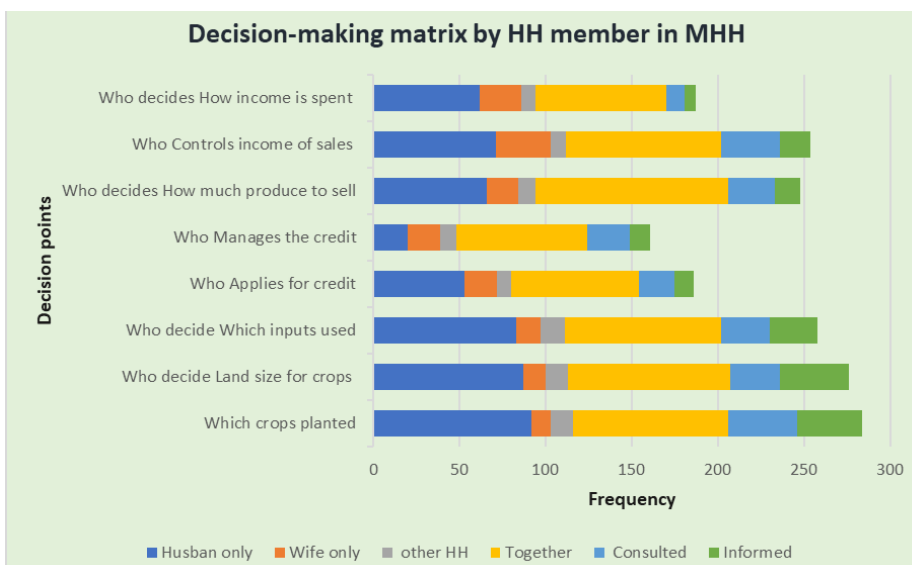
Literacy on farm cost recording is key for farmers to make informed decision, plan and realize a profitable business. Farmers, cooperatives and unions strengthen their relationship through the training that creates shared benefits.

### Gender disparities ....

Continued from page4

from formal financial sources and informal money lenders. However, only 32% of FHHs got similar chance. This contributed to the varied level of technology adoption between MHH and FHH. Of the MHH respondents 37% applied fertilizer while 24% of the FHH applied fertilizer for sesame production. Another major challenge women face includes control over production resources and share of benefits. The findings of the study showed that husbands in the MHH set up the rules and decide on agricultural related issues. This inhibits women from attaining their full potential and their contribution to societies. Within FHH, mostly women make independent decisions related to family income.

Decision-making matrix by HH member in MHH



Key informant interviewees and focused group participants pointed out that lack of own capital and limited credit access, limited access

to extension and advisory services and shortage of labour are the major challenges inhibiting women farmers from using their full potential.



## Cluster farming: sesame farmers improve productivity through farm clustering approach

**S**esame farmers are currently being advised to use farm clustering as an alternative farming strategy in order to increase productivity and their incomes. The farmers can benefit from clustering of their farms for a number of reasons. They can reduce their input costs, have easy access to rental machinery services, get better extension service, consolidate their produce and supply in bulk, minimize transportation and transaction costs, etc.

In 2019 production season, farmers in five *kebeles* of Western and Northwestern Tigray, namely, Adebay, Ruwassa, Badme, Sheraro and Lemlem showed encouraging results in cluster approach. These farmers planted the same type of sesame seed; performed land preparation, row planting, agrochemical spray, insect pest control as well as transportation of crops together.

The experience of Lemlem *kebele* is especially worth mentioning. Farmers in this *kebele* started to implement cluster farming in 2018. They use *wefera*, which is a pre-existing cultural practice in which farmers form a working party using communal labour. Farmers especially did the weeding and harvesting together. In those working days, they eat and drink together. After harvest, the farmers in the *kebele* supplied their product to Ethiopian Commodity Exchange through their multipurpose cooperatives called Orena.



Mr. Tadesse Fisha, a farmer from Adebay cluster gets 12.10 quintals sesame per hectare sesame

Working together in their adjacent farms helped the smallholders reduce their production and other costs. It also allowed them to get better support from the development agents throughout the entire production season.

The close collaboration among the concerned stakeholders and partners such as the WoA, Cooperatives, Unions, HuARC, Benefit-SBN in supporting smallholders played an important role for the successful implementation of the farm clustering approach in the *kebeles*.

Mr. Tadesse Woldegebriel, from Kafta Humera *Woreda* Office of Agriculture said: "We have learned important lessons from this years'

experience. Coming together and working in clusters and applying the recommended technologies help farmers to increase their earnings. Mr. Tadesse Fisha a farmer from Adebay cluster gets 12.10 quintals per hectare which is a new record from this *woreda*."

A total of 1,707 farmers organized themselves in 23 clusters and planted sesame on 1,758 hectare of land.

The selection of farmers was made by development agents. Criteria used were: farmers willingness, readiness to use fertilizer, improved seed and readiness to apply the 20 important steps of sesame production.

## Farmers evaluate different sesame and soya bean varieties on the field

**M**etema *Woreda* Office of Agriculture (WoA) in collaboration with GARC and Benefit-SBN organized field days for more than 200 farmers from Kokit and Kumer Aftit *kebeles*, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 2019.

The field days were part of the Crowd Sourcing (CS) and Participatory Variety Selection (PVS) activities that GARC has carried out together with the WoA, Benefit-SBN and ISSD Amhara. The four parties trained farmers and supplied three different varieties of sesame and soya bean before the production season.

The field days allowed farmers to compare the performance of the different varieties and choose the varieties that they think are best in their own parameters.

Ms. Woyneshet Tesfaye a sesame farmer from Kokit *Kebele*, participated in the CS activity. Of the three varieties of sesame she was offered, she liked the one with prolonged plant height, many branches and pod numbers. She said: "This is not the first time when farmers come and visit my field. I ones got 11 quintals sesame per



Ms. Woyneshet Tesfaye

Continued on page 7



## Farmers evaluate sesame and soya bean...

Continued from page 6

hectare using Abasina variety and applying all the recommended practices.” She added: “This year farmers have evaluated the sesame varieties in my field. They also liked the soya bean that I planted.”

Mr. Zemed Melese who also participated in the CS said he planted three varieties of sesame in addition to the local variety that he planted. He said: “I strictly followed the recommendations and advices of the researchers. Out of the three varieties given to me, I already choose one variety which is performing relatively well. It has a good height, many pods which I think will give better yields. It relatively resists the waterlogging problem. We are experiencing heavy rains this year and waterlogging is our major problem.” Mr Zemed added that he and other fellow farmers have learned good lessons from the variety selection activity.



Mr. Zemed Melese

Farmers also visited sunflower and cotton fields which were planted in the area for rotation purposes.

During the discussions at the end farmers raised their concerns on shortage of improved seed varieties; planting time of seed varieties; water logging problems; weather information, unavailability of improved seed varieties that withstand water logging problems; chemicals for pest and disease and lack of credit.



## Regional field day held at Central and Mirab Gondar zones

On the 17th of September 2019, the Agriculture Offices of Tach Armachiho, Tegede and Mirab Armachiho *woredas* in collaboration with Gondar Agricultural Research Center (GARC), ATA and Benefit-SBN organized a one-day field visit for more than 300 individuals convened from regional, zone, *woreda* and *kebele* level stakeholders. In attendance were administrators, researchers, agricultural expert, heads from different bureaus and offices and farmers.

Participants of the field day first visited smallholder farmers' fields where sesame was planted in a cluster of neighbouring fields at Kisha *Kebele* Tach Armachiho *woreda*. 32 farmers came together and planted sesame using good agricultural practices in 38 hectares of their adjacent fields at Kisha *Kebele*. The head of the *Kebele* Agriculture Office and two members of the group of farmers who work in the same cluster shared their experiences and the significance of working together in clusters with the participants.

Then visitors went to Tegede and visited the soya bean plantation in a commercial farmer field at Marzeneb *kebele*. Subsequently, they headed to Mirab Armachiho and visited a seed multiplication and research site of GARC at Abrahajira *kebele*. GARC is multiplying sesame, soya bean and sunflower seeds in 3.87ha, 12.17ha, and 0.91ha of land, respectively.

At last, participants visited a farmer training centre and sesame cluster farm at Terefwork *kebele*, Mirab Armachiho *woreda*.

The field day not only helped officials and experts to see the works that have been done at the ground level but it also served as information sharing and discussion platform on the major challenges.

During the discussions at Mirab Armachiho, after the visit, participants of the field day appreciated the collaborative efforts of BoA at different levels, ATA, ARARI/GARC and Benefit-SBN in supporting farmers apply good agricultural practices and increase their productions and productivity.

See the points raised during discussions at: <https://sbnethiopia.org/2019/09/18/regional-level-field-day-held-at-central-and-mirab-gondar-zones/>



GARC seed multiplication and research site at Abrahajira

## Agricultural professionals received practical training on pest and disease management

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 2019, Benefit-SBN in collaboration with GARC and Woreda Offices of Agriculture organized practical training session on the identification and management of pest and disease of sesame and rotational crops for 91 (42 female) experts, development agents, private input suppliers and junior researchers convened from Tegede, Tach Armachiho, West Armachiho, Quara, Metema and Belesa woredas.

The training was organized in two locations, in GARC research stations at Metema and Mirab Armachiho woredas.

The objective of the training was to increase the knowledge and skills of agricultural experts and development agents on the identification of the most common weeds, insects and disease that are prevalent in the sesame production areas. The training was also aimed at increasing awareness among agricultural experts on



Above, the training at Metema and below, at Abrhajira

recommended and available chemicals and developing their skill of calibration and safety issues in the application of chemicals.

The training comprises both theoretical and practical sessions. Topics covered were types of sesame and rotation crops pests, their specific characteristics, prevention and controlling methods, scouting methods; handling and safe management of chemicals and equipment/pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, the managements and applications of chemicals in the field and calibration and safety issues in applying chemicals. Trainees have practically identified sesame and rotational crops infested with disease, insects and various weeds in the field.

Participants appreciated the practical demonstration session during the plenary discussions at the end. However, they expressed concern about the timing and short duration of the training. They said since pest and disease occur anytime, such training sessions need to be organized at the different growth stage of the plant.

### Upcoming activities

- Organizing thematic meetings for regional level decision makers
- Following up the guarantee fund activity
- Providing support for financial literacy trainers
- Documenting the agricultural season activities
- Organizing regional workshops
- Preparation for evaluating sesame marketing
- Cooperative capacity assessment
- Organizing training on home gardening

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