



The State of Eritrea

# Ministry of Agriculture Newsletter



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## Ministry Conducts Annual Assessment Meeting

The Ministry of Agriculture conducted its annual assessment meeting, on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2023 in Asmara, evaluating its overall accomplishments and challenges through the year 2022. During the meeting, its departments, divisions and branch offices from all administrative regions presented their respective reports and held extensive discussion on several issues.

According to the Agricultural Extension Department (AED)'s report, various on-farm and off-farm soil and water conservation activities were carried out on more than 50,000 hectares of land in total. This accomplishment was addressed as considerably very low vis-à-vis the plan. The need to put up increased efforts in this regard was also ultimately emphasized through conclusive views of the meeting's participants.

The report further highlighted that a total of 493,000 hectares of land (96% of the planned) were cultivated with cereals, legumes and oil crops in the course of the year, giving rise to 84%, 7% & 9%

respectively. Accordingly, it was indicated that crop production increased by around 9%. However, the participants stressed that added efforts must be made to attain higher level of yield per hectare.

With regards to horticultural production, the report disclosed that the year 2022 witnessed the cultivation of fruits and vegetables in a total area of more than 4,600 and 22,000 hectares respectively, and the demand thereof could be met throughout the year, except for a short-lived instance of shortages of few vegetable commodities due to scanty rainfall during the Azmera season.

Strengthening the artificial insemination technique was among the areas where the ministry invested heavily during last year. AED's report quantitatively reveals that more than 1,500 dairy cattle were artificially inseminated in the course of this period, and that a better result has already started to be registered. Thus, the number of dairy cattle has grown by 11%. On the other hand, an instance





*Mr. Kahsay Negash, Agricultural Extension Department*

of decline in the scope of fodder cultivation last year was noted and the participants called for an immediate intervention in this regard.

Participants of the assessment meeting further held extensive discussion on the prevailing shortage of poultry and chick supply and laid emphasis on the importance of adhering to backyard poultry breeding focusing on traditional manner of incubation on the part of farmers to sustain the sub-sector. On the other hand, it was stated that distribution of chicks will start shortly, and that prices are due to drop to their normal levels.

Indicating that relatively higher level of beekeeping activities were recorded last year, the ministry noted the efforts made to realize the set goal, especially in terms of introducing top-bar hives extensively. The report shows that number of beehives grew from 34,000 to 39,000 last year.

Another point of discussion in the assessment meeting focused on livestock health. It was made clear that, except for fewer instances of camel deaths in a certain part of the country, no significant problem was faced. Consequently, a total of 1.1 million livestock and poultry were vaccinated last year, while more than 383,000 animals were treated for different ailments. The participants also noted temporary shortage of vaccines in certain areas of the country.

Regarding the annual report of the National Agricultural Research Institute (NARI), its Genetic

Resources Research Division managed to characterize 69 accessions of Taff (*Eragrostis tef*) agro-morphologically; and evaluated 19 bread wheat entries (18 developed genotypes (Manna x Kafza) & 1 improved variety) using 8 traits. The Division also conducted accessions regeneration & multiplication of seven crops.

In the Livestock Improvement Research, 11 sweet potato lines were evaluated for forage yield and nutritive quality. Subsequently, three lines were selected for their high bio-mass with six cuttings per year. Establishment of Barka Breeding Nucleus at Golij was also marked as a promising step towards identification and improvement of local breeds.

NARI's report indicated that several solid and liquid organic fertilizer trials were applied on wheat, potato and other vegetables. According to the report, even though the trials will further continue, the results, so far registered, are promising.

Seed improvement programs were some of NARI's notable achievements. During the year 2022, a number of seed improvement programs were carried out on wheat, sorghum, pearl millet, barley, maize, rape seed and some legumes. In addition, maintenance of different crop varieties was conducted. Similarly, the report indicated that potato improvement program, sweet potato seed multiplication as well as cassava observation trials were among the main achievements of NARI.

NARI has also been engaged in releasing virus-free seeds through tissue culture. During the reporting period, promising tissue culture activities were done on potato, banana, date-palm as well as aloe-vera. The routine production and distribution of



*Ms. Rahwa Abdela, National Agricultural Research Institute*



*Mr. Asmerom Fekadu, Regulatory Services Department*

foundation seeds, vines, suckers and seedling were also incorporated in the NARI's 2022- report.

A report by the Regulatory Services Department (RSD) underscores the efforts made to meet its main objectives which is ensuring safety and quality of agricultural products. To this end, vegetable products, particularly tomatoes farms, were intensively inspected for safety, besides conducting intensive awareness-raising activities on farmers with regard to proper application of pesticides.

The positive development is that tomato contamination by pesticides has now drastically declined. In the past, pesticides were heavily applied

on tomato plants pest attacks, especially leaf miner. Moreover, all agricultural food processing plants, the majority of which are to milk and milk products processing businesses, were closely inspected in connection with safety standards. As a result, consumers are enjoying safer food, including yogurt, which used to be imported from Yemen in the past. The report further indicates that plant and animal quarantine activities at entry points (Tesseney, Massawa Seaport, Asseb Seaport and Asmara international Airport) were implemented with significant success in 2022 as these quarantine stations were equipped with the necessary facilities and quarantine inspectors were trained to render effective inspection services by upgrading their pest/disease diagnostic and identification capacities.

According to the report, a number of awareness-raising meetings, which were conducted at regional and headquarter level, were organized for stakeholders and farmers on relevant topics like the importance of food safety, proper use and management of agrochemicals (both pesticides and veterinary drugs), agricultural quarantine, as well as seed quality and natural resources management. While around 2000 stakeholders and farmers took part in such meetings, it was reported that more than 90 RSD's inspectors attended training courses in the country and abroad to enhance their inspection capacity in quarantine, seed quality and meat inspection.

The report also highlights that the RSD, representing the Ministry of Agriculture and in collaboration





with stakeholders (The Ministry of Land, Water and Environment; Ministry of Marine Resources; Forestry and Wildlife Authority; Eritrean Institute of Technology; Hamelmalo Agricultural College; and other private institutions), has successfully strengthened the National Database on Fauna and Flora (NDFF), attaining data entry level of over 4200 fauna and flora species.

Regarding prevention of migratory pests, besides limited instances of tree-locust in Gash-barka region, and African armyworm in some parts of the country, the ministry didn't face any major challenges in 2022. The ministry is putting up consistent endeavors to substitute farmers' use of chemical pesticides with organic pesticides and

mechanical weeding, according to a report on plant protection.

The breaking news on launching vaccine production against Peste Des Petits (PPR) and Newcastle Diseases (NCD) was reported by the National Animal and Plant Health Laboratory (NAPHL). According the report, NAPHL has managed to produce 327,200 & 30,000 doses of vaccines for NCD & PPR respectively; and this will periodically enable the country to meet its demand. The National Laboratory also presented extensive reports on animal and plant diseases diagnosis; quality and safety tests as well as strengthening regional laboratories, among others.

In addition to the afore-mentioned reports, all supporting departments and divisions presented their achievements, work plans and corresponding challenges. The deliberations from the participants of the meeting had the following focus, among others: Ensuring expedited increase in the scope of oil crops' cultivation, strengthening grass collection practice, boosting fodder production, carrying out cost-benefit analysis, conducting continued maintenance and renovation of micro-dams, expanding the space of potato seed stores, ensuring regular supply of veterinary drugs and vaccines.



*Mr. Anday Semere,  
National Animal and Plant Health Laboratory*

H.E. Arefaine Berhe, the Minister of Agriculture, in his remarks, called for concerted actions in soil and water conservation, use of improved seeds, increased cultivation of oil crops, regular annual grass collection, selecting bulls of outstanding local breed, consolidating backyard poultry farming activities, widespread introduction of top-bar hives, assignment of agricultural professional at village and administrative-area level, increasing the number of farmers' agricultural schools and regular meetings, popularization of progressive farming, giving added impetus to sweet potato production, ensuring greater production of organic fertilizers and pesticides, as well as inspiring the young professionals at village and kebab level to perform different trials.

Mr. Arefaine further gave an in-depth explanation and deliberations on the issues of standardization of reports; strengthening youths' participation in all national development programs; stopping the use of perilous weed-killer (2-4-D); as well as distribution and cultivation of locally grown hybrid maize seeds; ensuring regular supply of veterinary

drugs and vaccines; and giving special attention to remote areas of the country.

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*H.E. Arefaine Berhe, Minister of Agriculture*

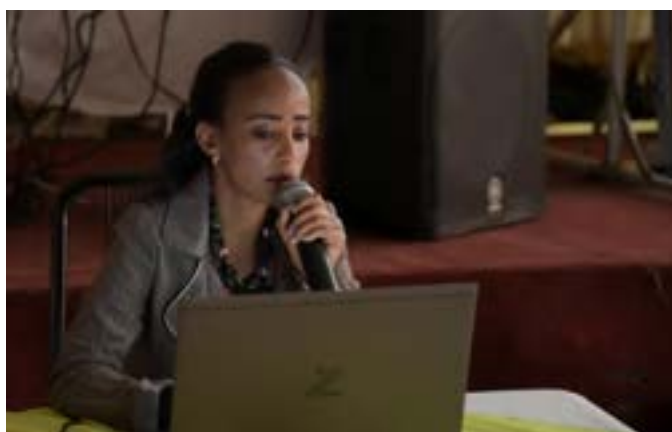
## Pictorial Presentation of the Assessment Meeting



*Mr. Omer Mahmud, Southern Red Sea Region*



*Mr. Teklemariam Zerom, Anseba Region*



*Ms. Fithawit Gebretinsae, Maekel Region*



*Mr. Afenigus Zeweldi, Debub Region*



*Mr. Redae Kidane, Northern Red Sea Region*



*Mr. Tesfay Negash, Gash-Barka Region*



*Ms. Almaz Gebreyohannes, Agricultural Strategic Information Systems*



*Ms. Samrawit Kidane, Planning and Statistics*



*Mr. Daniel Habtemichael, Administration and Finance*



*Ms. Adiam Abraham, Human Resources Development*



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