



IMPROVED POTATO SEED PRODUCING GROUP

The USAID funded SPIR Program, led by World Vision in a consortium with CARE and ORDA, is intended to help households in the PSNP4 program achieve food security for their households through a combination of savings, diversifying their sources of income through income generating activities, and skills training that can help them graduate from food assistance. This complementarity is core to the success of the collaboration between the GoE and the USAID funded SPIR Program. SPIR supports 526,444 direct project participants in the Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR regions of Ethiopia.

While potato is one of SPIR's focus value chains and has high potential for profit, high-quality seed potatoes are not easily available in East and West Hararghe, and must be imported



526,444

SPIR direct project participants in the Amhara, Oromia and SNNPR regions of Ethiopia

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from at least 300 kilometers away, if not farther. This puts it out of reach of most farmers, both in terms of price and market access. Focusing on purpose one of SPIR—increased income, productive assets and access to nutritious food for vulnerable women, men and youth—SPIR has worked with local producer groups to create business growing seed potato and selling to local farmers. These local businesses not only provide an important income generating activity for the producer groups, they also allow other vulnerable farmers in the area to access seed to grow, eat, and sell potatoes.

60 producers make up these 2 local groups to create a sustainable local market for potato seed in East Hararghe. SPIR provided them with 8 metric tons of starter potato seed in partnership with Haramaya University. Farmers participated in trainings on agronomic practices, post-harvest handling and marketing. In the first round of multiplication, producer groups multiplied the seed and were able to harvest 59 metric tons of seed to sell to plant, store, and sell to their fellow farmers.

After a training on post-harvest handling of potato seed most of the farmers were able to construct household level Diffused Light Storage (DLS). Currently, these businesses are storing 30 metric tons of potato seeds ready for sale and planting in the upcoming season. The other 29 tons they have already sold into local markets. The project continues to help farmers build links with the seed businesses and other farmers who participate in SPIR so that they can purchase the seed if they are interested in starting to grow potatoes. Promoting demand among farmers and connecting them to sustainable, quality supply creates a long-term market that will improve sustainability of the project and agricultural production in the region.



Ibsa Haji Ture (left in the photo) is a key member of the

Arletika producer group. He started producing potato seeds last year, and has already seen a big difference. In the first season of activities, the group's 30 members started with 4 metric tons of seed from SPIR and the local university that produces improved seeds. From that starting stock, they produced 35 metric tons of potatoes. From that amount, the group sent 6 tons to another kebele so a group there could start a potato seed business. They saved 14 tons to sell or plant in the next season. The remaining 15 tons they sold as food instead of seed or ate at home.

This is a significant difference from the previous year. Ibsa used to plant the local variety of potatoes, where for every 100 kg he planted he got 200 kg in yield. Now, if he plants 100 kg, he gets 3 tons in yield. Ibsa is investing the profits from this into growing his business. He built a Diffused Light Storage shed in his back yard using profits and training from the first season. He's growing his production, too. Last year he planted 100 kg on 06 hectares of land, and got 7,000 birr (250 USD) in profits. This year, he's planning to plant .25 hectares of land, and is predicting that he can make 50,000 birr (1,785 USD).

Ibsa is not alone. Another farmer Mohamed Hussen Tucha in the group invested in diversifying his crops. He used the profits from potato and put them into expanding into groundnut production for the upcoming season so that he has two crops. Amee Gezali Aliyu (in yellow, right of photo) bought an ox, and is so excited about the business that he thinks next year they will produce 200 metric tons—enough seed stock for the whole woreda.

“ This isn't about CARE. We will keep doing producing even without a project, because this is for our whole community. Everyone in this area benefits from our business. ”

Challenges

Access to seed stock is still a challenge for expanding the producer group model. There's a shortage of preferred and certified potato seed varieties for seed multiplication groups, even when partnering with local agricultural research centers. Additionally, the potato producer groups tend to be male dominated. Of the 60 group members, only 6 are women. SPIR is reviewing its activities to ensure that they are all contributing to women's empowerment and gender equality.

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