



Livelihoods for Resilience Activity



Spicing up rural livelihoods through pepper production

Smallholder farmers in Sidama and Gedio zones of South Ethiopia who participate in the Feed the Future Ethiopia – Livelihoods for Resilience Activity have discovered that improved pepper seed and agronomic practices help them to have better production, and earn good income. Tefera Yohannes is one of these farmers.

“Early on, I did not have the skill and experience to grow peppers,” said Tefera, who lives in Aleta Wendo Woreda of Sidama Zone. He works as a petty trader on market days and farms a small plot of land, but has been struggling to make ends meet for his family of four. Despite Tefera’s hard work, his income is low and he relies on cash or food transfers from the Government’s Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) for six months of the year. Despite his challenges, he has seen promising improvements in his family’s situation over the last two years thanks to his familiarization with pepper cultivation techniques and improved seed varieties facilitated by the Livelihoods for Resilience Activity.

Tefera, and his wife, Hamsalech Tessema, became participants in the Livelihoods for Resilience Activity when they and 20 of their neighbors established a village economic and social association (VESA) called *Yegna Tesfu*, which means “our hope”. In that VESA, Tefera learned more

about a variety of topics, including credit and savings, business skills, value chains, gender equity, and women’s empowerment. “When we started saving at the VESA, our expectations were not that high. My wife and I started saving 50 birr per week and wanted to see to what extent our participation could improve our livelihood,” Tefera says.

Tefera also received training on pepper production—both theoretical and practical training on pepper production in a nursery and in the field, pest management, harvesting, and seed processing and storage. He describes this training as pivotal: “Although we have half a hectare of land, we did not plant pepper until I took training on it,” he explains. “We had no idea that producing pepper can generate a good income. It requires only a little money to buy seed of improved pepper seed varieties.”

He transferred the knowledge he gained to his wife. Using their knowledge about pepper varieties, climates, and

soil types, they purchased the pepper variety seed that best suits their farmland for only 40 birr (a little over USD 1). Three months later, they started harvesting peppers.

“My wife and I earned over a total of 3,500 birr (USD 105) after we sold the pepper on consecutive market



Tefera and Hamsalech with their child

days,” Tefera says proudly. “The income helped us to start a poultry business and buy raw materials for transitional beehives. Pepper has also become our regular ingredient in our meals.”

Tefera is planning to plant pepper for a second time using seeds left over from his production, and, over the longer term, plans to produce pepper at least twice per year if he can access water nearby.

He believes that if his income continues to grow, with the introduction of modest incomes from the production of honey and chickens, his family can graduate from the PSNP within three years. Recently, Tefera and his wife took out a 5,000 birr (USD 150) loan from a micro-finance institution to start sheep fattening and fruit trade.

Chilli pepper value chain interventions

Pepper—consumed as a spice with *enset* and haricot bean—is a key cash crop supplementing the incomes of farmers in Sidama and Gedio. PSNP households in these woredas produce pepper using traditional farming practices—they allocate small plots of land to pepper production and use varieties that are poor in quality and not always suited to the agro-ecological environment. There is no improved seed supply system in the area. The Livelihoods for Resilience Activity helps farmers overcome these challenges by:

- Supporting farmers to conduct **demonstration trials** and select the best pepper varieties through **participatory variety selection process**. This intervention helps farmers identify the right variety to their area, produce seeds locally, and sell to fellow farmers at affordable prices.
- Increasing farmers’ engagement in pepper production by providing technical and business skills training and facilitating **farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange** with the use of model farmers, demonstration plots, and experience sharing events
- Establishing multi-stakeholder platform at cluster level to strengthen collaboration and coordination of key private and government sector actors and create an **enabling environment** for **inclusive pepper markets** for PSNP households.

To date, 2,364 project participants (of whom 971 are women) have adopted the improved pepper varieties.

About the Livelihoods for Resilience Activity:

The Feed the Future Ethiopia – Livelihoods for Resilience Activity is part of the U.S. Government’s global hunger and food security initiative. The five-year project is designed to help up to 97,900 chronically food insecure households to graduate with resilience from the government of Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Program. A consortium led by CARE and including the Relief Society of Tigray (REST), Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA), Agri-Service Ethiopia (ASE), and SNV implements the project in 37 PSNP woredas of Tigray, Amhara, and SNNP regions.

