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About this newsletter

The purpose of the RAISE-FS newsletter is to provide relevant information on the latest developments and current issues in the Ethiopian food system and the project support activities.

In this issue we highlight the major activities that have been taken place between April to June, 2024

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Cultivating healthier diet habits in RAISE-FS intervention areas

Armed with key messages from the Ethiopian Food Based Dietary Guidelines, participants are now better equipped to promote dietary diversity, health and well-being within their communities.

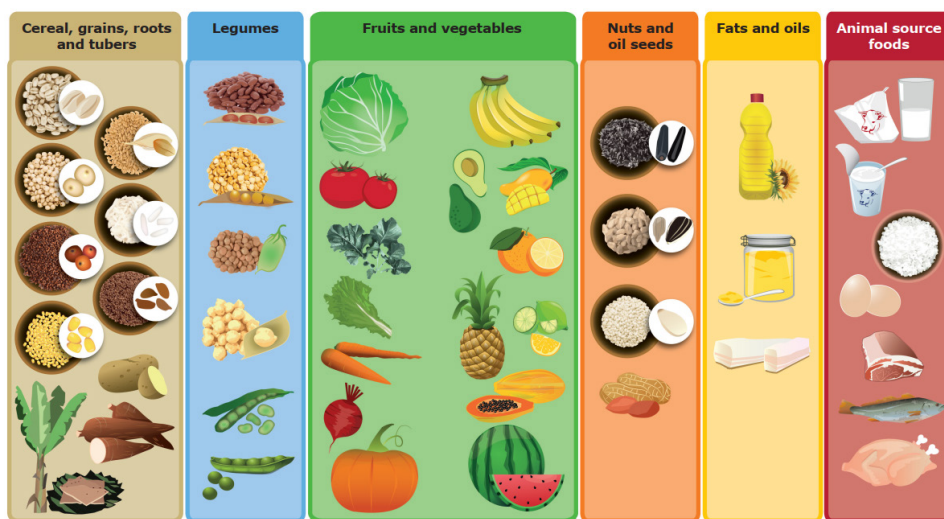
RAISE-FS is embarking on an action research project aimed at implementing the Ethiopian Food Based Dietary Guideline (EFBDG) through the piloting of Social Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC) strategies. By promoting the application of the guideline RAISE-FS seeks to promote healthier eating habits and improve nutritional outcomes in the project area.

In order to lay the groundwork for this initiative, a comprehensive scoping review of existing SBCC documents developed by both government and non-government organizations was undertaken.

This review served as the basis for a thorough comparison of the existing documents with the key messages outlined in the EFBDG. The goal was to identify gaps and develop a tailored SBCC guideline that aligns with the EFBDG and can be effectively implemented in the project area.

To ensure the successful implementation of the developed SBCC guideline, a Training of Trainers was conducted at the national level.

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The five key messages



The training targeted University and Agricultural Research Institute nutrition experts, as well as regional team members and centre representatives. Subsequently, collaborative training efforts were undertaken in different regions, Amhara, Oromia, South, and Tigray, involving various stakeholders. As a follow-up, each region hosted three consecutive days of training, with a total of 46 participants in attendance, including 19 females. The participants comprised of development agents, health extension workers, and representatives from agricultural and health offices, highlighting the comprehensive nature of the EFBDG implementation efforts.

The training sessions covered essential topics such as basic human nutrition, EFBDG key messages, social and behavioural change communication (SBCC) strategies, as well as facilitation skills and adult learning principles. This capacity-building effort seeks to empower local stakeholders with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively deliver the key messages within their communities.

Scaling up an initiative involves

a strategic and consistent approach to ensure that key messages are effectively transmitted to the target audience. In this case, the selected key messages will be communicated over a period of six months, with ongoing support from development agents and health extension workers. These individuals will play a crucial role in facilitating the dissemination of information, supported by partner organizations and woreda nutrition experts. The sustained effort to transmit these key messages aims to bring about behaviour change within the community. By consistently reinforcing the messages, the initiative seeks to cultivate a lasting impact on the

target audience. This approach recognizes the importance of ongoing engagement and support in order to achieve meaningful change. In addition to the transmission of key messages, a robust monitoring and evaluation framework will be put in place to track progress and assess the effectiveness of the intervention.

The finalized SBCC guideline will undergo translation into local languages to ensure widespread accessibility and cultural relevance. Furthermore, a strategic initiative to integrate nutrition education with practical interventions, such as home garden and poultry initiatives in specific woredas, is aimed at maximizing the overall impact of the intervention. The pilot action research for implementing EFBDG will be carried out in selected woredas within the RAISE-FS intervention areas.

In conclusion, RAISE-FS's pioneering approach to implementing the EFBDG through SBCC holds great promise for driving meaningful change in nutritional behaviours and outcomes. By leveraging existing resources, building local capacity, and fostering multi-sectoral collaboration, this initiative seeks to create lasting impact and contribute to improved health and well-being in the project area.



Training participants from South Ethiopia

Addressing mycotoxin contamination in Ethiopian food system: A call to action

Mycotoxin contamination poses a significant and growing challenge to food safety and public health, particularly in the context of export commodities. A recent validation workshop organized by RAISE-FS shed light on the assessment of mycotoxin prevalence in selected commodities under farmer's storage conditions in the Amhara region, Ethiopia, revealing concerning findings. The assessment specifically focused on understanding and addressing the challenges related to mycotoxin contamination in red pepper, soya bean, and sesame. The decision to focus on these commodities was strategic, considering their susceptibility to mycotoxin contamination and their significance in the export market.

Food safety is a critical issue within the Ethiopian food system, and it demands the attention of all stakeholders involved. Dr. Dawit Alemu, the Wageningen Research

Ethiopia country representative, emphasized this point in his opening speech. He highlighted the significant challenges that exist in ensuring food safety and stressed the need for stakeholders to prioritize this issue. The goal of RAISE-FS is

The study revealed that levels of mycotoxins in all three commodities, especially red pepper, is of concern and necessitates immediate attention from responsible stakeholders. It emphasized the importance of collaborative



Traditional storage practices observed in the study area



The study team in the field collecting data

to ensure that food safety receives the attention and focus it deserves from all parties involved in the food system. Dr. Dawit also emphasized the notion of starting small and growing big. This approach signifies the RAISE-FS project's commitment to taking incremental steps towards achieving significant and sustainable improvements in food safety. By working together and prioritizing food safety, Dr. Dawit expressed confidence in the possibility of ensuring that the food produced and consumed in Ethiopia meets the highest standards of safety and quality.

Conducted by Bahir Dar University, the assessment aimed to evaluate the knowledge, attitude, and practices of farmers towards mould/mycotoxin, determine the occurrence of Aflatoxin (AFT) and Ochratoxin (OTA) in red pepper, sesame, and soya bean, and investigate the post-harvest practices, quality characteristics, and contamination of these commodities.

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Promoting sustainable vegetable seed production in Haramaya woreda

In the agricultural landscape of Haramaya woreda in the East Hararghe Zone, the cultivation of vegetables plays a pivotal role in the livelihoods of local farmers. Among these vegetables, carrot and shallot seed production has emerged as a promising avenue for income generation and economic empowerment. The small landholding size, typical of the area necessitates a focus on high-value crops, making vegetables a vital cash crop alongside khat. However, despite the potential benefits, the vegetable sector faces a myriad of challenges. These include limited diversity of seed, price fluctuations, and a lack of knowledge and practices in seed production.

To address these challenges and harness the opportunities, an intervention was designed by RAISE-FS and Haramaya University to facilitate carrot and shallot seed production at the grassroots level. The intervention aimed to equip small-scale growers with the technical know-how, market linkages, and quality seeds to enable them to produce and supply seeds locally.

The intervention, initiated in 2022, focused on building the capacity of farmers who underwent comprehensive training in both the theoretical and practical aspects of seed production. The aim of this capacity-building initiative was to empower the farmers with the essential skills required to independently engage in seed production in the future.

As the intervention progressed, success stories began to emerge. Kalif Ahmed Baker, a young farmer from Kuro Jalala kebele, demonstrated remarkable dedication to

carrot seed production. His proactive approach and diligent management resulted in a successful harvest, enabling him to sell a substantial quantity of carrots and reserve a portion for seed production. Similarly, Sharif Adam Mohammed from Haro Adi kebele achieved significant success in shallot seed production, utilizing his

The strides made in promoting carrot and shallot seed production in Haramaya woreda serve as a testament to the transformative power of targeted interventions in agriculture. By harnessing the potential of high-value crops and equipping farmers with the necessary knowledge and resources, sustainable agricultural practices

Farmers success stories

Mr. Kalif Ahmed Baker, a resident of Kuro Jalala Kebele in Haramaya Woreda, has ventured into carrot seed production on a 600m² plot. Despite being a first-time seed producer, he has managed the crop diligently, selling 10 quintals of carrot for 25,000 birr. Additionally, he has set aside one quintal for seed production and used 50 kg for household consumption. Mr. Baker's entrepreneurial spirit is evident as he plans to utilize the remaining bulb for seed purposes. Similarly, Mr. Sharif Adam Mohammed, a successful farmer from Haro Adi Kebele, has embarked on shallot seed production with remarkable success. His dedication has resulted in an income of 125,000 birr from the sale of shallot bulb, with an additional 80,000 birr expected in the coming weeks. Both farmers attribute their achievements to the support and guidance received from project teams and woreda experts. Looking ahead, they aspire to become leading seed suppliers in their region, showcasing a new approach to farming in their community.

harvest for both market supply and future seed production.

These success stories underscore the potential of vegetable seed production to uplift the economic status of small-scale farmers in Haramaya woreda. Furthermore, they highlight the impact of targeted interventions and capacity-building efforts in empowering individuals to pursue sustainable agricultural practices.

Looking ahead, the project aims to establish linkages between farmers and seed suppliers, as well as engage with stakeholders to institutionalize seed production and ensure sustainable market access

can be fostered, leading to improved livelihoods and economic resilience within the community.

As these initiatives continue to unfold, it is evident that the cultivation of vegetable seeds has the potential to not only generate income but also contribute to the food system transformation efforts in the region. Through collaborative efforts and continued support, the vision of empowering small-scale growers to become self-reliant seed producers can be realized, paving the way for a more prosperous agricultural landscape in Haramaya woreda. Simod inatre alis. Ahalicierum ses nos commoretimmo veris es

Revitalizing the seed system in Tigray: Post-War recovery and transformation

Tigray's economy heavily relied on crop production and cattle fattening before the war. The majority of the rural population in Tigray was engaged in small-scale agriculture and crop production, which played a crucial role in ensuring food, feed, and nutritional security. Despite notable advancements in land restoration, agricultural input utilization, and water security, the agricultural sector in Tigray faced significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, desert locust infestation, and the outbreak of war in November 2020. These events led to widespread destruction of farms, agricultural infrastructure, and disruption of seed multiplication activities, severely impacting the seed system in Tigray.

Taking these challenges into account, a workshop on post-war seed system recovery and transformation was organized by RAISE-FS in collaboration with the Tigray Bureau of Agriculture. The workshop aimed to assess the current state of variety development, early generation seed (EGS) production, and the seed supply status in Tigray. Additionally, it sought to evaluate the functionality of seed producing cooperatives, unions, and private sectors, analyse policy issues related to seed supply, and draw lessons for strengthening the seed sector in Tigray.

The workshop featured presentations focusing on various aspects of the seed sector in Tigray, including variety release and EGS production, seed business operations, seed demand-supply dynamics during and after the war, and the legal frameworks governing seed regulation and inspection. These discussions shed light on the achievements, challenges, and opportunities in

each area, providing valuable insights for the revitalization of the seed system.

After a series of insightful presentations, participants engaged in thorough discussions about the current state of the seed system in Tigray. The discussions brought to light key areas that urgently need to be addressed in order to revitalize the seed system and ensure sustainable agricultural development in the region. Key points discussed included the urgent need for emergency seed collection, support for seed cleaners operated by cooperatives, early generation seed production, and addressing policy frameworks related to seed regulation and inspection. The workshop emphasized the importance of addressing the pressing concern of emergency seed collection, with only 10% of the required 15,000 tons of seed obtained by the regional Bureau of Agriculture. Development partners were tasked with securing the remaining funds, while the BoA would facilitate and coordinate the seed collection efforts through the regional Agricultural Task Force.

Efforts were also directed towards restoring seed cleaners operated by cooperatives, requiring significant investment for maintenance. The BoA, along with support from organizations such as FAO and ATI, took on the responsibility of overseeing the necessary maintenance activities to revive these essential facilities on time. The production of early generation seed was identified as a critical aspect for revitalizing the seed system, the research centres and universities entrusted with overseeing this process. A designated coordinator was responsible for developing a detailed plan to be

submitted to the BoA. Addressing policy issues related to seed regulation and inspection was recognized as fundamental for the long-term development of the seed sector. Effective implementation and enforcement of legal frameworks was emphasized to promote a sustainable seed sector benefiting both farmers and seed companies while safeguarding agricultural biodiversity and food security. The regulatory department was tasked with managing policy-related matters to ensure a conducive environment for seed system revitalization.

The workshop served as a platform for stakeholders to come together and strategize on revitalizing the seed system in Tigray. It is imperative that these efforts are sustained through continued collaboration and resource mobilization to ensure the successful transformation of the food system in Tigray. Representatives from diverse organizations including research institutions, the bureau of agriculture, Tigray Agricultural Transformation Institute, universities, NGOs, UN agencies, projects, unions, cooperatives, private seed producers, agro-dealers, and the seed enterprises and cooperatives agency were in attendance.

The workshop concluded with a clear roadmap for action, outlining specific responsibilities for different stakeholders. It was underscored that concerted efforts are required to address the challenges facing the seed sector in Tigray. The regional BoA was assigned to take a central role in managing awareness creation, policy revision, and coordinating the relevant stakeholders for timely revitalization of the regional seed system.

From grassroots to changemakers: Empowering local leaders to tackle gender inequality

In today's society, promoting gender equality and inclusion is of utmost importance. One effective way to achieve this is through staff training on gender transformative approaches. Equipping staff members with the knowledge and skills to address the root causes of gender inequality can create a more inclusive and empowering environment for everyone. As part of the effort to integrate gender transformative approaches in research for food system transformation, RAISE-

recognize gender-related biases, stereotypes, and discriminatory practices that may influence their work outputs and interaction with the community, and to increase their confidence to facilitate gender equality-related dialogues with others.

Subsequently, participants went back to their respective working areas and organized trainings to RAISE-FS implementing partners in Southern Ethiopia, Oromia, Amhara, and Tigray. The training was cascaded

using the RAISE-FS project intervention activity as an entry point.

The training sessions were carefully crafted to empower participants with the essential tools and knowledge needed to identify and address challenging social norms and power imbalances that hinder the progress of women and youth. The focus was on cultivating a more equitable and sustainable food system, enabling the participants to become effective



SAA training participants in Tigray region

FS in collaboration with CARE Ethiopia, recently organized a 5-day trainers' training on the Social Analysis and Action (SAA) approach. The training aimed at enabling partners to

down and the participants are expected to disseminate the knowledge gained by further cascading the training to the woreda or within the community in a kebele,

agents of change within their communities. By equipping them with the skills to cascade the training and implement

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From grassroots to change makers ...

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project interventions, the aim is to ensure sustainable and impactful development outcomes in both the Southern Ethiopia and Amhara regions. In Oromia region, one participant highlighted the need for transformative change, emphasizing that previous approaches to addressing gender inequalities had not been effective in bringing about meaningful transformation. The participant noted that while gender issues have received attention and been mainstreamed in government sectoral offices in Ethiopia, true gender transformation has yet to be achieved due to the lack of appropriate transformative approaches.



SAA training participants in Amhara region

Participants of the SAA training in Amhara region reflected:

"The training session is highly interactive and participatory. We have learned a lot in the five days of the training. I thought that five days would be excessive, but it was worthwhile. We have learned lessons that helped us even in our own private lives. Reaching as many people as possible would be good."

"We have been given the freedom to express our opinion freely and with confidence. This should be the culture. If other training sessions are organized in this manner, there will be a significant change both in the community and in the country."



SAA training participants in Oromia region

The successful implementation of the SAA approach has the potential to yield transformative outcomes within communities, and it is imperative for participants to promptly apply their newfound knowledge and skills to drive meaningful impact within their respective communities.

Addressing mycotoxin contamination...

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efforts and knowledge sharing among stakeholders to implement effective strategies aimed at mitigating mycotoxin contamination, thereby ensuring the safety and quality of Ethiopian agricultural products. During the workshop, participants engaged in group discussions to identify follow-up actions required to tackle the situation. Representatives presented the results of their group discussions, which centred on the implementation of activities addressing the challenge of mycotoxin contamination and raising awareness among consumers and other stakeholders in the value chain.

In light of the findings from the assessment and workshop discussions, it is evident that

mycotoxin contamination poses a significant threat to both the health of consumers and the economic viability of Ethiopian agricultural exports. Aflatoxin and Ochratoxin are known to have detrimental effects on human health, including liver damage, immune system suppression, and increased risk of cancer. Therefore, addressing mycotoxin contamination is not only crucial for ensuring food safety but also for protecting public health.

The findings from the recent assessment of mycotoxin contamination in Ethiopian agriculture underscores the urgent need for concerted action to address this pressing issue. The implications of mycotoxin contamination extend beyond food safety to encompass

public health and economic sustainability. Therefore, it is imperative for all stakeholders – including government agencies, research institutions, farmers, exporters, and international partners – to work together towards implementing effective strategies for mitigating mycotoxin contamination.

The workshop, which took place on the 12th of April 2024 in Addis Ababa, was attended by over 20 individuals from various organisations including The Ethiopian Public Health Institute, Ethiopian Agricultural Authority, Ethiopian Food Drug Authority, Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, Bahir Dar University, research institutes, private companies and RAISE-FS project and Wageningen University and Research staff.

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