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About this newsletter

RAISE-FS is one of SWR Ethiopia projects. 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 Jan to March 2025

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Food safety stakeholders validate key safety guidelines

The Ethiopian Agriculture Authority (EAA), in collaboration with SWR Ethiopia RAISE-FS project, hosted a validation workshop on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Handling Practices (GHP), Good Manufacturing Practices guidelines for sesame, hot pepper, and poultry that improve the quality and safety along value chains. The event aimed to address critical food safety challenges impacting Ethiopia's export commodities.

Opening remarks: A call to action

HE Ambassador Deriba Kuma, Director General of the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority, opened the workshop. In his opening remarks, Ambassador Deriba highlighted the critical challenges Ethiopia faces with food safety issues in its export

commodities. He emphasized the recurring notifications from importing countries regarding contamination concerns, particularly Salmonella, which has significantly impacted the country's agricultural exports.

Acknowledging the technical and financial support from SWR Ethiopia's RAISE-FS project, Ambassador Deriba expressed gratitude for their contributions toward ensuring Ethiopia's food safety landscape. He concluded by emphasizing the need for a dedicated national food safety platform to effectively coordinate efforts across the sector.

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HE Ambassador Deriba Kuma, making opening remarks

Ethiopian food safety stakeholders validate ...

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Dr. Wondale Habtamu, Deputy Director General of the EAA and Head of the National Plant Protection Organization (NPPO), highlighted specific concerns regarding red pepper contamination. He noted that practices such as adding water to increase weight have led to mycotoxin, and salmonella contamination. These issues have resulted in export bans from key markets like Malaysia and preconditions from India. "Unless there is a stringent approach to the pepper value chain, the problem will persist," Dr. Wondale warned. He commended SWR Ethiopia for its instrumental role in initiating the development of guidelines aimed at addressing these challenges.

SWR Ethiopia's RAISE-FS commitment to food safety

Dr. Dawit Alemu, SWR Ethiopia's Country Representative, how RAISE-FS one of SWR Ethiopia flagship projects prioritize the food safety issue as its focus area to contribute to the transformation of the Ethiopian food system. He highlighted the formation of a National Food Safety Working Group (FSWG) and its role in identifying and prioritizing tasks such as developing food safety guidelines.



Dr. Dawit Alemu, SWR Ethiopia Country Representative

Dr. Dawit highlighted several accomplishments of the RAISE-FS project, including facilitating the development of food safety guidelines for sesame, hot pepper, and poultry along the value chain, conducting assessments on prevalence of mycotoxin contamination in sesame, pepper, and soybean, piloted mycotoxin prevention technologies, organizing capacity-building training sessions in collaboration with Wageningen University & Research and assessing agricultural message content development and dissemination through mainstream media. "We are eager to collaborate with relevant stakeholders to address these findings," he added.

He reaffirmed SWR Ethiopia's commitment to collaborating with EAA not only on food safety but also on other strategic initiatives aimed at strengthening Ethiopia's agricultural sector. Draft guidelines presented for validation

The FSWG team presented overview of the draft guidelines for sesame, pepper, and poultry during the plenary session. The guidelines were developed through extensive research, including reviews of international food safety standards and stakeholder consultations. The drafts have undergone three prior writing workshops to refine their content. In depth review and document enriching activities took place in three parallel sessions.

Diverse stakeholder participation

The workshop brought together over 50 participants from

various sectors, including the Ministry of Agriculture, Ethiopian Agricultural Authority, Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, Ethiopian Food and Drug Authority, Addis Ababa University, regional regulatory authorities, exporters, and industry associations. This diverse representation ensured a comprehensive review of the guidelines.

In the group discussion participants reflected on the guidelines presented and gave input to enrich the documents. At the end of the workshop inputs provided by participants will be incorporated to enrich and finalize the guidelines by

the FSWG team. The EAA will take the lead in facilitating the endorsement of these guidelines with relevant stakeholders.

Looking ahead

As Ethiopia continues its efforts to modernize food control systems and meet international food safety standards, the food safety guidelines serve as vital steps toward achieving those goals. The finalized guidelines are expected to serve as a critical tool in addressing product quality and food safety challenges across key export commodities and fostering greater compliance with national and international standards.

Ethiopia's coffee sector faces EUDR compliance challenges as stakeholders validate key assessment

The Ethiopian coffee sector, a vital pillar of the nation's economy, is navigating a critical juncture as it prepares to comply with the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). The regulation, which takes effect in December 2025, aims to halt the import of commodities linked to deforestation into the EU. Given that coffee accounts for one-third of Ethiopia's total exports, with the EU being a major trading partner, the stakes are high.

The challenge of EUDR compliance

The EUDR, endorsed on May 31, 2023, prohibits the export of seven commodities to the EU if sourced from land deforested after December 31, 2020. For Ethiopia, this regulation poses significant challenges, particularly in ensuring that its coffee meets stringent traceability and sustainability requirements.

To address these challenges, SWR Ethiopia, through its RAISE

FS project, assessed Ethiopia's coffee value chain. The findings were presented to stakeholders in a validation workshop held on March 13, 2025. The study highlighted several critical issues:

Awareness gap: nearly half of the smallholders and traders interviewed were unaware of the EUDR and its compliance measures.

Ongoing compliance efforts: various stakeholders, including government bodies, development partners, and private sector actors,

have initiated steps toward compliance.

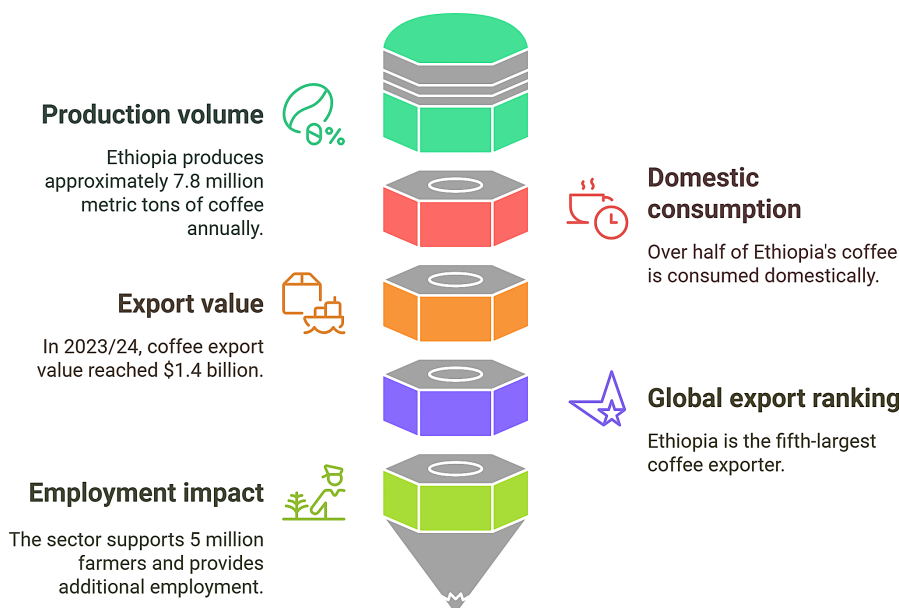
Operational challenges: key hurdles include small farm sizes complicating geo-location efforts, unclear definitions of deforestation and biodiversity degradation, aggregation practices that hinder traceability, insufficient infrastructure, and uncertainty over who will bear the additional compliance costs.

Recommendations for compliance

The assessment offered a series of recommendations to ensure



Ethiopia's coffee industry overview



Ethiopia's coffee sector aligns with EUDR requirements:

- Develop a clear compliance checklist for all stakeholders.
- Provide precise definitions for deforestation and biodiversity degradation.
- Zone coffee-producing areas specifically for EU exports and finalize geo-location mapping.
- Establish user-friendly traceability systems.
- Strengthen regulatory bodies to oversee traceability and value chain operations effectively.
- Enhance capacity-building initiatives to enable

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Food security challenges and the role of post-harvest losses

Ethiopia struggles with food insecurity worsened by substantial postharvest losses in its agriculture value chains. Recent estimates reveal significant loss rates of up to 30% for grains, 50% for fruits and vegetables, and 40% for red meat and milk. These losses exacerbate food insecurity in a country where millions already struggle to access adequate nutrition.

Contributing to address this issue, SWR Ethiopia, through its RAISE-FS project, has initiated efforts to design a robust framework for measuring and mitigating PHL. In a virtual workshop held recently, experts and stakeholders came together to discuss strategies for reducing post-harvest losses. Facilitated by Josianne Cloutier, a researcher in Post-harvest Technology at Wageningen University & Research (WUR), the workshop highlighted the urgent need for a standardized methodology to measure PHL. Dr. Akalu Teshome, Food System Transformation Advisor for SWR Ethiopia-RAISE-FS, opened the session by emphasizing the critical role of addressing PHL in achieving Ethiopia's food and nutrition security goals.

Key presentations during the workshop focused on innovative approaches to tackling postharvest losses. Topics included the "Target-Measure-Act" framework, the UN's food loss reduction targets, and the importance of science and innovation in minimizing losses across agricultural value chains. Discussions underscored the need for Ethiopia to adopt flexible, context-specific methodologies while aligning with global definitions of food loss and waste.

Participants identified high-priority commodities for PHL

measurement, emphasizing their importance to Ethiopia's food security, export potential, and industrial supply chains. Crops such as maize, sorghum, potatoes, bananas, mangoes, tomatoes, onions, sesame, pulses, and avocados were highlighted.

The workshop also stressed the importance of distinguishing between production loss and postharvest loss to ensure targeted interventions. Comprehensive measurement frameworks must cover the entire value chain—from harvesting to retail—and account for both quality and quantity losses.

To ensure accurate data collection and analysis, participants recommended employing a combination of techniques such as Focus Group Discussions (FGD), Key Informant Interviews (KII), field visits, and load tracking. Periodic assessments every five years, supplemented by annual reviews, were suggested as a way to monitor progress effectively. Validating collected data was identified as critical to informing evidence-based policymaking.

Challenges such as limited access to portable tools and simple assessment techniques were also noted. Participants called for significant investment in higher education programs focused on food science and postharvest management to build local capacity. They emphasized the need for government support in adopting standardized methodologies and granting permissions for data collection across regions. Effective collaboration among stakeholders emerged as a cornerstone of the initiative's success. Representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture

(MoA), Ethiopian universities such as Bahir Dar University and Haramaya University, the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), regional agricultural research institutes, SWR Ethiopia teams, and Wageningen University & Research brought their collective expertise to the table.

Participants agreed on the importance of mapping existing data to identify critical loss points within value chains. They also emphasized the need to make data accessible and reliable for policymakers. The workshop concluded with a call to action to prepare a proactive proposal to address Ethiopia's PHL challenges. Participants agreed that the proposal should leverage their collective expertise to influence local, national, and export-oriented markets. They also emphasized the importance of raising awareness about food loss and waste among policymakers through evidence-based calculations that highlight the economic and social benefits of reducing PHL.

The workshop brought together a diverse group of professionals with extensive expertise in postharvest management research, education, and development. Among the participants were experts and researchers from national and regional institutions such as the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Bahir Dar University, Hawassa University, Jimma University, Haramaya University, Mekelle University, SWR Ethiopia team and Wageningen University & Research, contributed to the discussions.

Action research driven changes on healthy diets and livelihoods

The RAISE-FS project is exploring innovative approach by implementing one key message at a time using the Ethiopian Food-Based Dietary Guidelines (FBDGs). The RAISEFS project emphasize on the six key messages: dietary diversity, legume consumption, fruits and vegetables, animal-source foods, dairy consumption, and water and salt intake. Our recent field visits provided insights into how these guidelines are making a difference in Central Ethiopia, Oromia, and Tigray.

Field visit highlights: progress and achievement

• Dietary diversity

awareness gains momentum

Farmers are increasingly recognizing the importance of balanced meals. Many now aim to include at least four food groups per meal and six food groups daily. This shift is fostering healthier eating habits within communities.

• Home gardening increased vegetable access

Home gardening initiatives have significantly boosted the availability and consumption of vegetables. Farmers are growing diverse varieties and incorporating them into their daily diets,

enhancing both nutrition and food security.

• Stakeholder collaboration strengthens implementation

Researchers, health professionals, and agricultural experts at the woreda and kebele levels are working together seamlessly to implement the dietary guidelines. This collaboration is driving effective and sustainable change.

• Peer-to-Peer knowledge sharing expands impact

The benefits of RAISEFS interventions are spreading beyond host farmers. Peer-to-peer learning has enabled non-host farmers to adopt improved practices, amplifying the project's reach and impact.

• Poultry farming brings hope to vulnerable women

In Tigray, widowed women affected by recent conflicts are supported through poultry farming initiatives. While egg production has not yet commenced, this intervention holds promise for improving both diets and livelihoods in the near future.

Empowering Communities Through Gender Integration

Gender-focused training, education on healthy diet and cooking demonstrations are fostering collaboration between men and women. Joint decision-making on income and spending for healthy diets is becoming more common, though women still lead in cooking demonstrations.

Challenges Identified across these three regions

- **Animal-source foods:**
Limited access to animal-



From scepticism to success: an inspirational journey with intercropping, a promising technology for dryland areas

In one of Ethiopia's dryland areas Zequala *woreda*, where rainfall is unpredictable, 54-year-old farmer Assefa Gulash was once not very happy with the performance of his sorghum and teff crops. In the 2024 cropping season, however, Assefa's fields tell a different story- intercropping of pearl millet and mung beans. Gazing proudly at the pile of his pearl millet harvest Asefa said, "These crops grow harmoniously, they collaborate, not compete. They become food for my family, fodder for my cattle, and money for my kids' school fees. This innovation can transform our future from the ground up. What more could a farmer want?".

in Zequala and Abergelle *woredas* into resilient farming systems. Pearl millet grows tall, reaching deep for water, while mung beans spread laterally, protecting the soil and boosting its fertility. As a result, this approach has led to an impressive 40% increase in yields compared to traditional monocropping methods.

Farmers who employ intercropping enjoy a range of benefits beyond just the grain they can either eat or sell. They not only gather grain for the market and protein-packed beans for family meals, but they also have stalks and straws that serve as feed for their cattle, adding more value to their farming practice.

From being a sceptic to becoming an innovator, Mr Assefa's story truly epitomizes climate resilience – showing that even in the toughest environments, nature rewards those who approach farming with wisdom. Assefa mentioned, "Farmers are now preferring pearl millet to teff, because of its versatility. What was once questioned, pearl millet is now recognized for its excellent local beer, amazing injera, and great malt. I suggest we take this technology to the next level by scaling even further."

"Due to the intercropping practice, farmers were able to diversify feed options. In terms of productivity, not only



Farmer Asefa Gulash with his wife

This change kicked off when SWR Ethiopia's RAISE-FS project and Sequota Dryland ARC scaled the pearl millet-legume (mung bean and haricot bean) intercropping practice to 532 farmers (342 men and 190 women) across 129 hectares of land, all through a cluster approach. By combining drought-resistant pearl millet with nitrogen-fixing legumes, this innovative intercropping approach turned drought-stricken and infertile plots that relied on mono-cropping

Families that once relied on unpredictable yields now find that mung beans provide essential portions, and they can trade pearl millet for tef or use it to make injera for meals. Mr Assefa has greatly benefited from the intercropping of these crops and has been impressed by the result. "At first there were some doubts, but now we realise that these crops mature quickly- within just 40 days- and provide a reliable food source," he added.

did they produce two types of crops, but they also managed to reduce production loss", said Ademe Mihretu, a researcher at Sequota Dry ARC. The next step, he added, is to support farmers how to integrate haricot and mung beans into the local cuisine.

To make this initiative a success, Sequota DL ARC has been providing hands-on training and technical

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From scepticism to success: an inspirational journey with ...

assistance. Stakeholders at the woredas and kebeles, including DAs have also been collaborating with them to help ensure that participating farmers are adopting the best agricultural practices. Overall, intercropping leverages the benefits of growing different

crops together to improve soil health, minimize risks, make the most of available space, and sustainably increase agricultural productivity. Yet, implementing this promising approach in the Sequota area is not without challenges. As Assefa pointed out, there is

a seed shortage, and pests causing issues for mung beans. This situation demands farmers and other stakeholders to quickly adapt to their context and exert efforts to address these challenges.

Action research driven changes on healthy diets...

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source foods remains a hurdle. Legumes are being promoted as an alternative protein source.

- **Fruit consumption:** While fruit seedlings have been distributed in limited, their impact will take time as they have not yet yielded consumable fruit.
- **Sustainability issues:** Sustainable water and seed

supply systems are essential for maintaining year-round home gardening production.

Way forward

Looking ahead to 2025, the project will continue monthly follow-ups, reinforce training with repeated key messages, and ensure cooking demonstrations are widely implemented. Collaboration with government entities will

support scaling up these best practices to benefit even more communities.

A Brighter future: the RAISE-FS project is not only enhancing dietary practices but also empowering farmers to build sustainable livelihoods. Together, we are driving impactful change, one key message at a time.



Ethiopia's coffee sector faces EUDR compliance challenges...

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- proper management and segregation of EU-bound coffee from other exports.
- Reinforce the newly established national coffee platform to foster collaboration among stakeholders.

During the workshop, stakeholders emphasized the urgency of geo-location mapping as a cornerstone for EUDR compliance. They called for immediate infrastructure development ahead of the deadline and underscored the importance of awareness campaigns across the value chain to ensure coordinated efforts. Collaboration among government agencies, private sector actors, and development partners was deemed essential to create synergy. Participants also discussed the need to zone coffee-

producing areas exporting to the EU. This would not only facilitate compliance but also enable tailored extension services, capacity building, and infrastructure development. Revisiting land use rights and trade regulations was also highlighted as critical to aligning with EUDR requirements. As Ethiopia races against time to meet EUDR standards, building confidence among value chain operators is seen as crucial for sustaining EU exports beyond the December 31, 2025, deadline. Strict government controls will be necessary to ensure that no exported coffee originates from deforested areas.

The regulation's focus on forest protection, traceability, and geo-location presents both challenges and opportunities for Ethiopia's coffee sector.

While compliance will require significant investments in infrastructure and capacity building, it also offers a pathway to enhance the global competitiveness of Ethiopian coffee by aligning with international sustainability standards.

As Ethiopia braces for additional EU regulations in the future, aligning land use rights and trade policies with EUDR requirements will be crucial. With coordinated efforts and timely action, Ethiopia's coffee sector can rise to meet this challenge while safeguarding its vital contribution to the national economy. The workshop concluded with a consensus on the need for strict government controls to ensure that no exported coffee originates from deforested areas.

New publications

- [Cocoa sector development in Ethiopia: Potential for impact and provisional road map](#)
- [Stakeholders Collaboration for Enhanced Food Safety Control System in Ethiopia](#)
- [Analysing Agricultural Messaging in Ethiopian Media: Strategies for Improvement](#)

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