

Issue 15 March 2026

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 and Mar 2026

Policy dialogue to enhance agricultural messaging in Ethiopia

A high-level policy dialogue aimed at improving agricultural messaging in Ethiopia was organized by Wageningen Research (SWR) Ethiopia in collaboration with the Agricultural Transformation Institute (ATI). The event, held in Addis Ababa on 24th of March 2026, brought together policymakers, researchers, farmers, media practitioners, and development partners to discuss the findings of a comprehensive study on the state of agricultural information dissemination through mainstream media (TVs and Radios) in the country.

The study was conducted by SWR Ethiopia under its RAISE-FS project, in partnership with Farm Radio International.

In his opening remarks, Dr. Dawit Alemu, SWR Ethiopia's Country Representative, emphasized that the study aims to assess the current state of agricultural message design and communication, as well as their effectiveness in delivering timely, relevant, and actionable information to farmers. He highlighted that the study also examines the prevailing challenges and opportunities within the system and seeks to propose strategic interventions to address identified gaps and enhance the overall effectiveness of agricultural messaging as a key agricultural extension mechanism.

Continue reading on page 2

Inside this issue

Policy dialogue to enhance agricultural messaging in Ethiopia...01

Advancing Agrologistics for Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems:04

Tigray's potato seed system: Innovation, collaboration, and05

Catalysing food system transformation in Ethiopia:06

Where culture meets action: Marking 2026 International.....07



Dr. Irene Koomen (WUR), Professor Nigusie Dechasa (EIAR), HE Dr. Meles Mekonen (MoA)

Policy dialogue to enhance agricultural messaging ...

Continued from page 1



H.E. Dr. Meles Mekonen, State Minister of Agriculture

Opening remark

In his opening speech, His Excellency Dr. Meles Mekonen, State Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture, emphasized the critical role of agriculture as the backbone of Ethiopia's economy. He reiterated the government's commitment to advancing the sector as part of its home-grown economic transformation strategy. Dr. Meles stressed the importance of disseminating scientifically accurate, timely, and user-focused agricultural messages to enhance productivity and growth.

"Developing effective agricultural messaging requires collaboration among all stakeholders," Dr. Meles said. "The study presented today is timely and underscores the need for structured and research-based communication that addresses farmers' needs."

Key findings of the study

Dr. Dawit Alemu presented the major findings of the study. He noted that although Ethiopia has more than 80 media outlets, including radio, television, and community-based services—

only a limited number of public and community channels consistently broadcast agricultural programs. Moreover, none of these outlets are dedicated exclusively to agricultural content.

The study identified several systemic challenges related to the governance and dissemination of agricultural messages. These include limited engagement of key stakeholders in setting media agendas, weak coordination among actors, and the absence of structured platforms for aligning efforts. As a result, many agricultural messages are developed using a top-down approach and are insufficiently tailored to the diverse needs of farmers. The findings further indicate that much of the information disseminated through mainstream media is not well aligned with farmers' actual practices, seasonal activities, or crop calendars. The timing of broadcasts is often incompatible with farmers' daily work schedules, limiting accessibility and uptake. Furthermore, messages frequently lack context specificity, with

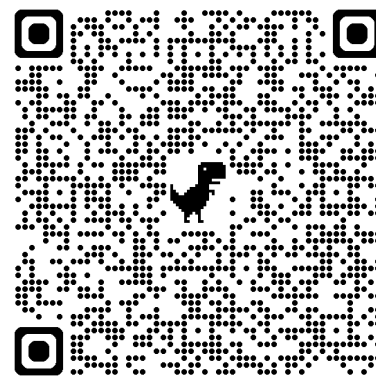
inadequate differentiation across agro-ecological zones.

Another critical constraint highlighted by the study is the limited technical capacity of journalists covering agricultural issues. Many lack the subject-matter expertise required to accurately and effectively communicate complex agricultural technologies and practices, thereby reducing the quality and relevance of the information delivered.

Reflections from media experts and farmers

Two panellists provided reflections on the study's findings. Mr. Biruk Kebede, CEO of NBC TV, acknowledged that agriculture, a vital sector for Ethiopia's economy and livelihoods, has not received sufficient attention in mainstream media. He noted that existing programs focus primarily on success stories rather than providing farmers with practical guidance on processes and methods. He emphasized the need for more resources and collaboration to develop comprehensive agricultural programs that go beyond success stories.

Dr. Getachew Dinku, journalism instructor/lecturer from Addis Ababa University, emphasised



QR Code to access the full document

that effective agricultural communication requires a blend of technical knowledge, social psychology, and journalism skills. He called for specialized training in agricultural journalism and highlighted the need for stronger collaboration between knowledge institutions, extension services, and media outlets. He stressed the need for specialized training programs in agricultural journalism and suggested revising university journalism curricula to include agriculture-related courses.

Farmers themselves echoed these concerns, emphasizing that much of the information disseminated through mainstream media does not reflect their day-to-day practices or challenges. Mekonen Alemu and Gebrie Dadi, representatives from the Oromia region shared their perspectives, agreeing with the study's findings while adding their own concerns. They criticized the tendency of journalists to focus solely on so-called "model farmers," whose experiences may not reflect broader realities. Both farmers expressed a need for accurate, timely information about practical agricultural techniques.

Proposed strategies for improvement

The study proposed several strategies for improving agricultural messaging in Ethiopia:

- Institutionalizing sustainable financing for scientific communication within the National Agricultural Research System (NARS).
- Establishing multi-stakeholder platforms at federal and regional levels to enhance coordination and knowledge exchange for proper design and communication of agricultural messages.
- Involving research institutions, extension services, private sector actors, and farmer organizations in co-creating and validating agricultural content with proper and accountable work procedures.
- Promoting the design and communication of evidence-based, context-specific messages tailored to farmers' agro-ecological and livelihood needs.
- Establish a proper

mechanism to ensure relevance and timeliness of the design and communication of agricultural messages.

Next steps

The dialogue concluded with actionable recommendations for improving agricultural messaging in Ethiopia. Dr. Meles Mekonen summarized the discussions and urged stakeholders to strengthen ongoing initiatives while addressing gaps identified in the study. He highlighted efforts such as establishing an agricultural media house in collaboration with ATI as a promising step forward.

Dr. Meles emphasized that improving agricultural communication requires collective action from all stakeholders, policymakers, researchers, media practitioners, and farmers alike. He encouraged participants to integrate the study's recommendations into Ethiopia's communication policy and to identify short- and long-term action points for follow-up discussions with higher officials.



Advancing Agrologistics for Resilient and Sustainable Food Systems: RAISE-FS LOGIC

The project “Advancing Agrologistics for Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Food Systems (RAISE-FS LOGIC)” was officially launched with a planning workshop involving key stakeholders. This two-year initiative, funded by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the European Union, aims to revolutionize agrologistics systems in Ethiopia, with a particular focus on potato, banana, and avocado value chains in Southern Ethiopia.

A collaborative approach to transform agrologistics

The planning workshop brought together relevant stakeholders, including representatives from the EAA, ATI, EIAR, Ethiopian Maritime Authority, SNV, Wageningen University & Research, and Wageningen Research Ethiopia.

The workshop outlined project goals, gathered stakeholder feedback, and clarified roles and responsibilities. It aimed to foster collaboration for enhancing agrologistics systems to improve product quality, value chain performance, supply chain efficiency, and resilience, while reducing environmental impact.

Key highlights from the workshop

Dr. Wondale Habitam, Deputy Director of the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority, delivered the opening remarks, emphasizing the timeliness of RAISE-FS LOGIC in addressing critical gaps in Ethiopia’s food systems. He highlighted the strategic importance of agrologistics for the development of the horticulture sector, a priority area for the Ethiopian government. He also underscored that agrologistics is a key focus area under Ethiopia’s horticulture strategy and plays a central role in the upcoming HortiFlora 2026 Expo.

Dr. Dawit Alemu, Country Representative for SWR Ethiopia, welcomed participants and provided an overview of SWR Ethiopia’s mission and ongoing projects. He emphasized the organization’s commitment to generating evidence-based practices and policies that align with Ethiopia’s agricultural transformation agenda.

Project framework and approach

Dr. Irene Koomen, RAISE-FS

coordinator from Wageningen University & Research, outlined the objectives of the workshop and presented an overview of the RAISE-FS LOGIC approach. She emphasized the importance of a food-systems perspective in addressing challenges in agrologistics, a critical yet often overlooked component of food systems.

Dr. Akalu Teshome, senior food system advisor at SWR Ethiopia, presented highlights on the relationship between RAISE-FS LOGIC and other RAISE-FS outcomes. He discussed the rationale for selecting specific commodities and regions for intervention, introduced project partners, and outlined planned activities as well as expected outcomes.

Participants provided valuable insights into potential gaps in planned activities and identify additional stakeholders who could play a crucial role in achieving the project’s objectives.

The planning workshop concluded with a vote of thanks from Dr. Dawit Alemu, who expressed gratitude for the active participation and constructive feedback provided by all attendees.



Tigray's potato seed system: Innovation, collaboration, and impact

Potatoes are a vital source of food and income for smallholder farmers in Tigray region, Ethiopia. However, productivity in the region has lagged behind national averages. To address this, the RAISE-FS project, in collaboration with its implementing partners, has introduced potato innovation bundles in Tigray's Tsaeda Emba and Atsbi woredas to demonstrate evidence of innovation for scaling. With a focus on improved varieties, quality seed systems, and advanced crop management, the initiative has shown remarkable progress in transforming the potato system with key drivers related to (i) bundling of the different aspects of the production innovations and (ii) ensuring collaboration among relevant actors.



Collaborative effort to establish and strengthen the potato seed system

To ensure a continuous supply of quality potato seeds, RAISE-FS has facilitated collaboration among key stakeholders in Tigray's agricultural sector. At the heart of this initiative is the Tigray Agricultural

Research Institute (TARI), which develops and releases high-yielding, disease-resistant potato varieties tailored to local conditions. These varieties are then propagated by Tigray Tissue Culture, which produces disease-free mini tubers.

The mini tubers are distributed to potato seed producer cooperatives, which act as decentralized hubs for seed multiplication. These cooperatives transform the mini-tubers into quality-declared potato seeds that are subsequently sold to smallholder



ware potato producers. The Bureau of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BoANR) play a critical role in coordinating this value chain, providing oversight, regulation, and logistical support.

This collaboration has significantly improved the availability of quality potato

seeds, empowered farmers and boosted local markets, implying a great opportunity for scaling of the innovation bundle at the regional level.

Rebuilding the potato seed system in the Tigray region

The conflict in Tigray devastated the potato seed system. As such potato innovation bundles were introduced to revive the production by reintroducing Generation-0 (G-0) mini-tubers via tissue culture. This enabled cooperatives like Shewit

and Kalay Choma to produce 190 quintals of high-quality Generation-1 (G-1) seeds. Farmers have praised this system for boosting productivity, income, and sustainability. Encouraged by these results, the cooperatives have expanded their operations by procuring additional G-0 mini-tubers to further enhance the availability of quality potato seeds.

Demonstrations show encouraging results

To showcase the benefits of improved potato farming practices, RAISE-FS, together with its partners organized a series of demonstration activities under both rainfed and irrigation conditions. The results were impressive: under irrigation,

Catalysing food system transformation in Ethiopia: Insights from the RAISE-FS expert workshop

An expert workshop entitled “Expert Workshop on Food System Transformation for Ethiopia – experiences from RAISE-FS” was organized on February 5th, 2026. The main aim of the Expert workshop was to create a space for key high-level Experts from relevant public organizations (MoA, MoTRI, MoPD), Knowledge Institutes (HLIs and ARIs), private actors, and development partners to share generated evidence of innovations, foster collaboration, and explore strategies for institutionalizing and mainstreaming proven RAISE-FS innovation bundles into Ethiopia’s food system.

Dr. Dawit Alemu, SWR Ethiopia country representative and RAISE-FS project manager, welcomed participants and set the tone for the workshop. He explained that the purpose of this expert workshop is to share evidence-based innovations in areas of policies, practices, institutional development, and capacity building, accumulated over the past four years of the project.

Dr. Irene Koomen, the RAISE-FS project coordinator from Wageningen University & Research, shared valuable insights into the project’s journey and achievements to date. Dr. Irene discussed the identification of leverage points within these systems, the pathways designed to address them, and the interventions and innovation bundles created through the project. Furthermore, she emphasized the potential of these efforts to tackle systemic challenges in Ethiopia’s food systems while aligning with the country’s broader goals for transforming its food systems.

Round table conversation on key themes

The workshop featured group discussions centred around four critical themes, each aligned with Ethiopia’s food system roadmap and the evidence generated by RAISE-FS: Sustainable production practices and food safety, promoting healthy diets and social inclusion, bottom-up planning and agricultural innovation, and sector development and enabling systems.

These discussions highlighted the importance of improving access to markets, information, and infrastructure, which align with cluster 5 and 7 of the Ethiopian roadmap.

Reflections from high-level panellists

A distinguished panel of experts; Dr. Mulugeta Teamir (FAO, ex-MoA advisor), Dr. Sewhareg Adamu (Lodestar Associates), and Fessah Tekele (Ministry of Health, Sekota Declaration); praised the RAISE-FS project for its innovative and practical approach to tackling Ethiopia’s food security and sustainability challenges.

The project was commended for turning complex food system theories into actionable solutions that contribute to advancing sustainable food systems in Ethiopia.

The panellists stressed the importance of mainstreaming and institutionalizing these innovations for a transformative impact. They also highlighted opportunities to scale successful interventions and integrate them into national policies, suggesting that initiatives like the Sekota Declaration could adopt and expand on these advancements.

Looking ahead: The path to transformation

In her closing remarks, Mrs. Yenenesh Egu, Agriculture and Horticulture Extension Lead Executive Officer, at Ministry of Agriculture, expressed her gratitude to all participants for their active engagement and constructive feedback. She reiterated that Wageningen Research Ethiopia has been supportive to the ministry of agriculture whenever necessary. She also emphasized what has been showcased from RAISE-FS holds immense potential to contribute to Ethiopia’s food system transformation. However, for this potential to be realized, it is crucial for all relevant stakeholders to embrace these innovation bundles and integrate them into their regular plans. She highlighted the bottom-up integrated planning approach as very good experience and that she would do her best that to be taken up by the ministry. Mrs Yenenesh expressed her heartfelt thanks to Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands for supporting Ethiopian development efforts in many directions.

The workshop brought together a diverse group of high-level stakeholders from various sectors. Representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Agricultural Transformation Institute, the Ministry of Health, the Ethiopian Public Health Institute, the Ministry of Planning and Development, the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration, Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research, Hawassa University, Haramaya University, Bahir Dar University, CGIAR, Farm Radio International, AGRA, FAO, Sekota Deceleration, Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands and Wageningen Research Ethiopia.

Where culture meets action: Marking 2026 International Women’s Day at SWR Ethiopia

At SWR Ethiopia, International Women’s Day (IWD) is more than a moment of celebration it is a deliberate effort to reflect on progress, challenge norms, and strengthen an organizational culture that promotes gender equality and inclusion.

This year’s celebration brought staff together in a vibrant and reflective atmosphere. A cherished tradition continued, with male colleagues preparing a variety of delicious and nutritious meals for everyone. Beyond the joy it brings, this gesture symbolizes a shift in traditional gender roles and highlights the importance of shared responsibility in both professional and personal spaces.

The celebration also created space for meaningful discussions on womanhood, gender equality, and the realities women navigate in their daily lives.

Celebrating women’s voices and contributions

A key highlight of the day was the showcase of inspiring stories of women researchers. Through a gallery walk and poster displays, staff engaged with powerful narratives of



resilience, determination, and impact in agricultural research. These stories were also shared through SWR Ethiopia’s communication platforms, amplifying the voices and contributions of women who are shaping the future of the sector.

By celebrating these journeys, SWR Ethiopia not only recognizes achievements but also inspires others particularly young women to pursue careers in research and innovation, while fostering a culture that values and supports their contributions.

From reflection to action: “Give to Gain”

In line with this year’s theme, “Give to Gain,” staff turned

inspiration into action. Together, they contributed 131,800 ETB to support high school girls who cannot afford menstrual hygiene products. The initiative will provide reusable menstrual pads, helping girls stay in school with dignity and confidence.

Adding a heartfelt touch to the celebration, male colleagues shared written appreciation messages to their female counterparts recognizing their strength, dedication, and contributions to the organization. These moments of acknowledgment strengthened a sense of respect and solidarity across teams.

A celebration with purpose

This year’s IWD celebration was not only joyful but meaningful bringing together reflection, recognition, and action. It reinforced SWR Ethiopia’s commitment to building an inclusive organizational culture and contributing to lasting change.

As we move forward, we are reminded that transforming culture requires collective effort and that when we give, we all gain.



Tigray's potato seed system: Innovation, collaboration ...

continued from page 4

farmers using improved varieties achieved an average yield of 41.7 t/ha, compared to 26.5 t/ha using traditional practices. Similarly, under rainfed conditions, yields from improved varieties averaged 30.5 t/ha, nearly double the 15.4 t/ha achieved with local seeds. The introduction of the *Gudene* potato variety combined with recommended agronomic practices, was particularly impactful.

The success of these demonstrations was amplified through learning events such as field days and media campaigns, which helped build trust among farmers and encouraged widespread adoption.

Scaling up for wider impact

In 2026, RAISE-FS is scaling its efforts across four kebeles

in Atsbi and Tsaeda Emba woredas, involving 200 farmers cultivating 0.25 hectares each. BoANR allocated 13 million ETB to procure 100 tons of improved seeds to sustain this progress. A new potato row planter introduced by Mamay Group is also being tested to enhance mechanization and efficiency.

Recognizing contributions: A community's gratitude

The impact of these initiatives has not gone unnoticed. The Shewit Potato Seed Cooperative recently honoured the RAISE-FS project with a Certificate of Appreciation for its exceptional contributions to revitalizing the potato seed system. The award was presented on January 21, 2025, by H.E. Alembrhan Harifeyo, Head of the Tigray Bureau of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Key takeaways from the initiative

The success of this initiative highlights several key lessons: the importance of starting with quality seeds, adopting bundled innovations, engaging farmers through practical demonstrations and training, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. These strategies have proven effective in driving sustainable agricultural development and improving livelihoods in the region. With ongoing efforts, potatoes are poised to play an even greater role in ensuring food security and economic growth for smallholder farmers in Tigray.

New publications

- [Harmonizing Ethiopian Coffee Production Systems with European Deforestation Regulation](#)
- [Analysing Agricultural Messaging in Ethiopian Media: Strategies for improvement](#)

For more information, questions and comments you can contact us through:

info.raisefsethiopia@gmail.com

Contact address of RAISE-FS

Dr. Dawit Alemu
Country representative
Stichting Wageningen Research - Ethiopia
dawit.alemu@wur.nl

Dr. Irene Koomen
Wageningen Social and Economic Research
irene.koomen@wur.nl

Website: <http://www.raise-fs.org>

You can also find us on our social media pages:

Facebook: Raise-fs Ethiopia

Twitter: @RAISEFSethiopia

LinkedIn: [linkedin.com/in/raise-fs-ethiopia-a98613260](https://www.linkedin.com/in/raise-fs-ethiopia-a98613260)

subscribe to our newsletter: inforaisefsethiopia@gmail.com

RAISE-FS is a project hosted by
Stichting Wageningen Research (SWR) Ethiopia



WAGENINGEN
UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH

www.wur.eu