

## **Celebrating 20 Years of Ethiopia-Canada Partnership in Nutrition and Agricultural Development**

### **Feature article**

Twenty years ago, Hawassa University and the University of Saskatchewan began a capacity-building project in agricultural development and soil management, a development research partnership aimed at improving the lives of Ethiopian farmers and their families.

Today, this partnership has evolved into a complex set of initiatives drawing upon a range of disciplines, research areas and partner relationships (a “triple helix” of university-industry-government relationships). Areas of focus include nutrition, value-added pulses processing, seed delivery systems, marketing, gender and social relations and business models with various communication modes.

On May 25-26, 2017, representatives of the stakeholders of the project meet at the University of Saskatchewan to celebrate 20 years of this Ethiopian-Canadian partnership. They will reflect upon past achievements and challenges and discuss and foretell their shared vision for the future. This celebration will begin with introductions followed by greetings from leaders representing the Government of Saskatchewan, University of Saskatchewan, Government of Ethiopia and Hawassa University.

Multidisciplinary presentations will follow on historical development of the project and the partnership and relationships between Hawassa University and the University of Saskatchewan. These presentations will highlight achievements and advancements in agricultural and nutritional capacity building. An important component of this is the training of MSc and PhD students, supported by development of joint MSc and PhD curriculum in agricultural sciences and human nutrition at Hawassa University. A range of themes will be discussed, including capacity building, curriculum development for diverse learners, zinc biofortification of chickpea, and soil bacteria. Two PhD students will reflect on the project from the viewpoint of their experiences.

Presenters on the theme of pulse innovation in southern Ethiopia will highlight the processes and outcomes of bio-fortification and the development of “farmer cluster systems” to create sustainable pulse production and consumption.

The session will examine the advantages of developing of value-added nutritious pulse food products processing and providing training to female farmers through micro-loans and micro-financing. Presenters will also discuss the benefits of producing nutritious ready-to-eat pulse-based products and establishing the micro-franchising model. The economics of pulse-based food systems and the impact of social networks on scaling up success will also be explored.

Following the thematic presentations, a panel discussion will focus on correlating and linking pulse innovation with broader topics and salient global themes including climate change, trade and prosperity, the “protein highway,” women’s economic empowerment and plant propensity to meet food security goals. The panel discussion will look at the major challenges facing the Canadian international food security research funding, and if it is being effective in meeting food security challenges.

Following the formal agenda, events will focus on sustaining and renewing partnership between the University of Saskatchewan and Hawassa University and on creating new alliance with the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN).

Day two of the event will focus on gender, with a special round table meeting at the Saskatoon Club to look at global food nutrition security through a gender lens. Themes on the broader areas of gender and women’s empowerment and food and nutrition security will be discussed. Experience drawn from a number of countries including Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia will be on the table. The role of Canadian NGOs and their success stories and challenges will also be highlighted, including specific experiences.

Marking 20 years of partnership is a chance to tell the story of historical development and current achievements as well as the challenges of using pulse intervention to address food and nutrition insecurity in Ethiopia. It highlights the multiple benefits of establishing the “triple

helix” (of university-industry-government relations) to build capacity to facilitate and ensure food and nutrition security, and the role women can play – in the production, distribution and consumption of pulses in particular. Forward-thinking partnerships will be key to addressing broader global themes such as the global environmental crisis that affect food security and wellbeing.