



## **Report on the Future Agricultures Workshop**

Awassa, SNNPR

March 2006

## **1. Introduction**

Future Agricultures is the UK Department for International Development funded learning consortium comprising the Institute of Development Studies, Imperial College London and the Overseas Development Institute. The Consortium has been formed to stimulate debate and generate policy options for agricultural growth. The study focuses on three countries, namely Ethiopia, Kenya and Malawi.

As local partners of the Consortium the Ethiopia team was tasked with initiating policy debate through key informant interviews and where possible holding discussions in a form of workshops. The Awassa 2006 is one such workshop.

## **2. Organisation of the workshop**

The Ethiopia team contracted a local NGO based in Awassa to organise the workshop. Participants were carefully selected from a range of institutions – government bureaus, non-government, research and academic institutions. A total of 22 individuals from Awassa and about 10 from Addis Ababa showed interest. However, a total of 21 participants (14 regional and 7 Addis Ababa) attended the one-day workshop. It was unfortunate that that all those registered could not attend because the workshop coincided with government meetings.

## **3. Presentations**

The Ethiopia team prepared two presentations on (1) the Policy Process and Outcome in Ethiopia and (2) Small Holder Agriculture in Ethiopian Highlands. The first presented a summary of key informant interviews on the policy process and a review of PASDEP and posed a series of propositions regarding participatory policy process. The second presented research evidence on the status of smallholder agriculture and implications for policy making.

## **4. Discussion**

The presentations were followed by Q&A, comments and discussion. Among the questions posed with respect to the first presentation were:

- ✓ Why participation in policy formulation process is low?
- ✓ Does media have a positive or negative role in policy formulation process? Does the media know about participation?
- ✓ What does policy formulation mean at regional level?

With respect to the second presentation, the following questions and issues were raised:

- ✓ Is land certification enough?
- ✓ Researchers like raising issues. They also should show how policy makers should resolve the issues given various constraints.
- ✓ How willing are policy makers to listen to research evidence?
- ✓ What should be done about land holding?
- ✓ Does increase in import of input indicate increased utilisation?
- ✓ The Ethiopian government subsidises large investors but not the small farmer. Is this pro-poor?
- ✓ How to promote policy dialogue? How to communicate policy ideas/agendas to policy makers?

Following a series of exchanges on these and other issues, the participants broke for lunch. Before going to lunch four or five issues were identified from the discussion as well as from previous work on Ethiopia for possible group work. Participants were asked to sign for issues that think can contribute to.

## 5. Group work

Up on returning from lunch, two groups instead of four were formed and given the following topics.

### Group 1

- ✓ Crop production
  - Diversification
  - Intensification
  - Technology
- ✓ Commercialisation of agriculture
  - Domestic demand
  - Export markets

### Group 2

- ✓ Migration and resettlement
- ✓ Livestock/animal farm and pastoralism

The groups were given two basic questions against which they discuss their respective topics:

- ✓ What are the constraints now with respect to the issues at hand?
- ✓ What are the future possibilities with respect to the issues at hand?

## 6. Sample results from one of the groups

Discussions about the future of agriculture in SNNPS were necessarily located in the diverse local contexts of the region. The regional government for example has identified three areas, associated with different intervention strategies. These provided a focus for a workshop discussion of different scenarios for agriculture (and critically non-agricultural livelihoods) in each, as well as the type of interventions required for broad based development.

### **(i) High population density areas, largely highland**

#### ***Constraints?***

In most of these areas the key constraints are land holding size and fragmentation, and the difficulty of making sufficient income from farming to sustain livelihoods. Because of the very marginal and highly vulnerable nature of the economy, these areas produce only limited surplus and there are few off-farm economic opportunities beyond trade at very small scales. The future for such areas is not clear. As discussed in the workshop, available technology packages and other interventions are not appropriate, as people are often too poor or the land area too small to make things work. A 'low equilibrium trap' is observed which sustains deep poverty, requiring regular interventions in terms of relief and safety net support by government and NGOs.

### ***Futures?***

Continuing the standard extension packages for such constrained agricultural settings is probably not the best investment of resources. Out-migration to alternative livelihoods in other places will be key to the future of such areas. With land pressure reduced, farmers may then be able to invest in new technologies/management practices and produce surpluses for markets. But some degree of depopulation is seen as a pre-condition. However, it was noted that such movement of population must involve a ‘pull’ to new opportunities, rather than a ‘push’ as part of conventional resettlement programmes. Experience of resettlement in the region – both previous and the current effort – has been mixed. Very often new settlers find it difficult to adapt to the new setting and they confront new constraints (e.g. of human and livestock disease) in lowland areas making a new, productive life difficult. The discussion focused instead on seeking ways of encouraging a pull factor from urban/semi-urban areas. Support for the growth of small towns and associated economic activity was seen as critical. In addition, investment in peri-urban agriculture - for example around Awassa on plots with relatively large land sizes – potentially offers the opportunity for new market based enterprises where input packages might be affordable/viable. Dairy farming with improved fodder grasses was cited as a possible example with potential.

### **(ii) Humid forest areas**

#### ***Constraints?***

The western areas of the region are sparsely populated and covered with dense forest, with coffee being an important cash crop. The main current constraints centre on infrastructure linkages (roads and other communications) and market access. Although recent road building has improved things, the incentives for external investment in the area remains limited because of remoteness/poor infrastructure etc. The area is also a key environmental resource for the country, and is the last remaining area of continuous forest cover. Opening up the area for future exploitation – and clearance for agriculture in particular – is seen as potentially highly damaging. Already illegal logging operations are in existence and forest cover has declined significantly with the expansion of coffee growing, but there remains a potential production-environment trade-off.

#### ***Futures?***

While recognising the environmental issues, and the need to protect certain areas for biodiversity reasons, the agricultural and market potential of this part of the region was also highlighted. Here the promotion of niche commercial investments in particular commodities was identified as an important future scenario. Extending beyond coffee to bamboo, spices and honey production on a commercial scale was seen as important. Developing further high value niche markets – for example organic coffee – was seen as key, as was the investment in local agro-processing capacities – for example in bamboo products. Attracting external investment, linking new enterprises with new markets and improving the infrastructural base, as well as overseeing environmental impact assessment, was seen as an important role for government and donor efforts. New commercial agriculture/natural resource-based enterprises could it was argued be a source of employment for many, offering a ‘pull’ from other areas of the region.

### **(iii) Lowland pastoral areas**

#### ***Constraints?***

The familiar constraints of dryland pastoral areas were listed – including drought, water source, veterinary support etc. A particular emphasis was placed on the importance of market issues, especially for increasing income to the pastoral sector and maintaining a certain proportion of pastoralists in pastoral production. It was noted however that due to the recurrent cycles of droughts and other factors that many pastoralists were no longer able to sustain a ‘traditional’ pastoral way of life.

#### ***Futures?***

Different scenarios were envisaged for those in the livestock business and those who have either dropped out, or are very marginal.

For pastoral ‘drop outs’ alternative income earning opportunities are very few. Settlement for agriculture is one option, but without substantial investment in irrigation how viable is this? Removal of riverine areas for agriculture in pastoral areas could also, it was pointed out, would have a negative impact on the remaining pastoral system. Other options for economic diversification in these areas are needed therefore. Developing a sustainable fisheries industry in the rift valley lakes was seen as a major priority. Currently poorly managed systems have resulted in substantial depletion of stocks. But encouraging external investment may result in better control and restocking efforts it was thought. Such small scale industries could have employment generation effects, and potentials for other growth linkages. Tourism development was seen as another area for the future. With the diversity of ethnic groups and diverse scenery, the South Omo area has become a growing tourist destination in the country. But currently the benefits of such tourist enterprises (and the new private parks in the area) are not realised locally beyond some limited employment. A model of tourism development focused on sharing the benefits more widely was recommended for the future. Providing reasonable livelihoods for all those in the lowland areas may not be possible, however, and movement out of the area for some will be key, and – as above - attraction to ‘growth poles’ for alternative livelihoods will be important.

For those with animals the future scenario is different. Here future investments must focus on market development and ensuring that livestock products get the maximum possible price. This requires again improving infrastructure (mostly roads), and ensuring that the trading system runs efficiently and transparently. Given the riskiness of the livestock system, and its increased vulnerability due to drought impacts, systems of ‘drought cycle management’ were recommended, involving facilitation of destocking/restocking and associated financial mechanisms to assist this process. With growing urban demand for smallstock in the region, the trade in goats and sheep is set to increase. Combined with the demand for export (both illegal cross-border and formal) for large stock, the prospects for a vibrant livestock sector (for some, but not all pastoralists) was seen to be good.

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Several issues emerged from these location-specific discussions, with implications for how policy responds to supporting agriculture, rural development and livelihoods more generally.

1. A growth focus must go hand-in-hand with a poverty focus, but with clear strategic and focused priorities. Different scenarios in different places for different people are emerging.

2. Different options are therefore appropriate to different areas. A location specific approach at sub-regional level is clearly necessary, where local particularities and dynamics are taken into account. Simple plans/solutions based on simplistic models are inappropriate, but must be fully tailored to evolving dynamic scenarios in particular place.
3. Interactions between strategies is however key. Success in one may be dependent on the other. Thus sequencing and integration is essential.
4. Such strategic prioritisation, sequencing and integration across strategies may have to occur across regional states too. For example, similar issues – and interacting challenges – occur across pastoral areas in SNNPS, Oromiya and Somali regional states.
5. Some basic ‘precondition’ investments/requirements are seen to be important. A clear priority in all areas remains rural infrastructure (and roads in particular). But such interventions need to be well-planned and targeted – it is not a road anywhere for any purpose, but in different places, along different routes for different reasons.

## 7. Summary of vision for Ethiopian agriculture

Before the start of the workshop, participants were given a sheet of paper with two questions:

- a) State your vision for the Ethiopian agriculture
- b) What proportion of the Ethiopian people would you like to see depend on agriculture 25 years from today? Currently 84% are dependent on agriculture

### Vision for Ethiopian agriculture

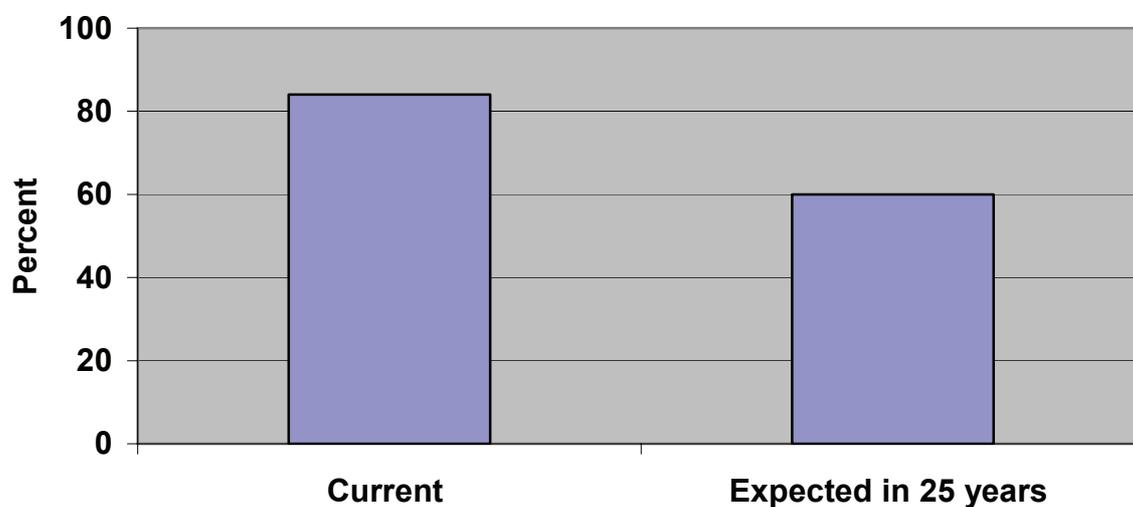
A total of 15 vision statements were received. The key elements are:

- ✓ Agricultural production and productivity increased through mechanised agricultural
- ✓ Self-sufficiency, and poverty reduction and environmentally sound agricultural development.
- ✓ Peaceful agricultural revolution
- ✓ Reduced dependency on agriculture at family level
- ✓ Agriculture commercialised and contribute to poverty reduction. Less people depend on agriculture.
- ✓ Participation of farmers in policy formulation and in addition incorporation of appropriate technology in the farming system (50%). High participation of women in the policy process.
- ✓ To see agriculture that will be governed in a systematic manner
- ✓ Share the vision held by the 84% earning their living from agriculture

### Proportion of Ethiopians depending on agriculture

The participants stated the proportion they would like to see depend on agriculture in 25 years time. The minimum stated was 25%, which is rather too ambitious to reduce from the current 84%. The maximum stated was 89%. It is unrealistic to call for more people to join the agriculture sector. The average is 60%. Although this is pure speculation, it seems realistic that in 25 years Ethiopia should be able to say 60% of the population depends on agriculture. The result is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:**



8 List of participants

Name	Organisation
Dr Gebeyehu Ganga	Southern Agricultural Research Institute (SARI)
Dr Adugna Tolessa	Debul University
Dr Abitew Lagibo	Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development (BoARD)
Sileshi Getahun	Southern Ethiopia People's Development Association (SEPDA)
Fikru Tarekegn	SEPDA
Mekonnen Tadesse	SEPDA
Lidia Cabral	Overseas Development Institute (ODI) – UK
Mulugeta Fetene	BoARD
Amare Shemo	Pastoralist Community Development Programme (PCDP)
Dr Eden Mengistu	Debul University
Digafe Tesfaye	Africa Beza College
Zerihun Getu	SEPDA
Adrian Cullis	SC/US
Teshome W/Mariam	SEPDA
Dr Amdissa Teshome	A-Z Consult
Dr. Gezahegn Ayele	Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI)
John Wyeth	SC-UK
Ian Scoones	Institute of Development Studies (IDS)
Dr. Samuel G/Selassie	EEA/EPRI
Kussia Bekele	SEPDA
Senait Yohannes	SEPDA