Understanding The Aspiration Of Small Scale Producers And Their Constraints Is The Key To Food Security In Africa: Example Form Ethiopia.

Teshome Regassa[1], Shimelis Beyene[1], Martha Mamo[1], Belaineh Legesse[2], Tsegaye Tadesse[1], Yitbarek W/Hawariat[3], Mary Willis[1], and Ray Hames[1].
[1]University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE (tregassa2@unl.edu); [2] Haramaya University and [3]Wollo University, Ethiopia

BACKGROUND

- A multidisciplinary team at the University of Nebraska in collaboration with Haramaya and Wollo Universities in Ethiopia initiated a holistic multidisciplinary research project in order to understand and address food security issues that small-scale farmers confront.
- The research aimed to understand circumstances and factors influencing farmers' decision making.
- Understanding the factors influencing farmers' decision may lead to a better understanding of challenges and opportunities for increase farm level production and improve household food security.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

- Two areas with contrasting agro-ecological and sociocultural characteristics were selected in northern Ethiopia around Dessai in the Amhara region and in eastern Ethiopia around Harar in the Oromia region.
- At both locations, household surveys were conducted in collaboration with local colleagues.
- The surveys were done in two phases:
  - Collection of background (secondary) information, focus group discussion with farmers, and consultative meetings with governmental and non-governmental organizations. No structured questionnaire was used during this phase.
  - The informal survey provided the information used to create structured questionnaire for a formal survey and to divide the survey area into strata for stratified random sampling of households.
- A total of 200 households were sampled from the east and 150 households were sampled from the north
- The information presented here is based mainly on the focus group discussion with farmers at both locations, although we also used a preliminary analysis of selected quantitative variables from the Oromia region.

One of the women focus groups in the east (top) and north (bottom)

SKETCH OF KEY PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Land Ownership: Inadequate access to land and fragmented small holdings

Arable (ha)		Number of Pieces	Grazing
Average	Maximum	(Fragmentation)	(ha)
0.59	2.0	2-7	0.06

- Very small holdings to be sliced for up-coming farmers
- No security as land is owned by the state
- Apportioned to multiple crops and varieties
- Up to one hour of traveling to fragmented holdings

Access to Draught Animals: "if you don't have oxen, you are one and if you don't have donkey you carry the load" .

Proportion of farmers owning one or more drought animals			
	no	one	two or more
Ox	61%	28%	11%
Donkey	43%	52%	5%

- Very critical for timely field operations such as sowing
  - ➢Up to 50% drop in yield due to delayed sowing
- Donkey ownership helps generate off farm income
- Oxen ownership serves as insurance and lien
  - ➢Reflects social status

Source of New Agricultural Information:

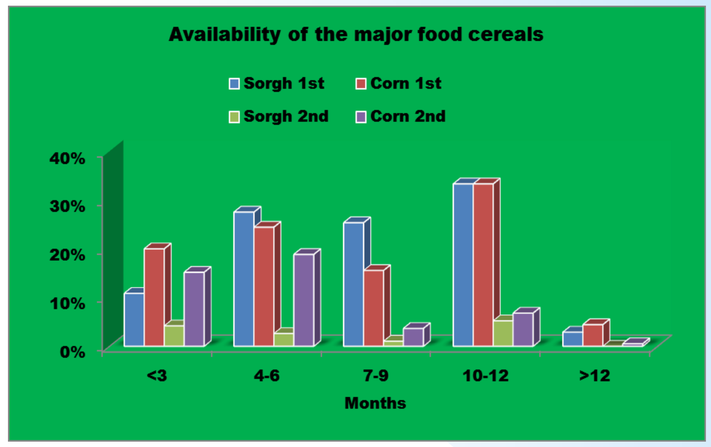
- Risk aversion strategies limit the acceptance of new ideas and innovative practices.
- Farmers trust and learn from each other.

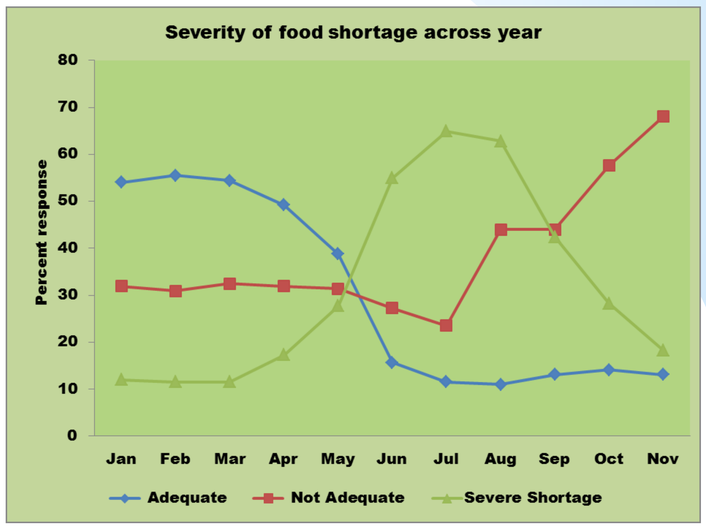
Percent trusting information source				
Farmers	Relatives	MOA	University	Others
52	23	14	1	10
75		15		

- 97% of sorghum and 82% of corn growers save their own seed

	% siting		Area	Seed Source		
	1st	2nd	(ha)	Save	Exch.	Purch.
Sorghum	75%	11%	0.45	97%	3%	1%
Corn	24%	59%	0.53	82%	16%	2%

Household Food Availability: All risk management strategies are direct to sustain food shortage.





LESSON LEARNED AND PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED

- Current production systems no longer support the basic subsistence needs of farmers due to declining key resources and the erosion of basic farm assets (land, oxen, labor, and livestock).
- No new assets are created nor are existing assets being maintained. In terms of asset accumulation, farmers are often worse than the previous years. For example, the small plots available for each household are fragmented further to make room for new generations of "micro farmers".
- Farmers have listed a number of production problems but at the center of all was the fear of unknown and what will happen to their families if their fears came true. Any effort to improve the food security of small scale producers in Ethiopia should start with creating a measure of livelihood security so that farmers could rationally plan for the future.
- Inability to tolerate risks forced these farmers to engage in low risk survival strategies leading to a predicament of a cycle of poverty. Thus, on-farm decision under such system is geared at managing risk, implied or tangible, paralyzing the decision process from taking reasonable risk for improvement.
- Impact of any uncertainty factors such as shortage of rain, crop failure, or other mild turbulence collapses the system

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