

## The Ministry of Agriculture - Annual Meeting



Makda Solo

The Ministry of Agriculture has held its annual meeting on 25th and 26th January at its head quarter in Asmara, where reports of the six regions and the divisions and departments of the ministry were presented.

The reports of the six regions included topics on rainfall, protection of wild life and how they are progressing, crop production, vegetable and fruit production, irrigation, water and soil conservation, fertility of oil seed, livestock raising and production, dairy, poultry, and honey production as well as the impact of pesticides on crops production. The presentations were evaluated in comparison with the previous year's registered outcomes.

The Southern region, one of the most fertile land in Eritrea, reported low harvest in 2017 due to the low amount of rain. Around 154, 976 hectares of land was cultivated and a total of 770,340 quintal of crops (658, 481 quintal cereals and 98,833 oil seeds) was harvested in 2017. However, the productivity was lowered by 52% from that of 2016. In cooperation with the African Development Bank the Ministry of Agriculture works on the construction of terraces, dams and reservoir as well as improving production of crops and on increasing milk production.

The Central region reported that it annually conducts several activity involving students and institutions. The presentations were particularly on irrigation, terracing (increased by 654 % in 2017) and reservoirs making. The Central region won the Duma Award for the best performance on Sustainable Land Management (SLM).The region also increased vaccination services by 188.7% and increased milk production by 6.8 % from that of 2016. However, land cultivation decreased by 9.2% as crop and cereal production declined by 41.4% due to low amount of rain.

The Annual report of MoA continued with one of the two hottest regions with lowest rainfall. In this region the biggest achievements were on fruit and vegetable production. In 2017, 6,006 quintal of vegetables were

harvested from 55 hectares and a 601.4 % increase of fruit production was registered helped stabilize the market.

Giving training to farmers is part of the Ministry's production enhancement program. Training that focused on cultivating palm and wild dates was given to farmers of the region and showed promising results in the Danakil. Contrary to that, Milk production and vaccination services were not as satisfactory.

Despite stream damage in five hectares of crops, 25 wheel, 21 water motors and 50.75 hectares of vegetables and crops, the Northern Red Sea did register encouraging results. Despite the warm climate and with low rainfall in the previous year, a total of 26,181 hectares of land was cultivated registering a 60% increase of sorghum harvest. In 2017 alone honey production increased by 14975 kilograms and vegetables by 2.45 %. Other endeavors include the construction of a 136,640 meter cube reservoir in a bid to prevent soil erosion and enhance water conservation. The cultivation of palm trees in Hamelmalo College of Agriculture adds to the list of remarkable achievements in 2017.

The Anseba region is one of the largest regions in Eritrea, most of its inhabitants live through farming, herding and livestock raising. Lower rainfall in 2017 and pest attack over 912.3 hectares of land led to the reduction of productivity by 78% and the reduction of vegetable and fruits by 51%. Some notable achievements of the region include, good productivity of honey and the construction of 17,147 m<sup>3</sup> terrace and check dams in Geleb, Elabered and Hamelmalo improve drip irrigation and water and soil conservation.

The region was also working towards the "Minimum Integrated Household Agriculture" which was being tested on a quarter of a hectare with a dairy cattle, 25 chicks, two beehives, vegetables, fruits and cereals which are believed assumed to give to farmers nutritional food.

The annual reports of MoA continued with the topographically largest and demographically densest region, Gash Barka. The region suffered a little from low rainfall and pest attack over 4.151 hectares of cultivated land in Shambqo, Mensura and Logo- Anseba. But its production of 140,185 quintal of crops, 51 quintals of cereals and 7,548 quintal of oilseed stabilized the region significantly.

Minimum Integrated Household Agriculture was one the activities the Gash Barka region was working on. The leveling of 1,389 hectares of land as well as improving drip irrigation and preserving wild life and afforestation was the hardest task of the region in 2017.

On the second session of the annual meeting, the Agricultural Extension Department gave reports on irrigation, natural resources management as

well as soil and water conservation in 2017. According to reports, the construction of soil bund terrace in northern red sea, hill side terrace in Debub region, check dam construction in Debub and Anseba regions were the big triumphs in 2017. The department was working to transform traditional farming to modern farming, increase organic farming for sustainable development and increase proper utilization of agronomic measures of soil and water conservation which will be done on 470,000 hectare of land, with a view to increase productivity by 40 to 50 % in the five year strategic plan, 2017- 2021.

The presentation of Agriculture Regulatory Services Department was by and large about animal, plant, crop, milk product, quarantine and monitoring illegal killing of wild animals as well as taking care of illegally imported drugs. As for National Animal and Plant Health Laboratory Department the key function of the department is to establish vaccine production laboratory and produce certain vet and to identify disease which can be transmitted to humans. As NAPHIL presentation indicated, in 2017, 16,840 samples were processed of which 16,396 samples were tested for animal disease diagnosis, 236 samples were processed for food quality and safety and 208 samples were tested for plant disease or pest diagnosis. The agreement between Sudan and Eritrea, referred to as “technical executive agreement” aimed at the joint collaboration of the two states regarding agriculture was also explained at the presentation.

Mr. Arefiene Berhe Minister of Agriculture underlined in his clothing that, as soil and water conservation and land labelling are the major components of farming, the farmers and the departments of agriculture

have to work to level their lands before the rain starts and they also need to know their land so that they can cultivate suitable seeds. Furthermore, he said, the minimum integrated house hold agriculture project is assumed to insure nutritional food security all over the country.

Mr. Arefiene finally recommended that though the MoA, regional administrations and the population have been working on water and soil conservation activities, increasing fertility and constructing dams, terrace, and water reservoirs, there is a need to continue working hard.

Shabait.com

February 2018