

Gerset: integrated farm Project



Orange Tree in Gerset

Kesete Ghebrehiwet

The construction of Gerset Dam some years back played a substantial role for the establishment of integrated farm activities in Gerset. As part of the wider farm areas of Golug sub-zone, Gerset has moved forward the expansion of farm activities in large scale around Gerset Dam.

Since its establishment in 2000, Gerset Farm Project has been expanded into various sections that include horticulture – fruits, vegetables, crops and animal feed -- and animal husbandry, Sesame, sorghum and maize are among the most commonly grown during the rainy season.

Although the amount of water in the dam is sufficient for carrying out agricultural activities, the sustainability of the farms can only be ensured through judicious utilization of water. For this reason, drip irrigation is promoted to minimize wastage.

The farm project has three sections known as "Farm A", "Farm B" and "Farm C" and around 110 hectares have been cultivated under the first section.

Tomato, onion, pumpkin and pepper have been grown in the vegetable section while orange, mango, grapefruit and lemon have been cultivated in the fruit section. The livestock resource department breeds camels, sheep, goats and cattle.

Gerset Farm has its own nursery station that supplies seedlings to the different sections and to other farm projects in Kerkebet and Gahtelay. A total of 19,397 seedlings are currently developed at the nursery station.



In the livestock section, 4,198 sheep, 306 cattle and 194 camels have been raised in Gerset. Green animal feed has been grown to augment the number of livestock and to take animal husbandry to the next level.

As regards the current condition of fruits, Mr. Amine Tesfamichael, manager of Gerset Farm, said that there are 1,354 orange trees in 115 hectares, 7,059 mango trees in 150 hectares and 1,315 date trees in seven hectares and 1,908 grapefruit trees. Besides, guava, papaya and other fruits have also been planted.

Mr. Amine noted that last year's rainfall has positively impacted agricultural produce. Hence, around 10,000 quintals of sorghum and 400 quintals of millet were harvested.

Also, according to Mr. Amine, the tomato cultivated in around 40 hectares was taken to Alebu Banatom Factory to be processed and packed as paste. Onion has been cultivated in small scale through drip irrigation, and around 15 hectares of green animal feed has been making a difference in meeting timely demand.

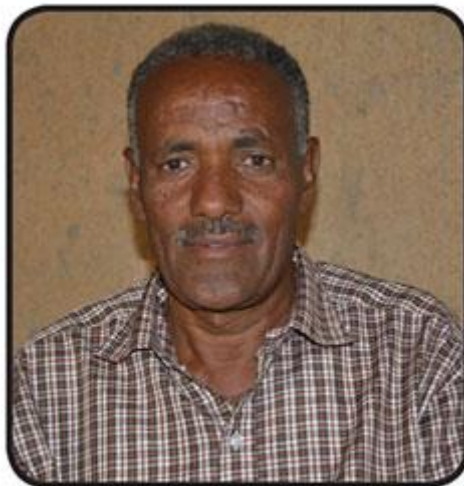
Besides supplying fruits and crops to the market, Gerset Farm has been very instrumental in creating job opportunities for the inhabitants of the area. The people around Gerset Dam earn their living by working at the farm project. Around 300 people from Gerset, Golug and Tesenai have been working in the farm project on daily basis.

The animal husbandry department in Gerset Farm has been breeding cattle species known as Gerej that are local to Eritrea. The species are well accustomed to the area.

The livestock in Gerset Farm have been ensuring meat supply of boarding schools such as Warsay- Yikealo Senior Secondary School, institutions of higher education and other government bodies.

What is more, the association of fishermen from Fanko-Rawi and Fank-Tsum'e visited Gerset Dam and carried out fishing activities there to sell fish at the Tesenai market.

This year, veterinary service centers have been established at sub-zone level, and around 30,000 livestock have been vaccinated in different villages of Golug sub-zone. Besides vaccination, the veterinarians have also been giving technical assistance to farmers. Crops and livestock Corporation of Eritrea has freely provided vaccines and pesticides.



Mr. Amine Tesfamichael

Mr. Amine said, "Sufficient supply of medicine and pesticides as well as adequate number of veterinary specialists boosts our confidence. Thus, we do not have any challenge in plant or animal health related issues."

The administration of Gerset Farm has been working hand in hand with the farmers in the area. It has been assisting farmers by sending veterinary specialties to their respective areas. A store in Golug, for instance, has been providing veterinary medicines and pesticides to farmers. The veterinary scientists in Gerset Farm have been working in collaboration with representative farmers. "We have been fostering good partnership with the farmers in the area," Mr. Amine elaborated.

Mr. Amine said that soil fertility has been ensured through the use of natural manure while fine soil from river banks has also been added to the farmland.

The abundant water in Gerset Dam has been the reason for the commencement of varied farm activities. But the farm activities so far implemented are small given the larger amount of water available.



As regards future plans of Gerset Farm, Mr. Amine said that the establishment of seedling nursery station is part and parcel of expanding the farm project. "We are looking forward to expanding the farm project, but there are various determining factors that need to be considered such as infrastructure. There will be, for sure, new developments that go in line with the future plans of the Crops and Livestock Cooperation," he reiterated.

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