

## **Agriculture Graduates Running Major Farm Projects**



By: Kesete Ghebrehiwet |

Over 1,600 experts in Animal Science and other fields of agriculture, who are all graduates of institutions of higher education, have been working in various agricultural fields of Eritrea's Crops and Livestock Corporation (ECLC).

The impact of institutions of higher education in human resource development is vividly seen in the overall development of farm projects and other work areas which testify to the worthiness of the investments being made in the education sector.

Weldegebriel Gebremariam, who studied Soil and Water Conservation and General Irrigation at Sawa Center for Vocational Training, is now working as a manager of Adi- Omar farm project in the Gash- Barka region. He said, "We have been acquiring skills through skill transfer programs and we have learnt a lot from our seniors."

Berhane Asmerom, a graduate from Hamelmalo Agricultural College, is currently working as head of Animal science in Adi-Omar Agricultural project.

He said through its four units -- Animal Husbandry, Pharmacy, Feeding and Veterinary Science -- the Animal Health Department has been monitoring animals' health condition, provision of medicines, hygiene, feeding activities and deposits

and deficits of animal feed and distribution of livestock among others.

Feven Asmerom, a graduate from Hamelmalo Agricultural College and a unit head of a horticultural block, and Feven Naizghi, from Adi-Halo and an expert in horticulture, are giving guidance to women workers about proper care and cultivation of fruits and vegetables.

As part of their daily activity, Feven Asmerom and Feven Naizghi are in charge of the nursery and all vegetable and fruit farm activities. They regularly provide technical assistance to those who engage in cultivation, weeding and all other farm activities.

Working at the farms enables the graduates, who see their job as a challenge and an opportunity, to hone their skills. The graduates have not been limited to working in the Adi-Omar farm projects. Instead they have also been giving technical assistance to farmers in their surroundings.

As regards the challenges they face while working in the farms the two hard working female graduates from Adi-Halo and Hamelmalo Agricultural College say:

When we studied horticulture in our colleges, we learnt the most common plant diseases and curing methods, but it was not easy to implement the knowledge on the ground. At times, we encounter some diseases that we did not know. So, the new challenge provides us with a new opportunity to study. The more we study about the new phenomenon, the more eager we become to solve it. There is nothing more pleasing than overcoming a challenge through collective endeavors.

Adi-omar farm project, which has been providing employment opportunities for daily workers, is currently being run by agricultural experts who graduated from institutions of higher education. The technical assistance the agricultural experts give to daily workers has been instrumental in transferring skills to the nomadic communities around the farm projects. The effect of the intervention is seen in the increase in production of fruits and vegetables.

Regarding the experiences he gained since he took up a new career right after graduation, Berhane said: "In 2012, while I was a new graduate from Hamelmalo Agricultural College, I was first assigned to the Ministry of Education and stayed there for four years. Every working day at the Ministry was a challenge for me. Fortunately, I was reassigned to work in the field of my study by joining the ECLC and I have been upgrading my skill ever since.

Mr. Weldegebriel, on his part, said that he is a first generation graduate from Sawa Center for Vocational Training and acquired skills of paramount importance once he joined the farm fields in Adi-Omar.

What is so impressive about the farm projects is that almost all major activities have been run by the graduates. The senior experts have not been only transferring skills to their subordinates but they are giving them a chance to independently run the projects. That is why Weldgebriel is now a manager of Adi-Omar Farm while Berhane is a Unit head of the Animal Science Department. Female leaders and unit heads have been running the horticulture department.

Being role models, the female graduates have been influencing women residing around the farm areas. They have maintained strong friendship with the local women and have been encouraging them to be self reliant.

Gulsum, for instance, is an area around Adi-Omar Farm known for its traditional livelihood. Women residing there were mostly confined to doing domestic chores. But working in the farm fields enabled them to improve their living standards and they are learning a lot from the female graduates. They have now changed their attitude and believe they are productive not only at home but also in the fields. This is a major change of lifestyle among the women population of the area. The female graduates are also teaching the local women new skills they could apply in their households.

Besides engaging themselves in the farm fields, all the graduates have been making a difference in all work activities.

They are making efforts as leaders and implementers of various tasks.

An increase in the number of graduates in various fields of agriculture has been the reason for expanding the scope of the farm activities in Adi-Omar Farm. Farmers are satisfied with the services being provided by the experts.

Virtually no livestock death has been registered since the graduates started to provide veterinary services to the communities in their neighborhood and remote locations.

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