

**Eritrea observes World Food Day  
And International Day  
For Eradication of Poverty**



This year's World Food Day (WFD), and International Day for Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) were commemorated under the themes 'Leave no One Behind' and 'Dignity for all in Practice' respectively at Embaderho, Serejeka Sub-zone of the Central Region, on the 17th of October 2022. The event which was coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) was attended by Ministers, high government officials; ambassadors and a number of representations of different countries; honorary consuls, UN agencies, MoA Officials; agricultural experts; farmers and other invited guests.

During the event, the Minister of Agriculture, H.E Arefaine Berhe; FAO Representative in Eritrea, Ms. Esther Lusepani; and the UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. James Wakiaga delivered important speeches regarding the dual commemorations.

H.E Arefaine Berhe

H.E Arefaine Berhe, on his key note address, underscored that this year's themes of the two events perfectly match with the strategies and goals of the

Ministry of Agriculture of the State of Eritrea. He, then, outlined the Government of the State of Eritrea's (GoSE) strategy and endeavors towards achieving better production, better nutrition, better environment and better Life.

The Minister, in his remarks, mentioned the country's location which makes it prone to recurrent drought as the major agricultural challenge. To mitigate this challenge, the GoSE has implemented a number of soil and water conservation programs as well as construction of different sized water reservoirs which have led to improved irrigated agriculture and increase in horticultural production. Introduction of high yielding varieties and bio-fertilizers and pesticides were also among the most important inputs by the MoA, He emphasized.

The Minister mentioned the Minimum Integrated Household Agricultural Package (MIHAP) as a flagship program of the MoA towards achieving better nutrition.



Ms. Esther Lusepani

H.E Arefaine Berhe also pointed out that implementation of the country's land proclamation, and reinforcing organic farming as the best ways to meet a better environment.

The combined result of all the above mentioned efforts will definitely lead towards realizing a better life for all citizens, the Minister emphasized in his key note address.

Ms. Esther Lusepani, FAO Representative in Eritrea, on her part, outlined that during the years 2020- 2022, FAO along with line ministries managed to mobilize resources and was able to reach many beneficiary communities. She noted that the intervention areas include food and nutrition security, emergency preparedness and resilience, capacity building, drought emergency response,

fisheries, desert locust response, value chains and agribusiness and animal health.

Ms. Esther, further elaborated that in accordance with the 2022-2031 Strategic Framework to support the 2030 Agenda, FAO-Eritrea has developed a new Country Programme Framework –(CPF – 2022-2026) that include Fisheries research, development and management; Provision of support to the date palm production support programme; Development of key priority value chains; Improving the technical capacity of the GoSE Agencies in Agriculture and Fisheries; Promoting nutrition-sensitive agriculture across rural communities; Supporting the commercial development of the crop and Livestock Sector; Reduction of vulnerability and increasing resilience through innovation and technology transfer for climate change adaptation, biodiversity and land degradation and others.

Ms. Esther concluded her remarks saying, “In this era, when humanity is being affected by natural and man-made disasters, food and nutrition security has become a burning issue and will remain to be so. That is why we, FAO, would like to reaffirm our commitment to “Leave no One Behind” and support the governments’ effort to this end!”



Mr. James Wakiaga

Mr. James Wakiaga, UNDP Resident Representative, presented a statement regarding to IDEP on behalf of the UN Resident Coordinator, and on his own behalf. Mr. Wakiaga, after congratulating and thanking the MoA and the coordinating team for successfully leading the event, gave a brief explanation on how and why the International day for Poverty Eradication started.

He mentioned that this year’s International Day for the Eradication of Poverty is being observed under the theme “Dignity for all in Practice: The commitments

we make together for social justice, peace, and the planet”. He underscored that the covid-19 pandemic, the Ukraine crisis and the climate change along with its interrelated problems have had a devastating impact on human and environmental progresses.

According to Mr. Wakiaga’s remarks, quoted from UN sources, the current reality shows that, in a world where we produce enough to feed everyone, 811 million people do not have enough food and 44 million are at risk of sliding into famine; 2 billion people still live without safe drinking water and 3.6 billion without safely managed sanitation; 1.3 billion people still live in multidimensional poverty with almost half of them children and youth.

Besides, Mr. Wakiaga emphasized that doubling down on Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals is the best bet to not only end extreme poverty, but to curb inequality and fast-track progress for the people who have been left furthest behind.

In this regard, he commended the Government’s commitment to addressing food and nutrition security to enhance socio-economic development and social justice, which are key cornerstones of Eritrea’s development priorities agenda.

In conclusion, he reiterated the commitment of UNDP and UNCT to support development aspirations of the Government and people of Eritrea towards eradication of poverty and building sustainable livelihoods.

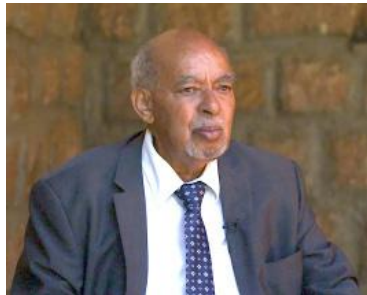
On top of the above consecutive remarks, a video message of Mr. Qu Dongyu, FAO Director General on the occasion of the WFD was presented.

During the event, four farmers namely: Ms. Freweni Tesfayohannes, Mr. Medhanie Mulugeta, Mr. Yonas Teklemariam and Ms. Tiebe Redae received certificate of achievements for their outstanding contributions in the fields of dairy production, poultry production, bee keeping, and horticultural production respectively from the Minister of Agriculture. The Minister also handed over certificates of appreciation to the exhibitors who displayed their products during the event.

The event was also accompanied by video presentations prepared by the MoA, FAO and UNDP. The videos showed the challenges in food and poverty, and also the endeavors made to mitigate these challenges.

**After the conclusion of the event, the Public Relations Division of the MoA interviewed the coordinator of the event, and some other farmers and experts who displayed their food products during the commemoration.**

Mr. Amanuel Negassi, Advisor to the Minister of MoA, and chair of the event’s coordinating committee said that it has been years since the commemoration of these important events started with the broad objectives to reinforce commitments towards ensuring safe and nutritious food, as well as eradicating poverty.



Mr. Amanuel Negassi

Mr. Amanuel elaborated that such events are important in that they improve public awareness with regards to nutrition-sensitive agriculture. He further noted that the GoSE is promoting this issue by integrating the efforts of a number of ministries, development partners and relevant stakeholders.

Mr. Debretsion Yosief, representing Hanny Meat Processing Factory, which displayed meat and milk products, said, “We have come with products like cheese, mozzarella and butter. However, many participants seemed to like the ‘mortadella’ we prepared from meat. It is very much appreciated by those who don’t eat pork.” He also said that they did their best to colorfully display and serve their products which included a bit of mozzarella, olive oil and a squeeze of lemon.



Mr. Gebrehiwet Fasil

Mr. Gebrehiwet Fasil and his team displayed liquid honey in a proper container representing the Maekel Region – Association of Farmers in Honey production. According to Mr. Gebrehiwet, the Association has got more than 180 members, and is producing organic honey. “Thanks to all-kinds of support we get from the MoA, we are able to improve the quantity and quality of our honey production. As you can see here, the participants, after tasting our honey, are buying more than expected.” He concluded.



Ms. Tirhas Yemane

Ms. Tirhas Yemane is a nutrition expert from the MoA, Home Economics Unit. According to her, the unit works in helping mothers to easily prepare nutritious food with available resources at home. Describing their display in the event, she said, “We have prepared three types of pancakes, which are made from bananas, potato and mixture of both with the aim of preparing nutritious food for kids under five years of age”.



Ms. Harena Kibrom

Ms. Harena Kibrom is also a horticulture expert from the MoA working in the fruit value addition; mainly in banana and citrus. She explained that her team had prepared marmalade from unpeeled citrus fruit, for most of the nutrients are found in the peel. She underscored that since our farmers experience 20- 30 % post-harvest losses, they can minimize these losses by adding value to their products.”



Ms. Salina Negusse

Ms. Salina Negusse is also a child-nutrition researcher at the Ministry of Education. She was exhibiting home-made nutritious biscuits. When asked about her display, she said; “We have prepared different types of homemade biscuits made from ingredients that can easily be found locally but not properly used yet. We have so far used flax seed which is rich in folic acid, antioxidants and omega-3; pumpkin – rich in Zink and very important for growth; and also nuts with full of antioxidants and protein. In addition, we have used zucchini which is rich in vitamins, and fish powder which has got high calcium, protein and free fatty acids. We have also prepared a juice made of beetroot which is rich in minerals like iron.” She, finally, recommended that we should properly feed our children with such types of food starting from 2 up to 5 years old.

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## Statement of H.E Arefaine Berhe, Minister of Agriculture



Mr. Moderator!

Excellencies Ministers!

High Government PFDJ and Army Officials!

Ambassador, Senior Embassy Officials and -Honorary consuls!

Ms. Esther Lusepani, FAO Representative!

Mr. James Wakiaga, UNDP Representative!

Heads of UN Agencies!

Religious Leaders!

Representative Farmers Present!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

This year's World Food Day theme is "Leave no one behind", "Better Production, Better Nutrition, Better Environment and Better Life".

This matches very well with our strategy which is elaborated as follows;



## **Better Production**

In Eritrea, the challenge of food production starts from its location. As Eritrea is situated in the Sahel region, lack of enough and regular rainfall and moisture is the main limiting factor for food production. Hence the number one priority of the Government has been and still is implementing soil and water conservation programs both on and off farm. Accordingly, numerous dams of different sizes were built over the past 30 years, mainly for irrigation. Around the bigger dams the government has also built several access roads, dry and cold stores. Additionally, the government has invested a lot to expand modified rain-fed agriculture and spate irrigation in the eastern and western lowlands as well as pressurized irrigation schemes.

To increase production and productivity, the government is also assisting small holder farmers as well as small and medium scale commercial farmers through the introduction of high yielding varieties and bio-fertilizers and pesticides. Moreover, the government is working to create conducive environment including land tenure security, development of market infrastructure, better access to inputs, credits and extension services as well as strengthening of Farmers' Cooperatives. While we are dealing with better production, I am glad to announce that we are poised for a very good harvest this year thanks to the gracious rainfall and the coordinated effort of farmers and the government.

## **Better Nutrition**

Until recently enough emphasis was not given to nutritional aspect of food security. Under the influence of global approach which focuses on "cereal security" even among cereals, the world in general and Africa in particular, has lost its crop diversity to wheat and rice. In our case, it was only in 2013 that our flagship project the MIHAP that is the Minimum Integrated Household Agricultural Package started to be implemented. With the advent of this project which integrates cereals, vegetables and fruits, dairy products, eggs and honey, the noble cause of insuring food and nutrition started to be realized in the project

areas. This approach is also extended to the small and medium commercial farmers.

To complement the above strategies, we are also introducing urban and peri-urban agriculture including vertical agriculture, roof gardening, hydroponics and aquaponics. The idea is to improve nutrition through integrated, diversified nutrition dense home gardens accompanied by short-cycle animals like chicken, rabbits and swine. In addition, Eritrea is also boosting fish production to enhance nutrition security.

### **Better Environment**

Owing to the cross-cutting nature of the environmental challenges, like climate change, land degradation and biodiversity loss, national efforts have been made to mainstream environmental issues in all sectors. Furthermore, recognising land as the basis of life and food production, the government has laid the foundation for equitable and fair land tenure system which enables access to land for all citizens regardless of gender, ethnicity and religion. This policy is expected to solve the loopholes of the customary system of agricultural land rotation by changing it into a life-time use right, which has a better impact on land care and productivity as it creates a sense of ownership and motivates farmers to invest more on their land and follow sustainable agricultural practices.

However, our effort in the food chain is not going to be sustainable if we do not address the safety issues. Recently, the Government has given a special emphasis to promoting safe-food production using bio-fertilisers and bio-pesticides, both solid and liquid, mainly from locally available materials. In addition, the regular and continuous work of soil and water conservation which includes terracing, check-dam construction, afforestation and closure establishment is also a visible trademark of our eco-friendly agricultural practice.

### **Better Life**

The combined result of all the above-mentioned efforts will definitely lead towards realizing a better life to all citizens. This will increase their resilience to

environmental and other shocks. Here the best example is the advent of COVID-19 and outbreak of desert locust in our region. The last locust invasion has caused significant damage to crops and vegetation across the horn of Africa. Despite the unprecedented upsurge, the swarms that invaded or hatched within Eritrea were easily controlled before causing any substantial damage through concerted efforts by MoA extension staff, local administration, farmers and members of the Eritrean Defence Forces. To sum up, the three betters mentioned above are expected to create the necessary environment for a healthy and productive life.

Before I conclude I would like to acknowledge the contribution of our partners in our development endeavor and urge them to do more. I would also like to commend the organizers of this event for a job extremely well done.

**I thank you for your attention!**

**October 16, 2022**