

Halhale Project: Promising Agricultural Venture



By :- Sertseyonas Negash

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Eritrea has numerous untold success stories that the global mainstream media willfully ignores. One of these success stories is Eritrea's remarkable achievements in the agriculture sector. The progress being scored in the activities of the Eritrean Crops and Livestock Corporation (ECLC) is a prime testimony of the country's success in this regard.

ECLC was established in 2012 with the aim of running and managing all the different public firms and food processing plants located across the country. Among other things, its mandate includes galvanizing the food security policy of the Government of the State of Eritrea, stabilizing, through enhanced production, the price of dairy products, vegetables and fruits, providing local farmers with selected high-quality seeds, free veterinary services, and various professional and material assistance.

Halhale Project is one of the major agricultural projects run by the ECLC. Halhale Project is a well-thought out project located at the right place. It is well known that, location has a great impact in the success of any agricultural project. Fertile soil, conducive climate, sustainable water supply etc. are some of the factors considered while planning and establishing an agricultural project.

Thus, being located in a vast arable land, moderate temperature and Mislam Dam (also known as Gergera Dam) in close proximity, Halhale Project is one of the significant agricultural enterprises in the development progress of Eritrea.



According to Major Kibreab Abraham, General Manager of ECLC, Halhale Project is actively engaged in livestock farming and cultivation of vegetables, fruits, crops and spice plants. Initially, Halhale Project was mostly involved in animal husbandry. The project started in late 2017 with 660 cattle imported from Germany. With time, the number of cattle grew exponentially in folds marking a great success and achievement that encouraged the expansion of the project.



Major Kibreab Abraham

Furthermore, Major Kibreab Abraham indicated that, as one of Eritrea's strategic agricultural projects, Halhale Project has created an employment opportunity for many young professionals who graduated in different fields of agriculture from Hamelmalo Agricultural College and other educational institutions. In addition to this, the project has created job opportunities for 1,700 local residents from nearby villages and towns. Employees of the project are hardworking, selfless and have a sense ownership in the project. Therefore, the dedication and hard work of all the employees has contributed a lot to the success of the project.

Since the animal husbandry part of the project has been covered several times by different media outlets, this article will particularly focus on the horticultural activity, which is a recent addition, of the Halhale Project.



Mr. Awet Tesfay

According to Mr. Awet Tesfay, Horticulture Expert at Halhale Project, the Horticulture Branch of the project is tasked with the production, experimentation and propagation of vegetables, fruits and spice plants. Hence, Halhale Project is producing and supplying various vegetables and fruits to local markets; involved in experimentation to produce quality seeds; and propagating seeds (preparing seedlings) of different vegetables and fruits in its nursery. The unique thing about the cultivation of vegetables and fruits in the project is that, all the produce are organic.

Currently, Halhale Project is using a temporary outdoor nursery to propagate seeds. To make the propagation process successful, the project is building a modern greenhouse nursery, which is nearing completion, with a capacity of holding around 100,000 seedlings at a time. Once the greenhouse is completed it will prepare seedlings in mass and better quality.

When it comes to vegetables, Mr. Awat Tesfay further stated, the project is currently cultivating potato, carrot, onion, garlic, tomato, spinach and cabbage. Vegetables are grown to satisfy the local demand. Experiments are also being carried out to produce quality seeds. Seedlings are prepared in the nursery to be planted in Halhale Project as well as in other ECLC's farm projects across the country.

Halhale Project is not only limited to cultivating existing fruits or those available in the country. It is also experimenting with fruits that were not cultivated in Eritrea. Recently, the project has introduced avocado and found it to be very successful. According to Mr. Awet Tesfay, at present there are 10,000 avocado trees on the farm. The first harvest was sold in Asmara recently. 27,000 coffee trees and 2,000 olive oil trees are also planted and are in good condition. Apple, guava, papaya, pomegranate and plum are also planted in a limited amount with an average expected fruit bearing time of two to four years. Avocado, coffee and olive oil trees are planted on the hillside along with the indigenous plants like acacia and sand olive. This serves a dual purpose; to leave the flat land for other vegetables and fruits and protection against soil erosion.

In addition to this, Halhale Project's nursery prepares seedlings of mango, citrus fruits, papaya and pomegranate to be planted in other farms of the ECLC and for distribution to individual farmers. Grafted seedlings are distributed to farmers and they can simply plant them and harvest the produce.



Though at experimental level and harvested for seed production purposes (multiplication), spice plants such as black seed and coriander are cultivated at Halhale Project. They have proved to be successful, and ECLC has a plan to cultivate these spice plants in other farms on a large scale to reduce the importation of spices from abroad.

In conclusion, the current progress of the Halhale Project in general, and horticulture activities in particular, are testimony of the projects promising future in meeting the demands of dairy products, fruits and vegetables locally and beyond. Being in the same place, both the livestock and horticulture farms complement each other. The cattle are sources of compost for the horticulture farm, while the farm produces fodder to the livestock. The valuable practical experience gained by all the employees of the project is also another great advantage of the project in capacity building in the agriculture sector.