

Keynote Address by Minister Arefaine Berhe
At National Conference on Eritrean Agriculture Studies



Your Excellency, Yemane Ghebremeskel, Minister of Information

Your Excellency, Halima Mohammed, Minister of Education

High Ranking Government and PFDJ Officials

UN Agencies Representatives

Distinguished Guests All

Protocols Observed

Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is s my privilege to welcome you today at this pivotal national Conference on Eritrean Agricultural Studies. I thank you for sparing your time to join us today, and I wish to acknowledge that your presence here today is not only an honor for us but also show of solidarity for our continued effort to improve the Eritrean agriculture.

I would like to inform you, Ladies and Gentlemen, that the inspiration to hold this Conference is rooted on the International Conference of the Eritrean Studies held in January 04-06, 2025. His Excellency Yemane Ghebremesqel, Minister of Information, led the organization of that Conference while Her Excellency Halima

Mohammed, Minister of Education, chaired the event. Today we are graced by their presence in this opening session. Please join me in giving them a warm applause!

This event signifies a renewed commitment to transforming Eritrean agriculture and solidifying its role as the cornerstone of our nation's economic prosperity. As we all know, Eritrea's history is inextricably linked to our land, and agriculture has been the lifeblood of our communities and economy for generations. However, we recognize that simply maintaining existing practices is not enough to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world, including climate change, population growth, economic instability and ecological degradation. That is why this conference, organized under the theme “**Advancing Sustainable Agri-food Systems for National Economic Growth**,” is vitally important for sharing experiences and lessons learnt that could improve current practices to foster agricultural development.

A thriving agricultural sector directly contributes to GDP, creates employment opportunities, reduces reliance on imports, and strengthens food security, which are all essential for Eritrea's future development. This Conference therefore serves as a platform to display ongoing research, innovative solutions, and strategic planning aimed at realizing these ambitious goals. It is an opportunity to translate commitment into tangible action, driving sustainable agri-food systems that fuel our economic growth and development.

The theme, “**Advancing Sustainable Agri-food Systems for National Economic Growth**,” recognizes that long-term prosperity is not simply about increased yields, but it is about building resilience and equitable food systems capable of meeting present needs, while safeguarding resources for future generations. “Sustainable Agri-food” demands an integrated approach incorporating climate-smart technologies, water conservation, soil health management, diversification of crops and livestock, and value chain development, where the MoA is making every effort to resolve these challenges. Crucially, it also prioritizes the livelihoods of our farmers, particularly smallholder communities, ensuring that they benefit directly from increased productivity and market access.

Ladies and Gentlemen !

The MoA is implementing its 5-year strategic plan, 2024-2028, under the strategic vision, “***Safe and Nutritious Food for Everyone, Everywhere***”. Supporting smallholder farmers is a major component of the strategic plan, where the

MoA : has designed three main strategies approaches to improve farmers’ livelihoods through access to improved technologies, and extensive extension services, thereby realizing the vision Safe and Nutritious Food for Everyone, Everywhere. Let me touch upon each of them very briefly.

- The first one is the Small and Medium Commercial Farmers Strategy transforms small and medium commercial farmers into modern commercialized farm-business. The Small and Medium Commercial Farmers Strategy is based on two pillars of intervention mechanisms: “***Technological Support***”, which is the hardware, and “***Creating an Enabling Environment***”, as the software.
- The second one is the Minimum Integrated Household Agricultural Package, popularly known as the MIHAP. The MIHAP is planned for smallholder farming communities, which have the opportunity to use irrigation water to support crop and livestock, and vegetables farming, with the aim of providing sufficient food and nutrition for the participating farmers, as well as producing extra production to the market, including women in agri-business
- The third one is the “***Small and Productive Farm Plot***” strategy, known in short as SPFP, which focuses on households living in arid and semi-arid environment engaged in traditional rain-fed agriculture, and water-stressed areas. The idea is to intensify farming on 1000 square-meter farm plot in producing cereals, pulses and oil crops, as well as vegetables in subsequent seasons. In addition to these agricultural activities, participating farmers are expected to engage in complementary agricultural activities that contribute to household food and nutrition security. These include, raising local backyard chickens, beekeeping using top-bar hives, and keeping either one dairy cow or up to six dairy goats for milk. Until the first half of 2026, over 90 % of the

planned villages in Zobas to participate in SPFP comprehensive at least one farmer in each village has established SPFP comprehensive, and by the end of 2026, the plan is that every village will have implemented the SPFP comprehensive. To help expand the SPFP comprehensive strategy, farmers' field schools will make considerable efforts for sharing knowledge and experiences among farmers. The year 2027 will be used to address any remaining gaps. And during 2028, which is the final year for year for the strategic plan, efforts will be made to fine tune and making sure that all households in all the villages have established SPFP comprehensive competently, thereby ensuring the achievement “*Safe and Nutritious Food to Everyone, Everywhere*”.

Ladies and Gentlemen !

This conference represents an opportunity for open dialogue, knowledge sharing, and collaborative planning. We value your insights as key stakeholders. Your contribution and active participation is essential in shaping the future of Eritrean agriculture. I thus call on each of us to embrace innovation, champion sustainable practices, and dedicate ourselves wholeheartedly to realizing this vision. Let us work together, as we embrace into the future, united in our commitment to building a vibrant agriculture, where the Eritrean agriculture sector thrives as a powerful engine for national economic advancement. Before I conclude let me reiterate my sincere appreciation to the Organizing Committee, who worked so hard under the Chairmanship of Dr. Efrem Ghebremesqel, during the last one and half years to realize the successful organization of this Conference. Let us give them a warm applause. Finally, yet importantly, let me commend all the presenters and their collaborators, who committed themselves to bring up their research work successfully to the attention of this Conference.

In conclusion let me wish you fruitful deliberations, and we look forward to see your constructive recommendations to move us forward.

I thank you for your attention and wishing you a pleasant 2-day discussion.

The two-day National Conference on Eritrean Agricultural Studies Concludes



The two-day National Conference on Eritrean Agricultural Studies 2026, held at the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers Hall in Asmara under the theme “Advancing Sustainable Agri-food Systems for National Economic Growth,” concluded on August 21.

At the conference, 76 research papers were presented on topics including Agricultural Extension and Farmers’ Adoption; Agricultural Digitalization; Value Chains and Agribusiness; Food Safety, Security and Nutrition; Agricultural Biotechnology and Laboratory Services; Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation; Genetic Resources and Biodiversity Conservation; and Agricultural Policy, Regulatory Frameworks and Governance.

The research papers presented by experts also covered the Evaluation of Sesame Varieties for Optimizing Yield and Cultivation Opportunities; Evaluation of Fish Amino Acid and Seaweed Liquid Fertilizer on the Growth and Yield of Barley; Status of Post-Harvest Handling and Ripening Methods of Bananas; Tenure Security and Agricultural Development; Mobilizing the Diaspora in Agro-Industrial Transformation; Synergizing Sustainable Energy Production and Climate; Documenting and Registering Flora in Eritrea; Effect of Compost on the Physicochemical Properties of Vertisols and Yield Performance of Wheat Varieties; Assessment of Current Dairy Cattle Performance; Assessment of Genetic Diversity and Population Structure in Eritrean Indigenous Chickens; Spatial and Statistical Variability Analyses of Satellite-Based Climate Data; and Survey of an Ectoparasitic Organism of the Tree Locust, among others.

In his concluding address, Dr. Efreem Gebremeskel, Chairman of the Conference Coordinating Committee, said that the conference had provided an important platform for presenting research findings, sharing professional experiences and discussing the challenges and opportunities facing Eritrea's agricultural sector.

Dr. Efreem went on to say that the key message emerging from the conference was the importance of strengthening the connection between research, policy and implementation. He said that the discussions had also underscored the need for stronger collaboration among Government institutions, research and higher education institutions, farmers, the private sector and development partners.

Noting that the idea of holding the conference stemmed from the International Conference on Eritrean Studies held in January 2025, Mr. Arefaine Berhe, Minister of Agriculture, attributed the success of the conference to the preparations undertaken by the coordinating committee over approximately a year and a half. He also congratulated the coordinating committee.

The conference, organized by the Ministry of Agriculture, was attended by more than 300 senior Government and PFDJ officials, experts, farmers' representatives, food processors, development partners and invited guests.

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