

# Bimonthly Updates

Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium Bimonthly Newsletter



## Welcome to the March 2025 Issue! Women's Month Edition

### About our newsletter: ESFSAC Insights

Welcome to the March edition of the ESFSAC bimonthly newsletter. In this issue, we bring you updates on major initiatives, events, and Ethiopia's growing contribution to sustainable agriculture and agroecology. Stay connected for key insights into our progress and upcoming opportunities to participate.

*Please note: This edition features a few AI-generated images (the cover and contents page), which do not depict real individuals and are free from copyright restrictions.*



Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems  
and Agroecology Consortium  
(ESFSAC)

**Message from AFSA  
Coordinator**

**Who controls  
our food, controls  
our future**



For All  
women  
and girls:  
Rights.  
Equality.  
Empowerment.

**Event Highlights**

**Post-COP 29  
Debriefing Workshop:  
The Road from Baku to  
Belem**



**Practitioner Perspectives:  
Agroecology**

**Advancing Agroecology in the  
Highlands of Ethiopia: A Step-  
wise Approach to Sustainable  
Agriculture**



**International Women's  
Day 2025, Message**

**There is Nothing Women  
Can't Do, Achieve, or Change!**



# Event Highlights



The Ministry of Irrigation and Lowlands organized a significant event held at the historic Adwa Museum. Previously announced in our past issue as an upcoming engagement, the event brought together high-level dignitaries, including the President of Ethiopia, officials from the African Union, and representatives from various countries. The gathering focused on regional development, cooperation in irrigation and lowland management, and showcasing Ethiopia's commitment to sustainable resource use and climate resilience.



H.E. Taye Atske Selassie, President of FDRE speaking at the event

Throughout the event, speakers emphasized the strategic importance of collaborative water management, regional integration, and modernizing agriculture through innovative irrigation methods. Discussions also highlighted cross-border cooperation as a vital aspect of ensuring food security and adapting to climate challenges in the Horn of Africa.

This event underscores Ethiopia's leading role in fostering sustainable development in lowland areas and its vision for inclusive growth driven by effective natural resource management and regional solidarity.

Read more: <https://www.mills.gov.et/>

**AFSA**

ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA



**Who controls our food,  
controls our future**

## From Extraction to Sovereignty

### Who Controls Africa's Agriculture? AFSA Conference Challenges Financial Extraction

The Shifting Financial Power: Defunding Industrial Agriculture and Funding Agroecology conference, hosted by the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), wrapped up with powerful reflections and bold commitments. Dr. Million Belay, AFSA's General Coordinator, delivered a compelling keynote that sparked deep conversations around reclaiming Africa's food systems from exploitative global structures.

In his address, Dr. Belay exposed how Africa's agriculture, rich in resources and biodiversity, remains trapped in a system of financial extraction driven by foreign corporations, financial institutions, and neo-colonial policies. He traced this legacy from colonial cash crop economies to modern industrial farming models pushed by institutions like the IMF and World Bank, which have left smallholder farmers landless, in debt, and reliant on imported food.

"Who controls our food, controls our future" he emphasized, calling for a radical shift in funding priorities toward agroecology—a farmer-led, ecologically sound alternative that promotes food sovereignty, community resilience, and sustainability.

Key takeaways from his speech include:

- Defunding industrial agriculture and exposing financial flows that uphold it.
- Redirecting agricultural investment toward smallholders and ecological farming
- Challenging land grabs and corporate seed control
- Empowering local food economies over export-driven models
- Building strong Pan-African farmer movements to demand policy change

The keynote received enthusiastic responses from participants, with one attendee calling it "one of the best meetings she had attended in years."



Dr. Million Belay, AFSA General Coordinator, speaking at the event

# Post-COP 29 Debriefing Workshop: The Road from Baku to Belem



**O**n March 13, 2025, the Consortium for Climate Change Ethiopia (CCC-E) organized a Post-COP 29 debriefing Workshop, bringing together more than 50 participants to analyze and reflect on the key outcomes of COP 29.

The workshop addressed five critical themes shaping climate negotiations at COP29:

**Climate Finance (NCQG):** Discussions highlighted the need for equitable and accountable access to climate funds. The current \$300 billion pledge remains far below the \$1.3 trillion target.

**Just Transition for Adaptation:** Emphasis was placed on inclusive, socially equitable strategies that strengthen community resilience.

**Gender Outcomes:** Progress on gender-responsive policies was reviewed, with a new Gender Action Plan expected at COP30.

**Food Systems:** Participants raised concerns over declining climate finance for food systems, urging stronger integration of agriculture in climate action.

**Youth Engagement:** The importance of youth voices in climate policy and grassroots solutions was strongly emphasized.

A key takeaway from the workshop was the urgent need to move beyond commitments and accelerate implementation. Achieving climate justice and sustainability requires a collaborative and inclusive approach—one that engages policymakers, relevant government institutions, civil society, communities and Private sector.

As the world prepares for COP 30 in Belem, Brazil, in November 2025, this workshop provided a crucial platform for knowledge-sharing and strategic discussions. CCCE remains committed and dedicated to creating a platform for fostering impactful climate discussions and advocacy.



Event participants



## Keep Your Promise Campaign: The Road from Baku to Belém Key outcomes of COP 29

Sapphire Addis Hotel

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Thursday, 13 March 2025



# From Practitioner Perspectives: Agroecology

## Advancing Agroecology in the Highlands of Ethiopia: A Stepwise Approach to Sustainable Agriculture

By Eden Teferi (GIZ) and Julia Doldt (GIZ)

The GIZ Integrated Soil Fertility Management (ISFM+)/ProSilience project has been driving the agroecological transformation of Ethiopia's agricultural system, fostering sustainable agriculture and food systems across the highlands, including Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, Sidama, Central, and Southern Ethiopia regions.

Land degradation and declining productivity in Ethiopia's highlands stem from soil erosion, nutrient depletion, and increasing soil acidity. To tackle these challenges ISFM has been identified as a solution and starting point of the agroecological transformation of Ethiopia's agriculture. The project supports participatory demonstrations to showcase how to sustainably boost yields and restore soil health as seeing is believing.

The project follows a stepwise approach based on ISFM and then moving into more holistic approaches at watershed level:

### 1. Increased On-Farm Biomass (Quick Win)

Encouraging immediate soil fertility improvements which benefits yields already in the first season.

### 2. Reduction of Nutrient & Biomass Losses (Short-Term)

Implementing measures to minimize soil degradation. This includes reducing heavy biomass removal to build soil organic matter.

### 3. Improvement of Resource Use Efficiency (Mid-Term)

Enhancing productivity through optimized resource management.

### 4. Agroecological Integration (Long-Term)

A holistic approach at the farm and watershed level that integrates crops, pasture, livestock, and forestry, ultimately reducing reliance on external inputs while optimizing productivity and soil health. See figure below.

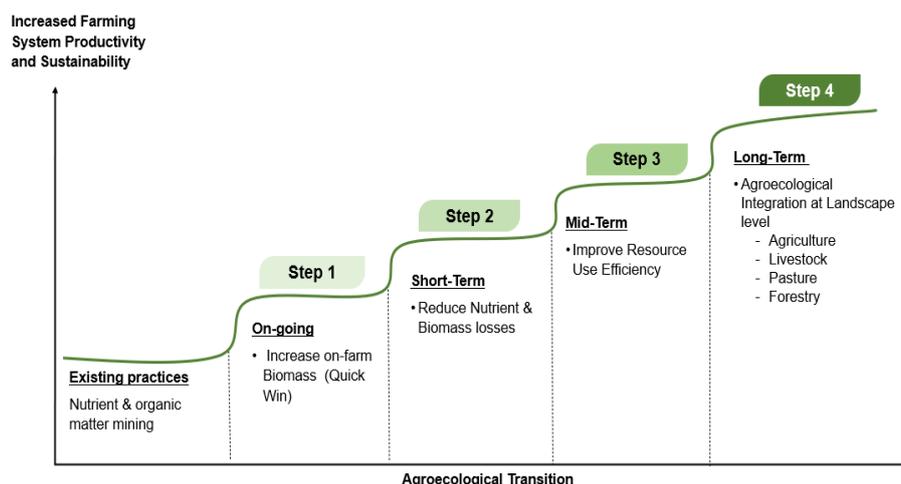


Community in a farm field. Photo: GIZ

Key interventions such as integrated application of organic and mineral fertilizers, applying lime on acidic soil, green manuring, improved seed varieties and row-planting have consistently led to better productivity. Agroforestry, crop residue management, conservation agriculture, crop rotation, different physical structures to conserve soil and water, amongst others are some of the vital components, demonstrating significant benefits for building soil water retention capacity, organic matter content, and nutrient recycling.

A research paper concluded that ISFM is essential for boosting productivity, ensuring food security, and mitigating climate change effects. Scaling up these efforts requires advocacy, awareness-raising, enhanced field-level extension services, and greater

For further details on the research work, see the full research "The role of integrated soil fertility management in improving crop yields in the Ethiopian Highlands" at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/376433688>



# From Practitioner Perspectives: Agroecology

## Scaling Agroecology at the Watershed Level

By Eden Teferi (GIZ) and Julia Doldt (GIZ)

The agroecological transition shifts the focus from individual farms to entire watersheds, fostering biodiversity, ecosystem services, and community resilience. Participatory landscape planning plays a key role in optimizing resource flows within these ecosystems. A critical instrument in this transition has been the Community-Managed Agricultural Development Initiative (CoMADI), which has facilitated sustainable farming practices through community-driven revolving funds and capacity-building initiatives

This approach strengthened local ownership and responsibility, but also highlighted the need for increased financial capacity and greater engagement from agricultural extension staff to ensure sustainability and scalability. The involvement of local community-based organizations, especially watershed users' cooperatives, is crucial for developing by-laws governing resource use and grazing management.

### Promoting Agroecology on regional and national level

In collaboration with Haramaya University, the project managed to incorporate agroecology into higher education system. The university has already commenced an MSc. program in Agroecology.

The FAO-developed Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE) was applied in collaboration with the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (ICRAF) to measure agroecological transition on farms. Findings revealed that 83% of participating farms were in transition towards agroecology, which was also linked to higher farm revenues, demonstrating the effectiveness of these interventions in fostering sustainable agricultural practices.

Check the key findings from applying the FAO Tool for Agroecology Performance Evaluation (TAPE): <https://www.cifor-icraf.org/knowledge/publication/9298/>

Even though the project is in its phase-out stage, it has made significant strides in raising awareness, enhancing the adoption of technical and socio-economic innovations in selected woredas, strengthening the policy and research framework for agroecological transition, and fostering national and international knowledge-sharing on agroecology.

**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



A woman in a farm field. Photo: GIZ

Currently, some of our partners, under the guidance of the Ministry of Agriculture, are working on drafting an agroecology strategy for Ethiopia, which will facilitate targeted investment and further progress.

If you would like to find out more, you can access various knowledge products using this QR code, follow the link below or contact Mr. Tesfay Halefom ([Tesfay.halefom@giz.de](mailto:Tesfay.halefom@giz.de))

ISMF+ Extension Material: <https://www.moa.gov.et/natural-resource-development/>



SCAN ME to get all the  
ISMF+ Extension Material

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## Taste of Tradition: Recipes That Nourish

Exploring Nutrition through Culture

**Did you know that the world's most nutritious meals are also rooted in local tradition?** This month, we are spicing things up by spotlighting food as culture, nutrition, and knowledge, inspired by FAO's global cookbook series.

**Kenya**, spotlighted in this issue. Kenyan's Food Recipes is more than a collection of meals - it's a celebration of cultural diversity and a tool for boosting community nutrition. From **cassava porridge (Uji wa Muhogo)** to **stewed chicken (Inghokho)**, these dishes are now documented with ingredients, portion sizes, and preparation tips to support healthier households and better nutrition outcomes.



What are you cooking today? Maybe it's a good time to make a healthy traditional meal, write down your family's old recipes, or try a new version of a favorite dish using beans or local green vegetables. Food is not just something we eat to fill our empty belly. It is part of our culture, our strength, and it helps build a better, healthier future.

Want to explore more? Check out the FAO cookbook series for inspiration. Your next healthy meal might just be a few pages away. <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/story/Celebrating-nutrition-with-these-five-FAO-cookbooks/en>

# International Women's Day 2025

## Message from the ESFSAC

On International Women's Day, we celebrate Ethiopian women's critical role in creating sustainable food systems. From farming to food preservation and agroecology, women's contributions are vital for food security and biodiversity, yet often go unrecognized. Their knowledge of local foods and their health benefits is invaluable.

As a woman-led institution, ESFSAC is dedicated to empowering women to lead change in agriculture and food systems. We believe that when women are supported and empowered, communities thrive, ensuring a sustainable future.

Despite challenges like unequal access to resources, Ethiopian women continue to innovate and drive meaningful change. Their resilience ensures food security for future generations.

*"At ESFSAC, we aim to create an inclusive food system where women's voices are heard, their leadership valued, and their knowledge applied. We advocate for creating opportunities for women to lead agroecological solutions that promote sustainability. Women lacked opportunities, they have great potential."*

- Dr. Bayush Tsegaye – Executive Director

We are proud of Ethiopian women who have excelled in diverse fields, like the pioneering all-women Ethiopian Airlines flight crew.

Let's continue to break barriers and create a world where women thrive in every sector.

## MEET OUR AMAZING TEAM

Our leadership and team members are dedicated to making a difference in the Ethiopian food system through agroecology and sustainability initiatives:



**Dr. Bayush Tsegaye**  
Executive Director



**Lensa Girma**  
Program Coordinator



**Sena Getahun**  
Communications Expert



**Eden Yoseph**  
Finance & Administration

We are excited to invite you to be featured in our upcoming issue of ESFSAC Insights, coming in May 2025. If you have any projects, achievements, or announcements you'd like to share, please send us your content by mid-May. This is a wonderful opportunity to start the year by showcasing your work. For submissions or inquiries, feel free to contact us or email your content to: [tsegayebayush14@gmail.com](mailto:tsegayebayush14@gmail.com) / [senagetahun@gmail.com](mailto:senagetahun@gmail.com) / [lensagirma146@gmail.com](mailto:lensagirma146@gmail.com). We look forward to featuring your highlights in our May issue!

## Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC)

### Ethiopia Founding Members

- MELCA Ethiopia
- Land for Life Ethiopia
- PELUM Ethiopia
- Enhanced Rural Self-Help Association
- Pesticide Action Nexus Ethiopia
- Agri Service Ethiopia
- CST Ethiopia

### General Assembly Members

- Home Grown Vision
- PHE Ethiopia
- Ethio-Organic Seed Action
- Green Flower Foundation

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