

Bimonthly Updates

Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium Bimonthly Newsletter (August - September 2025)



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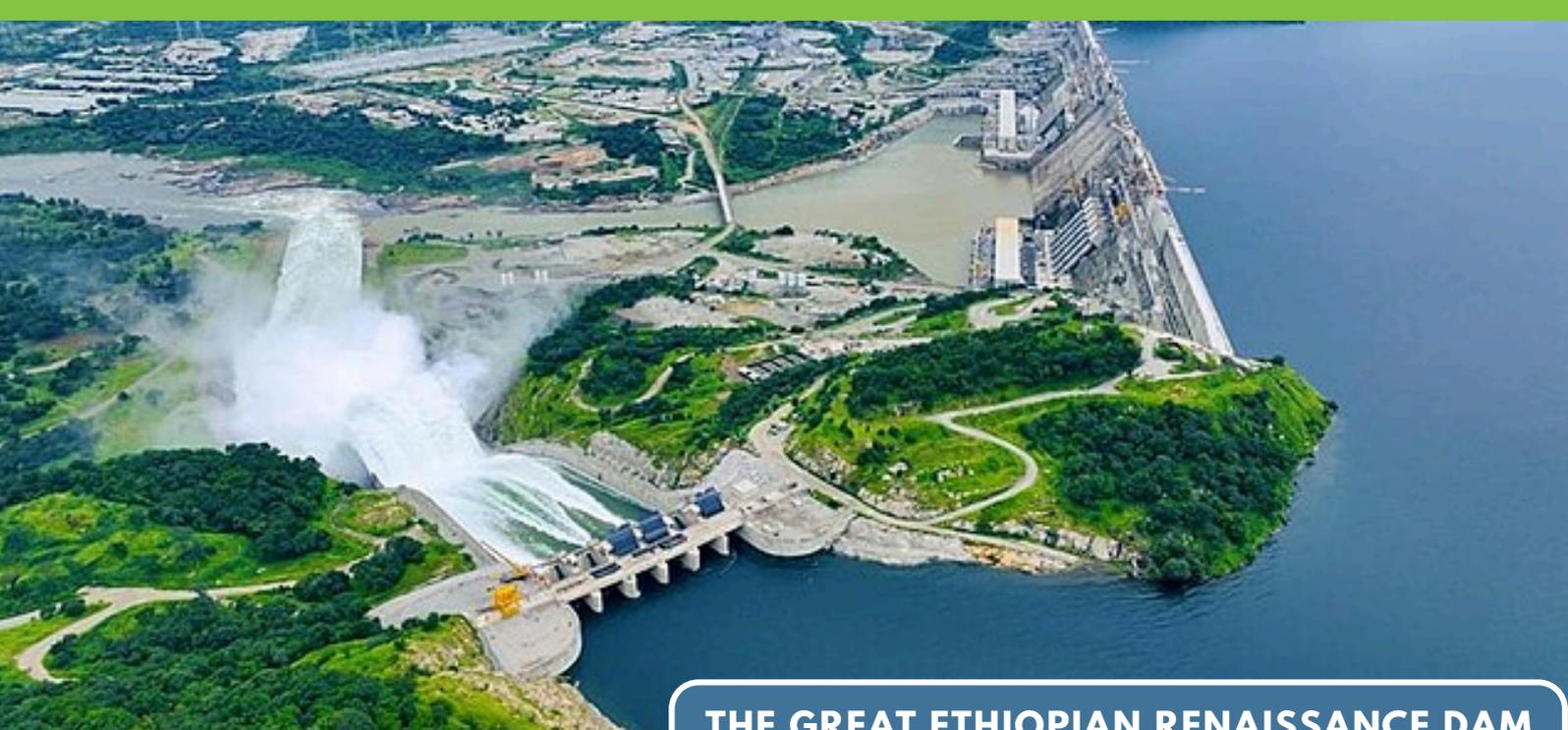
Welcome to the Sixth Issue

ESFSAC Insights

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC) bimonthly Newsletter. This newsletter shares updates on key initiatives, events, and Ethiopia's role in sustainable agriculture and agroecology, with a focus on women and youth empowerment, global climate and sustainable food system discussions. Stay tuned for insights into our progress and upcoming opportunities to get involved.



Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems
and Agroecology Consortium
(ESFSAC)



THE GREAT ETHIOPIAN RENAISSANCE DAM

Congratulations to all Ethiopians on the historic completion of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), the largest in Africa, inaugurated on September 9th 2025. This achievement is more than an engineering marvel it is a symbol of resilience, unity, and the power of vision when people come together for a common purpose. The multibillion dollar project was fully funded by the Ethiopian people without any loan or grant from external sources.

The GERD represents a new chapter in Ethiopia's journey toward energy independence, unlocking the potential for clean and sustainable power to reach millions. Beyond lighting homes and driving industries, the Dam will boost ecotourism and also strengthen our capacity for food security by powering irrigation and supporting agroprocessing, thereby contributing to climate resilience by reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

As we celebrate this milestone at the national level, we are reminded of the equally transformative innovations happening at the grassroots. Just as the GERD embodies the collective will of a nation, the Ministry of Agriculture is preparing to advance agroecology, harnessing indigenous knowledge, local resources, and sustainable practices to ensure healthier food systems and resilient livelihoods.

National milestones like this inspire us to dream bigger and act bolder in our local contexts. They remind us that resilience is built not only in grand structures but also in the everyday choices of farmers, pastoral and agropastoral communities including youth and women who are key change agents in shaping a more sustainable food future.

Let us carry forward this spirit of grand achievement into our work in agroecology and food systems transformation knowing that when we work together, no challenge is too great, and no vision is too distant.

With admiration and hope,

Dr. Bayush Tsegaye
ESFSAC Executive Director





THE SECOND AFRICAN CLIMATE SUMMIT

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**Hosted by the Government of Ethiopia (GoE)
in collaboration with the African Union (AU)**

From September 6 - 8, 2025, Ethiopia hosted the Second African Climate Summit (ACS2) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Summit brought together over 2500 delegates including: The African Heads of State and Governments, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, business leaders, youth, and civil society representatives. ACS2 unified the continent's voice to shape global climate action, championing a shared vision for Africa-led solutions. Its aim is to secure a fairer global financial system that funds renewable energy, adaptation, and community-led projects, empowering African youth and indigenous groups. Framing the climate crisis as an issue of justice and reparations, the Summit demanded equitable resources for nations disproportionately impacted yet rich with potential.

Beyond high-level finance, the summit powerfully centered climate action as a fundamental issue of justice and fairness. Resonating with the African Union's 2025 theme, the discourse highlighted the profound injustice faced by nations that have contributed least to the problem yet bear its most brutal impacts. This was not a plea, but a demand for equitable resource allocation and a new, respectful model of global partnership. The vision championed at ACS2 is one that empowers African communities, with a specific focus on elevating the roles of youth and indigenous groups in leading a just transition.

The journey from Nairobi is just beginning. The ACS2 held in Addis Ababa has issued a compelling call to action for the world to engage with Africa as an essential partner. The outcomes of this Summit will be the benchmark for Africa's negotiations at COP30, challenging global leaders to move beyond rhetoric and into a new era of collaboration built on mutual benefit and climate justice.



Key priorities of the Second African Climate Summit were;

- **African-led solutions:** Prioritizing locally relevant innovations and solutions rooted in Africa's own development priorities.
- **Climate finance:** Advocating for fair, significant, and predictable climate finance, shifting the focus from aid to investment.
- **Unified voice:** Building a strong, unified African position on climate change to present at global forums.
- **Adaptation and resilience:** Highlighting Africa's climate risks and focusing on scalable responses through a combination of nature-based and technology-based solutions.
- **Leveraging Africa's Green Potential:** Driving the green and renewable energy potential that Africa holds to bridge the energy gap.

The Second Africa Climate Summit concluded with a clear repositioning of Africa, not as a victim of climate change, but as the source of solutions for the regional and global economy.

Accelerating Global Climate Solutions: Financing for Africa's Resilient and Green Development.

The Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems And Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC) participated in both the main sessions and Side events. ESFSAC made deliberations as a panelist addressing the need to break the silo approach on a side event organized on the theme "From Ambition to Action: Amplifying Civil Society Voices in Ethiopia's NDC 3.0 for a Climate Resilient Africa". ESFSAC also shared its experiences in another side event held at the AFSA pavilion.

Youth in Agroecology and Indigenous Food Systems

Startup Competition

The Youth in Agroecology & Indigenous Food Systems Startup Competition was hosted by the Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC) in partnership with the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) and the Agroecology Fund. The competition commenced on July 14, 2025, with a registration call and ended by awarding winners. The competition targeted those working to transform sustainable food systems and have a startup rooted in agroecological practices.

The journey to crown Ethiopia's next generation agroecology innovators was both rigorous and inspiring, beginning with over 70 passionate applicants. Each contender had to prove their venture's potential through compelling video presentations and detailed business plans, entering a meticulous screening process. This careful evaluation narrowed down the pool to only top ten most promising finalists, who earned their place to pitch in the exclusive Youth in Agroecology and Indigenous Food Systems Startup Competition.

The real transformation for these top ten finalists began with an intensive capacity-building training program designed to sharpen their skills for the final showdown.

They immersed themselves in interactive sessions covering topics ranging from financial management and business planning to mastering communication and pitch deck development. With dedicated mentorship and peer feedback, they refined their story-line and strengthened their propositions, emerging as polished entrepreneurs ready to take the stage. The top ten contenders presented their pitch on August 20, 2025, where they were evaluated by expert judges accordingly.

The grand finale unfolded at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Addis Ababa on September 6, 2025, where the winners of the competition were announced and rewarded before a distinguished audience of judges, leaders of relevant government institutions, invited guests, and the media. The event was a vibrant celebration of dedication and innovation, building to crafting role models to inspire more youth for future engagement.

In a thrilling conclusion, the top three visionaries were awarded financial prizes to invest in their startup agribusinesses, marking a triumphant end to a competition that has undoubtedly ignited the journey to the future of sustainable food systems.



**Youth are key
change agents to
promote
agroecology**



Meet Dr. Million Belay



Dr. Million Belay, General Coordinator, AFSA

ESFSAC: Who is Million? Can you explain briefly?

Dr. Million: I was born and raised in Merkato, a place I call a miniature of Ethiopia hosting the largest open market. It is unusual for someone from Merkato not to end up as a merchant or businessman, but my journey took a different path.

After completing school, I began my career teaching biology and chemistry at Gindeberet Secondary School in central Ethiopia. While there, I collected plants for the Ethiopian Herbarium and wrote short stories to share at school. Later, I moved to Wolliso and started an environmental club, which became one of the strongest in Ethiopia through the dedication of teachers and students. During this time, I learned of a vacancy at the Ethiopian Heritage Trust, an NGO initiated by Michael Sargent of the British Council together with prominent Ethiopians, inspired by the English Trust. Its main goal was the preservation of Ethiopia's historic buildings. The Trust also took an interest in Entoto Mountain, a historic site where Emperor Menelik resided and built churches. I joined the Trust and spent three years mobilizing citizens, especially youth, to plant indigenous trees on the mountain and to protect historic buildings.

Later on, I joined the Institute for Sustainable Development (ISD), where I had the opportunity to work with farmers in Tigray on what we now call agroecology, and I initiated the concept of biocultural diversity. Every year, school clubs from different regions came together to celebrate cultural foods and display diverse indigenous seeds, herbs, spices, medicinal plants, and forest tree species from their respective localities.

“The value of our food diversity is the source of our resilience”

ESFSAC: How did you get involved in environmental activism? What were your sources of inspiration? How was the journey?

Dr. Million: My journey is long, and my inspirations came at different stages, each building on the other.

One pivotal moment was attending an Ethiopian Biological Society meeting in Addis Ababa on environmental education. By then, a teacher from Bale spoke about the loss of wildlife due to political instability and how he organized his students to protect the wildlife. As a young man, I was deeply moved and started the Walga Environmental Club at my own school. The club is still active today, and its leaders remain in touch with me.

After sometime, I shifted my focus from only celebrations to studying the environment more systematically. I divided the club members into four groups to study wildlife, wetlands, crop farms, and animal diversity. We later organized an exhibition, inviting leaders such as the late Dr. Tewolde Gebre-Egziabher, a Nobel Prize laureate, renowned environmentalist and African biosafety negotiator; and Sue Edwards, Founder and Director of the ISD.

Impressed by my mobilization skills, the Ethiopian Heritage Trust invited me to join them in managing the Entoto Mountain. I founded the Ethiopian Heritage Youth Club, and every year we planted indigenous trees at Entoto. My reputation grew as someone able to mobilize and encourage participation in environmental action.

Dr. Million's journey from a school club to a continental movement is just the beginning. Discover how a meeting with another Nobel laureate and a powerful book inspired his flagship program in a thrilling conclusion will come in our next issue. Stay tuned!!

Women in Agroecology and Food Systems Network

On October 11, 2025, the vibrant launch of the Women in Agroecology and Food Systems Network took place at the Vibes Hotel and Spa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Mahder Akalu, a Communications Expert and facilitator of the event opened the session by warmly welcoming all participants to the launch and networking event of the Women in Agroecology & Food Systems Network.

Dr. Bayush Tsegaye, Executive Director of the Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC) marked the event a significant step towards amplifying women's voices in a sector where they are critically underrepresented. Dr. Bayush outlined the mission and core values of ESFSAC, which champions diversity, sustainability, sovereignty, solidarity, justice and empowerment. The formation of this network was inspired by a previous gathering on International Women's Day in 2024 with the objective of tackling the systemic exclusion of women from training programs, assuming leadership roles and recognizing their invaluable indigenous knowledge.

The event featured several engaging and insightful sessions designed to highlight the different roles and contribution of women. A particularly creative segment, "Drawing a day in the life of a woman farmer," saw participants visually mapping the relentless daily schedule of women, from pre-dawn household chores and childcare to intensive farm labor and market activities. This was complemented by the "My Star" session, where participants shared personal and professional role models, illustrating the profound influence of women; from mothers, academic mentors, entrepreneurs to community leaders in shaping their lives and careers. These activities highlighted the immense, often unpaid, contributions of women to both agriculture and family well-being.

A core part of the agenda was a structured group discussion focusing on critical themes of leadership, policy, capacity building, and knowledge documentation. The presentations revealed significant barriers, including limited land ownership, inadequate policy implementation and a lack of access to credit and training for women.

Key Recommendations

- Advocacy to engage youth and women in policy development/revision process.
- Creation of inclusive capacity building programs (knowledge, skill and competence).
- Utilization of labor saving appropriate technologies.
- Systematically documenting, enhancing and sharing women's indigenous agroecological and food related knowledge.

The gathering concluded with plans for concrete action, including the formation of a dedicated women's task force to be selected from the network. This gathering emphasized the power of collective effort and diverse perspectives to influence policy effectively. This networking event successfully laid a strong foundation for a collaborative movement aimed at empowering women, advocating for their rights, and fostering a more sustainable and equitable food system for Ethiopia.

“No success in agroecology and food systems without engaging women”



Participants of the Women in Agroecology and Food Systems network gathering

Sadza rezviyo and zvinyenze

(finger millet pap and wrapped goat tripe with intestines)

Background and Significance

This pairing is a tale of two heritages, one from the earth and the other from the homestead. The **Sadza**, a hearty pap made from finger millet, is a gluten-free nutritional bedrock rich in calcium with a distinct, nutty depth. Its perfect partner, **Zvinyenze**; whose very name means "to wrap up" – is a celebratory delicacy that honors the nose-to-tail philosophy. These labor intensive parcels of seasoned intestines enveloped in tripe are an act of culinary care, slowly simmered until tender, yielding a uniquely savory and profound flavor that, when paired with the earthy Sadza, creates a feast that is as deeply rooted in culture as it is satisfying to the soul.

Part 1: Sadza rezviyo (Finger Millet Pap)

Ingredients:

- 2 cups finger millet flour (zviyo)
- 4-5 cups water
- 1 teaspoon salt (or to taste)

Instructions:

- 1. Initial Mixing:** In a separate bowl, mix the finger millet flour with about 1 cup of cold water, stirring vigorously to form a completely smooth, lump-free paste.
- 2. Cook the Base:** Bring 2 cups of water to a gentle boil in a pot. Slowly pour the millet paste into the boiling water, stirring constantly with a wooden stick, then reduce the heat to low.
- 3. Thicken the Porridge:** Continue stirring as the mixture thickens into a porridge for 5-7 minutes. It will bubble, so be cautious.
- 4. Incorporate Dry Flour:** Gradually add the remaining dry finger millet flour to the pot a handful at a time, stirring vigorously and continuously after each addition to prevent lumps from forming.
- 5. Knead the Sadza:** Once all flour is added and the mixture is very thick, vigorously fold and press it against the sides of the pot with your stick for 8-10 minutes until smooth and pliable. If it becomes too hard, sprinkle a little hot water around the edges, cover, and let it steam briefly.
- 6. Rest and Serve:** The Sadza is ready when it pulls cleanly away from the pot's sides. Shape it into a smooth mound, cover the pot, and let it rest off the heat for 2-3 minutes before serving.

Part 2: Zvinyenze (Wrapped Goat Tripe with Intestines)

Ingredients:

1 set of goat tripe (the stomach lining), 1 set of goat intestines, 1 medium onion, finely chopped, 2-3 cloves garlic, minced, 1-2 teaspoons curry powder, 1 teaspoon paprika (optional, for color), 1-2 fresh chilies, finely chopped (to taste), salt and black pepper to taste, a handful of fresh parsley or cilantro, chopped, water for boiling

Instructions:

- 1. Initial Boil:** Boil the cleaned tripe and intestines in salted water for 10-15 minutes. Discard this water and rinse the offal thoroughly to remove impurities.
- 2. Make Filling:** Cut intestines into 4-5 inch pieces. Mix with onion, garlic, spices, and herbs to create the seasoned filling.
- 3. Wrap Parcels (Kunyengetera):** Place filling on tripe pieces, roll into tight cylinders, and tie securely with butcher's twine.
- 4. Stew:** Place parcels in a clean pot, cover with fresh water, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat to a gentle simmer and cover.
- 5. Slow Cook:** Simmer for 2-3 hours until tripe is tender, adding water if needed. The slow cooking develops flavor and tenderizes.
- 6. Reduce Gravy:** In the final stage, let the cooking liquid reduce to form a rich gravy. Remove lid to thicken slightly if desired.
- 7. Serving:** Enjoy hot with the reduced gravy alongside Sadza rezviyo, traditionally eaten by hand.



UPCOMING EVENT

Get ready for a series of exciting upcoming events that will bring together experts, policy makers, and stakeholders to advance sustainable food systems.

- **Event Title:** Pan-African Convening on the future of Biodigital Technologies in Food and Agriculture.
Date & place of Event: 2 - 4 October, 2025. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- **Event Title:** World Food Day, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.
Date of Event: October 16, 2025.
- **Event Title:** Consultation workshop on the Draft National Agroecology of Ethiopia.
Date & place of Event: 23 - 24 October, 2025. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- **Event Title:** The 30th United Nations Climate Conference (COP30).
Date & place of Event: 6 - 21 November, 2025. Belem, Brazil.
- **Event Title:** The People's Summit (Global network of activism against extractivism, defend life and territories).
Date & place of Event: 10 - 21 November, 2025. Belem, Brazil.

We are excited to invite you to be featured in our upcoming November's issue of ESFSAC's newsletter. If you have any projects, achievements or announcements you'd like to share, please send us your content by mid-November. This is a wonderful opportunity to showcase your work. For submissions or inquiries, feel free to contact us or email your content to: contact.esfsac@gmail.com / natnaelbirhanu14@gmail.com / lensagirma146@gmail.com . We look forward to featuring your highlights.



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

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