

# Bimonthly Updates

Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium Bimonthly Newsletter

## New Volume, Same Mission, Bigger Goals

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

### Editorial Message

#### First Edition 2026

Welcome to the first 2026 edition newsletter of the **Ethiopian Sustainable Food System and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC)**.

It is with great pleasure that we share this edition with you our members, partners, supporters, and the wider agroecology community. This newsletter serves as a platform to reflect, inform, and connect. It captures the voices, actions, and collective sustained efforts shaping sustainable food systems across Ethiopia.

In this edition, you will find highlights of our ongoing initiatives, policy engagements, youth and women-led initiatives, community stories, and collaborative milestones. Each story reflects our shared commitment to advancing agroecology, strengthening indigenous food systems, and promoting food sovereignty rooted in our cultural and ecological diversity.

As a consortium, we believe that transformation happens through partnership, knowledge exchange, and sustained action. This newsletter is not only a report of activities it is a space for dialogue, learning, and inspiration.

We are grateful for your continued feedback, partnership and the way you share our newsletter across your networks. There is much more to share. Stay connected, stay inspired and together let's nourish the future. Thank you for being part of this growing movement and for your continued dedication to building resilient, just, and sustainable food systems in Ethiopia.

Warm regards,  
**ESFSAC Team**

# Ethiopian Fertilizer and Soil Health Roadmap

On 13 November 2025, Ethiopia has stepped into a leadership role to transform East Africa's agricultural potential into tangible food security and climate resilience. This ambitious announcement took place at the 19th multi-disciplinary team meeting, organized by FAO's Sub-regional Office for Eastern Africa. This critical meeting was carried under the theme **"Strengthening Partnership and Investment for Accelerated Agrifood System Transformation and Climate Resilience in the Eastern Africa Sub-region"**. It served as a powerful platform for aligning national priorities with a shared vision.

Mr. Meles Mekonnen, Ethiopia's State Minister of Agriculture highlighted the nation's recent agricultural advancements particularly in wheat production and landscape restoration. The convening demonstrated what can be achieved when we align policy, research, partnership, capacity development and committed engagement.

"This meeting is especially important as we celebrate the 80th birthday of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations" Mr. Meles said, recognizing FAO's long-standing contribution to agricultural transformation. He noted that Ethiopia is actively scaling up irrigation, improving soil health and promoting Market oriented commercial agriculture.

Abebe Haile-Gabriel, FAO Assistant Director General and Regional Representative for Africa, reinforced the call for collective action. He urged members to move beyond isolated innovations and move towards or increasing systemic transformative and developmental changes through strategic partnership.

There is an Ethiopian proverb that goes **'ፎር ቢያብር አንበሳ ያከር'**, roughly translating to strength in unity which symbolizes the power of unity and cooperation, and this meeting reflects the efforts and drive of African nations unifying for a common goal. FAO's Ethiopia representative, Farayi Zimudzi, noted that despite East Africa's agricultural potential nearly three quarters of the population can't afford healthy diet and one in three children under the age of five suffer from stunted growth. She emphasized the importance of digital agriculture and innovation as critical drivers for a meaningful improvement. This meeting outlined a clear set of priorities to address these challenges as follows:

## Key Recommendations

- Accelerating investments through FAO's hand in hand framework.
- Strengthening regional supply chains.
- Expanding climate smart agriculture.
- Enhancing land restoration and green vegetation coverage.
- Improving market connectivity and increasing strategic partnership.

As Ethiopia assumes its leadership role and regional partners align around a bold, unified strategy, the path forward for East African agriculture is driven by a powerful truth: **lasting transformation is not achieved through isolated efforts, but through the collective resolve to turn shared potential into shared prosperity for all its people.**

ESFSAC was honored to take part in the official launching event of the Ethiopian Fertilizer and Soil Health Roadmap, held on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2025 at the Ministry of Agriculture conference center in Addis Ababa. [Read more.](#)



Participants of the Ethiopian Fertilizer and Soil Health Roadmap Launch Workshop



## CONTINENTAL LEARNING WORKSHOP AND DIALOGUE ON THE AFRICAN FOOD POLICY

On 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> December 2025, the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) convened in Nairobi, Kenya for a pivotal Continental Learning Workshop and Dialogue, bringing together a diverse coalition of voices to reshape the future of food on the continent. The gathering, which drew senior government officials, researchers, civil society organizations, and grassroots campaigners from 16 African nations, centered on advancing agroecology and food sovereignty as the cornerstones of Africa's food systems. A central theme was the urgent need to shift food production towards nature-positive, culturally appropriate food systems as a direct response to the persistent challenges of hunger, malnutrition, and rising obesity rates. This collective vision sought to move beyond industrial agricultural models to build systems that are resilient, sustainable and genuinely people-centered.

A significant portion of the dialogue was dedicated to a critical analysis of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) strategy for 2026–2035. Participants meticulously examined the policy framework, identifying key gaps where agroecological principles needed stronger integration. The discussions underscored the necessity for harmonized policies that would facilitate cross-border trade, particularly to benefit smallholder farmers who form the backbone of Africa's food production. This focus on regional free trade was framed as essential for building resilient food systems that can withstand climate and economic shocks while ensuring food sovereignty.

The workshop served as a powerful platform for advocating for greater inclusion of civil society organizations and smallholder farmers in policy-making processes. Key themes that emerged included the importance of citizen control over food systems and the protection of food sovereignty, ensuring that communities have the right to define their own food and agriculture systems. The discussions highlighted that for policies to be effective and equitable, they must be co-created with those who are most impacted—from the farmers cultivating the land to the consumers whose health and cultural identities are tied to their food.

### Key Takeaways

- The workshop solidified a collective push to position agroecology and food sovereignty at the very heart of Africa's agricultural future.
- Strategic engagement with the CAADP 2026–2035 Framework.
- Building a resilient food systems depends on empowering smallholder farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolks through improved regional trade.
- The necessity for a unified and inclusive vision for food systems .



Ultimately, the AFSA Continental Learning Workshop and Dialogue reaffirmed a collective commitment to building African food systems that are resilient, equitable, and rooted in agroecology. By bringing together government, research, and civil society, the event fostered a shared understanding that the path forward requires integrating traditional knowledge with progressive policy. The outcomes of the dialogue are poised to inform ongoing advocacy efforts, ensuring that the voices of African farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolks communities are central as the continent implements its agricultural development agenda for the next decade and beyond.

## Campaign Update: My Food is African / My Food is Ethiopian

### Social Media Campaign by the ESFSAC | February 9 - 15, 2026

In a powerful affirmation of cultural identity and sustainable food systems, the Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium (ESFSAC) implemented its first structured institutional digital campaign on “My Food is African / My Food is Ethiopian”, a seven-day digital awareness campaign from 9 – 15 February 2026. The initiative aimed to celebrate Ethiopian food heritage while promoting agroecology, food sovereignty, and culturally rooted dietary practices. The “My Food is African / My Food is Ethiopian” campaign was designed to reclaim pride in local food heritage while reinforcing the link between cultural identity, conservation of biodiversity, health benefits and sustainable food systems.

The week long campaign featured daily spotlights on indigenous foods namely: *Beyaynetu*, *Bursame*, *Shiro*, *Gomen Besiga*, *Telba Fitfit*, *Chechebsa*, and *Billando* - each presented not as isolated recipes but as interconnected components of Ethiopia’s biodiverse food systems. Through narrative driven storytelling, the daily features explored cultural backgrounds, traditional preparation methods, nutritional values, and ecological significance.

The campaign highlighted the central role of legumes, cereal grains like teff, enset-based foods, and fermented foods in Ethiopian diets. The campaign concluded with a spotlight feature on young women entrepreneurs who took the initiative of promoting typical traditional dishes in urban settings.

The social media campaign received many affirming and positive remarks, achieving remarkable organic engagement on all ESFSAC channels. The results showed that indigenous food narratives resonate deeply within professional networks and beyond, even without paid amplification.

As ESFSAC’s foundational digital engagement initiative, this campaign has established a compelling blueprint for future storytelling efforts. It affirms that celebrating culinary heritage is not merely an exercise in nostalgia but a vital strategy for advancing agroecology, preserving biodiversity, conserving cultural diversity, indigenous knowledge and nurturing food sovereignty. ESFSAC is now positioned to build on this momentum to ensure that the message that “My Food is African/Ethiopian” continues to inspire and unite communities for generations to come.

“Discover. Celebrate. Share our indigenous and healthy foods”



Indigenous Foods Champions

# Women Driving Social Entrepreneurship

## Meet Selam Wondim, a Young Female Social Entrepreneur



Selam Wondim, Founder and CEO of Gomida Solutions

The financial system is not friendly to the youth who have ideas but have no collateral. That was also constraining us to take bold steps and experiment different options. Additionally, building in an emerging industry like gaming in Ethiopia comes with infrastructure and regulatory challenges.

**ESFSAC:** How did you overcome the challenges?

**Selam:** I focused on consistency, learning, and building strong networks. I reminded myself that growth happens outside of comfort zones. Instead of waiting for perfect conditions, I started with what I had and endure the challenges with self-determination. I always prepared myself to learn from the experiences of others and prepare myself on what is required to achieve my aspirations. Through time, I also learned the importance of creating safe and empowering spaces for building collaboration, especially for women. Discipline, resilience, and surrounding myself with supportive ecosystem partners helped me push forward.

**ESFSAC:** How would you introduce Selam to someone who has never met her?

**Selam:** I am Selam Wondim, the Founder and CEO of Gomida Solutions. It is a creative tech company focused on building ethical, skill-based gaming platforms across Africa and the Middle East. My background is in Marketing Management, and I've spent the last several years building ventures in agritech and now in gaming. I'm passionate about creating platforms that are bigger than me – spaces that empower youth, encourage creativity, and compete globally.

**ESFSAC:** Can you briefly tell us about your new innovative approach related to gaming?

**Selam:** Through Gomida Solutions and our platform House of Chewata, we focus on skill-based, hyper-casual games that reward performance rather than chance. We deliberately avoid gambling-style mechanics and instead build competitive, leaderboard-driven experiences that are engaging, educational, and brand-integrated. Our goal is to create an ethical gaming ecosystem that connects players, developers, and brands – and positions Ethiopia as a global player in creative technologies.

**ESFSAC:** What inspired you to engage in entrepreneurship?

**Selam:** I've always been driven by problem-solving and independence. Entrepreneurship gave me the freedom to create solutions instead of waiting for them. My journey began in agritech through an incubation hub that changed my perspective on innovation and impact. Over time, I saw the opportunity to build something bold in gaming – an industry with massive potential but limited ethical, skill-based alternatives in our geographical region. That vision inspired me to build Gomida Solutions.

**ESFSAC:** What are your advices to young boys and girls who like to join the sphere of entrepreneurship?

**Selam:** Start before you feel fully ready. You don't need perfection – you need action. Dream big, stay disciplined, and be consistent. Learn to fail forward and treat challenges as lessons. Be persistent and resilient.

**ESFSAC:** As a youth and a woman, what are the challenges you faced in becoming an entrepreneur?

**Selam:** One of the biggest challenges was navigating spaces that were not always designed for young women. Many opportunities and networks operate in environments where women are underrepresented. There were also moments of self-doubt – questioning whether I was “ready” enough or experienced enough to join the domain of entrepreneurship. Youth also face challenges of accessing finance to develop their business and enter the market.

Also, build your own networks. If a door doesn't open, create one. Entrepreneurship is not just about making money – it's about solving problems and building something meaningful. If you stay committed to growth and integrity, opportunities will follow.

**Conclusion:** Selam Wondim's journey is a powerful testament to the idea that you don't need permission to start—you just need action. Her work challenges the status quo, transforming the gaming landscape, creating platforms that empowers youth and women and building spaces that encourages creativity and innovation.

# The 39th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU)



## Held at AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia | February 11 - 15, 2026

The 39th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union was held from 11 - 15 February 2026, at the AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa. It concluded by marking a pivotal moment of leadership transition and the launch of a critical continental agenda. H.E. João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço, President of Angola, handed over the AU Chairpersonship for 2026 to H.E. Évariste Ndayishimiye, President of Burundi. Incoming Chairperson Ndayishimiye will steer the Union's work under the newly launched Theme of the Year for 2026: **"Ensuring sustainable water availability and safe sanitation systems to achieve the goals of Agenda 2063."** This theme places water and sanitation at the heart of the continent's development strategy for the fiscal year.

Deliberations were dominated by the continent's pressing peace and security challenges, with leaders reaffirming a zero-tolerance stance on unconstitutional changes of government and emphasizing the need for flexible financing for AU-led peace operations. A key outcome was the adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding to strengthen the operational readiness of the African Standby Force in coordination with Regional Economic Communities. On the governance front, the Assembly advanced the AU Institutional Reforms agenda, received reports on the AfCFTA and AUDA-NEPAD, and reaffirmed the Common Position on UN Security Council reform. Leaders also underscored the importance of a coordinated African voice within the G20, particularly following the Johannesburg Summit, to drive priorities such as sustainable financing, debt restructuring, and climate action.

The Assembly reaffirmed the centrality of **Agenda 2063** as Africa's strategic framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development. It welcomed progress in the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), emphasizing the urgency of transforming African food systems and strengthening resilience to climate shocks. In a significant move, the Assembly deliberated on a study regarding the classification of colonization as a crime against humanity and acts of the era as genocide, underscoring the imperative of historical justice and reparatory justice for African peoples. This was complemented by a renewed expression of solidarity with the people of Palestine.



## Key outcomes & decisions

- **Peace & Security:** The Assembly expressed deep concern over persistent conflicts and unconstitutional changes of government, reaffirming a policy of zero tolerance.
- **Global Governance & G20:** Building on the momentum of the 2025 G20 Summit in Johannesburg, leaders stressed the need for united African positions on global issues.
- **Continental Development:** Progress on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was commended, with calls for accelerated implementation to boost intra-African trade.
- **Historical Justice:** The Assembly considered a study on classifying colonization as a crime against humanity, underscoring the importance of reparatory justice and preserving the dignity of African peoples.
- **International Solidarity:** The Assembly reiterated its steadfast solidarity with the Palestinian people, supporting a just and comprehensive solution in line with international law.

As the Session concluded, the Assembly adopted its final Decisions and Declarations, expressing profound gratitude to the outgoing Chair, President Lourenço, for his 2025 tenure and to the Government and the people of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for the warm hospitality and excellent facilities provided for the successful convening of the Summit. With a clear focus on silencing the guns, driving continental integration through the AfCFTA, and championing the new water and sanitation theme, the African Union enters 2026 under Burundi's chairmanship with a robust agenda for a peaceful, integrated, and prosperous Africa.



Dignitaries at the Thirty-Ninth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union (AU)

# Food Culture : Traditional Dish From Madagascar

## Cultural Significance and Preparation of Romazava

**Romazava** is the national dish of Madagascar, a hearty stew of zebu (beef), leafy greens (anamalao), onions, and tomatoes served with rice. It is traditionally characterized by a tingling, numbing sensation from the greens. Celebrated for its rich flavors and deep cultural roots, romazava is a symbol of community and sharing, often prepared for family gatherings, holidays, and special celebrations.

The dish is a cornerstone of daily life and a powerful emblem of unity and camaraderie, traditionally enjoyed by families sharing from a communal pot to strengthen social bonds. Its preparation and consumption are central to major celebrations, from weddings and holidays to ancestral rites like the Famadihana—where the act of cooking together expresses love and respect, reinforcing the spirit of connectedness.

### Ingredients

- **Meat:** traditionally Zebu meat is used (the humped cattle of Madagascar). It can be substituted with other types of meat.
- **Greens:** a mix of local greens (like paracress), mustard greens (anatsonga), and spinach-like leaves.
- **Aromatics and vegetables:** onions, garlic, ginger and tomatoes.
- **Water or beef/chicken stock**
- **Seasoning:** Salt and black pepper to taste.
- **Spice:** Salkay (a fiery Malagasy chili sauce).
- **Steamed rice:** to be served along with the stew.



Go for recipes that nourish!



### Instructions

1. **Brown the Beef:** Heat oil in a large pot or Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the beef and cook until browned on all sides, about 8-10 minutes.
2. **Build the Flavor Base:** Stir in the onions, garlic, ginger, and chili peppers. Cook for another 2-5 minutes until fragrant.
3. **Add Tomatoes:** Add the diced tomatoes and cook for another minute. Some recipes also add a tablespoon of tomato concentrate at this stage for a richer flavor.
4. **Simmer the Beef:** Pour in the beef stock and add a pinch of salt and pepper. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat to low, cover the pot, and let it simmer for about 30 minutes. (Note: Some recipes suggest a longer simmer of up to 2 hours for the beef to become very tender, especially if using a tougher cut).
5. **Add Pork and Chicken:** Add the pork and chicken pieces to the pot. Stir well, bring back to a simmer, cover, and cook for another 15-20 minutes, or until the pork and chicken are cooked through.
6. **Wilt the Greens:** Taste the broth and adjust seasoning if needed. Now, pile the chopped greens on top of the stew. First the mustard greens, then the spinach, and finally the arugula. Cover the pot and let it simmer for about 10 minutes without stirring. The steam will wilt the greens, and they will reduce significantly in volume.
7. **Final Stir:** After the greens have wilted, stir everything together until the greens are well incorporated into the stew.
8. **Serve:** Serve the Romazava hot in bowls, with a generous portion of steamed white rice on the side or underneath the stew. Pass the sakay or extra chili sauce for those who want more heat.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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:** Celebration of International Women’s Day 2026, under the theme: “Rights, Justice and Action for all women and girls”. Organized by the Ethiopian Sustainable Food Systems and Agroecology Consortium.  
**Date & Place of Event:** 7 March 2026. Vibes Hotel & Spa, Addis Ababa.
- **Event Title:** Launching of the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2025 Report. 20 Years of Tracking Progress: Time To Recommit To Zero Hunger. Organized by Alliance2015 in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, and BMZ.  
**Date of & place of Event:** 10 March 2026. African Union Commission HQ, Addis Ababa.
- **Event Title:** Launching of the National Agroecology Strategy of Ethiopia. Organized by the Ministry of Agriculture.  
**Date & Place of Event:** 14 March 2026. Ministry of Agriculture Conference Center, Addis Ababa.
- **Event Title:** National Conference on “Empowering women for Sustainable Futures: addressing Gender, Climate Change and Nutrition”. Organized by the Forum for Social Studies.  
**Date & Place of Event:** 17 March 2026. Hilton Hotel, Addis Ababa.

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We are excited to invite you to be featured in our upcoming April edition of ESFSAC’s newsletter. If you have any projects, achievements or announcements you’d like to share, please send us your content by mid-April. 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](mailto:contact.esfsac@gmail.com) / [newsletter@esfsac-ethiopia.org](mailto:newsletter@esfsac-ethiopia.org). We look forward to featuring your highlights.

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

#### Consortium Members

- MELCA Ethiopia
- Land for Life Ethiopia
- PELUM Ethiopia
- Enhanced Rural Self-Help Association
- Pesticide Action Nexus Ethiopia
- Agri Service Ethiopia
- CST Ethiopia
- Home Grown vision
- PHE Ethiopia
- Ethio-Organic Seed Action
- Action Aid Ethiopia
- Ethio Africa Youth & Green Legacy Charitable Organization
- ORDA Ethiopia

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