

# Strengthening Institutional Systems for Scaling up OFSP for Improved Nutrition and Food Security in Tigray and SNNPR, Ethiopia



Fig 1. Participants of a ToT training at TARI (Credit: H. Tesfaye)

From July 2017 to May 2019, a total of 8.45 million orange-fleshed sweetpotato (OFSP) cuttings (1,317,500 in Tigray and 7,131,220 in Southern Nations Nationalities and People Region (SNNPR)) were distributed. These directly reached 19,758 households (HHs): 5,348 HHs in Tigray and 14,410 HHs in SNNPR. In addition, continuous advocacy efforts by the International Potato Center (CIP) and other partners means that OFSP is now recognized as a key biofortified crop for addressing food insecurity and micronutrient malnutrition in Ethiopia. OFSP has been mainstreamed into national health and agriculture strategies and the government extension education package.



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## What is the Problem?

Food insecurity and malnutrition are key public health challenges in Ethiopia. Micronutrient deficiencies, notably vitamin A, are highly prevalent, particularly amongst pregnant women and young children. Despite policy commitment, actual implementation of Nutrition-sensitive agricultural (NSA) interventions by implementing delivery sectors to enhance nutrition outcomes at scale is limited. There is limited government funding for NSA interventions; most programs are donor funded and cover limited areas. Moreover, there is low technical capacity for implementation of NSA interventions by relevant delivery organizations. This project is primarily aimed at strengthening capacity of government institutions at national and regional levels, to enhance institutionalization of OFSP for impact and sustainability at scale, leveraging on the achievements of the previous CIP-led, Irish Aid-funded project, namely “Scaling out Sweetpotato and Potato-Led Interventions to Improve Nutrition and Food Security in Tigray and SNNP Regions, Ethiopia”.

## What do we want to achieve?

The overall goal of the project is to contribute to improved nutritional status and food security among vulnerable populations in SNNPR and Tigray regions of Ethiopia through the strengthening of agriculture and health systems and through institutional development. The project began in July 2017 and runs through October 2019. We seek to achieve four objectives:

- Diagnosis of gaps in key institutions, system linkages and coordination, technical and institutional capacity and review of the OFSP evidence base to identify gaps and leverage points for system strengthening.
- Strengthened technical capacity of the Bureau of Agriculture (BoA), Bureau of Health (BoH), Southern Agricultural Research Institute/Tigray Agricultural Research Institute (SARI)/(TARI), agricultural, technical and vocational education training colleges (ATVETs), FTCs, and other stakeholders in the OFSP value chain to promote and implement sustainable OFSP technologies and services to smallholder farmers.
- Evidence, best practices, and lessons on using OFSP to improve food security and nutrition documented and disseminated at national, regional, and local levels.
- Evidence-based advocacy strengthened to influence policies and programming in support of OFSP as part of healthier diets.

## Where are we working?

The project is being implemented in the SNNP and the Tigray regions. The project covers a total of 20 *kebeles* (villages) in 10 *woredas* (districts) in the two regions and the regional capitals for advocacy efforts.

## How are we making it happen?

- Training of Trainers (TOT) model: Cascading training of implementing partners (IPs), *woreda/kebele*

- development agents (DAs) and health extension workers (HEWs), model farmers and field days.
- Engagement with partners with established grass root structures/networks in project sites through cost sharing and exploiting opportunities to link to their other activities.
- Engagement and presentation of evidence-based policy advocacy and networking in different platforms and fora for sensitization and advocacy.
- Incorporation of CIP's sweetpotato training materials into the Agricultural Training Vocational Education (ATVET) colleges curriculum and government extension systems.
- Establishment of OFSP vine multiplication demonstrations, cooking demonstrations and nutrition promotion activities based at FTCs and health posts.

## What have we achieved so far?

- Through continuous advocacy efforts by the International Potato Center (CIP) and other partners, OFSP is recognized as one of the biofortified crops for addressing food insecurity and malnutrition in Ethiopia and mainstreamed into health & agriculture strategies and the government extension education package (specifically, the National Nutrition Program, the Food and Nutrition Policy, the Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture Strategy and the Agricultural Growth Program).
- CIP and the Ministry of Agriculture jointly developed the National Potato and Sweetpotato Strategy which will be key in institutionalizing the scaling up of potato and sweetpotato.
- The project has increased the capacity of regional research institutes (SARI and TARI) to produce disease-free sweetpotato pre-basic seed and provided complementary support to SARI for varietal evaluation (Fig. 1).
- The project facilitated the establishment of a public-private sector partnership in pre-basic/foundation OFSP and potato seed multiplication and production between Tigray Agricultural Research Centre Tissue culture lab and the Tigray Biotechnology Centre.
- Four main Agriculture Technical Vocational Education and Training (ATVET) colleges in the country integrated CIP- OFSP training modules into the relevant ATVET training modules.

- In collaboration with Regional BOA, the project established OFSP demonstration and vine multiplication sites at 17 Farmers Training Centers (FTCs).
- OFSP recipes have been integrated into regular government health sector-led cooking demonstrations at 20 health posts. A total of 4,989 people (467 children, 848 adult men, 3,674 adult women) from project target areas were reached through cooking demos at health posts led by trained HEWs.
- Strengthened the capacity of extension service delivery partners (agriculture and health extension), and women development team leaders for sustainable production of OFSP by:
  - 1) Training 459 extension workers (regional and *woreda* BOA and BOH experts) on OFSP agronomy, nutrition and utilization (Fig. 2).
  - 2) Training 110 regional, district and *kebele* level health bureau staff, 101 ATVETS college instructors and 250 model farmers on OFSP nutrition, utilization and behavioral change nutrition counselling techniques.
- Evidence and lessons from OFSP interventions shared with stakeholders at 13 multi-stakeholder platform meetings at national, regional, and *woreda* levels.
- Organized a regional multi-country learning workshop for CIP Irish Aid funded projects in Malawi, Mozambique and Ethiopia for the 50 participants to exchange ideas experiences and lessons on "system strengthening".



Fig 2. Trained extension service officer on OFSP agronomy (Credit: F. Asfaw)

**Key partners:** Regional BoA in Tigray and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), Regional BOH in Tigray, Women's Association of Tigray, Egna Legn, Tigray Agricultural Research Institute, Southern Agricultural Research Institute, Mekelle University and Hawassa University

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