

EXTERNAL EVALUATION - SHORT REPORT

Key evaluator: Dr. Christine Martins
Technical evaluator: Dr. Franz Hengstberger

Strengthening of the Quality Infrastructure for Innovations in the
Agricultural and Food Sector in Ethiopia

Country/Region: Ethiopia | Sub-Saharan Africa

Project number: 2019.0128.9
Project term: 01.2020 – 03.2024

Lead executing agency: Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture (MoA)
Implementing partner institutions: MoA, MoTRI, EMI, IES, EAS, ECAE, ELA, EIAR, ARARI, BoAs, OSTA, agricultural input regulatory authorities and other agricultural sector organisations (acc. to Implementation Agreement, 12/08/2020)

PTB | Section: 9.35 Sub-Saharan Africa
PTB | Project Coordinator: Mr. Ukeme Okon Archibong

Date: March 30, 2024

This evaluation is an independent assessment. Its contents reflect the evaluator's opinion which is not necessarily equivalent to PTB's view.

List of abbreviations

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development / Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung
DA	Development Agent (agricultural extension staff working at woreda/district level, living in the village)
EMI	Ethiopian Metrology Institute
HARC	Holeta Agricultural Research Center
IES	Institute of Ethiopian Standards
iSTE	Intermittent Short-term Expert
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
OECD/DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
QI	Quality infrastructure
PT	Proficiency test
PTB	National Metrology Institute of Germany / Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt
SME	Small and medium enterprise
SMS	Subject Matter Specialist
ToT	Training of trainers

1. Executive summary of the project

The project “Strengthening of the Quality Infrastructure for Innovations in the Agricultural and Food Sector in Ethiopia” (01/2020-03/2024, 2 million EUR) is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, BMZ) under BMZ’s special initiative “ONE WORLD – No Hunger”. The project is in its second phase.

Political partner is the Ethiopian Ministry of Agriculture (MoA). Implementation partners mentioned in the Implementation Agreement of 12/08/2020 are MoA, the Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration (MoTRI), the Ethiopian Metrology Institute (EMI), the Institute of Ethiopian Standards (IES), the Ethiopian Accreditation Service (EAS), the Ethiopian Conformity Assessment Enterprise (ECAE), the Ethiopian Laboratory Association (ELA), the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), the Amhara Regional Agricultural Research Institute (ARARI), the Bureaus of Agriculture (BoAs), the Oromia Science & Technology Authority (OSTA), agricultural input regulatory authorities and other agricultural sector organisations (Note: this report uses the institutions’ present names, after the recent restructuring of the Ethiopian government institutions). Other important stakeholders are the Ethiopian Agriculture Authority (EAA), the Ethiopian Millers Association (EMA), the Animal Products and Inputs Quality Testing Center (APIQTC), the Oromia Agricultural Research Institute (OARI), and the Ethiopian Food and Drug Administration (EFDA).

According to the project proposal, target group of the project are quality infrastructure (QI) institutions and users of QI services in the value chains wheat, legumes, and honey in Arsi and West Gojam Zones in Oromia and Amhara Regional States. These comprise small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) of the agricultural production and processing (short: agri-food) sector, smallholder family farms that apply quality assurance measures, agricultural extension service providers (Development Agents, DAs; Subject Matter Specialists, SMS) and the trade sector. Indirectly, distributors, consultants and consumers benefit from the project.

According to the project proposal, QI services are generally designed in such a way that they are, in principle, available to the entire population of the country and project benefits are considered to be gender neutral. Therefore, the promotion of gender equality is not a primary or secondary objective of the project but is considered during implementation (e.g. for training).

The project aims at an increased use of QI services which contribute to the application of quality-related innovations in the selected project regions and value chains of the agricultural and food sector in Ethiopia. This is to be achieved by three different outputs covering the fields of quality assurance, laboratory performance, and stakeholder awareness. Quality assurance covers standards; the introduction of quality management systems in wheat-processing SMEs; calibration and proper use of measuring instruments; as well as, to a limited degree, procurement of equipment and consumables. Laboratory performance is improved via analyses of agricultural products, inputs, soils and plants; conducting interlaboratory comparisons (proficiency tests, PTs), and support of suitable laboratories. Stakeholder awareness includes sensitization events for political decision-makers, SMEs and providers of QI services; training of trainer measures and other training formats; as well as information products such as videos, brochures, service catalogues, and training materials.

2. Evaluation of the project

The evaluation was conducted between August and October 2023. Before travelling to Ethiopia intensive preparation took place (inception report, five online meetings with the Project Coordinator and the Local Coordinator, as well as 17 Zoom interviews with persons which could not be met in Ethiopia). The time in Ethiopia (October 23 to 30, 2023) was spent with five days data collection (1/2 day kick-off workshop, 20 interviews and visits), two days data analysis and the debriefing workshop for validation. The primary objective of the evaluation was to provide accountability to the client (BMZ) and facilitate learning within PTB and beyond, especially at the partner institutions.

The methods used were secondary data analysis, key informant interviews before and during the stay in Ethiopia, a start-up workshop with main implementing partners for introducing the evaluation and conducting a participatory evaluation (i.e., workshop participants evaluating the project according to key questions),

participant observation in QI institutions and other places visited (e.g., laboratories, SMEs), assessment of products produced with the support of the project (e.g., concepts, standards, workplans, training modules, information and awareness creation materials), the debriefing workshop to present, discuss and, where appropriate, adjust the preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the evaluation, as well as triangulation of data and methods.

The six OECD/DAC criteria were used as an evaluation basis for this evaluation:

- Relevance: Is the project doing the right things?
- Coherence: How well does the project fit?
- Effectiveness: Is the project achieving its objectives?
- Efficiency: How well are resources being used?
- Impact (higher-level development results): What difference does the project make?
- Sustainability: Will the results last?

The following marking scale was used for the evaluation:

1	2	3	4	5	6
very successful	successful	successful to a limited extent	rather unsuccessful	mainly unsuccessful	entirely unsuccessful

Overall, the project received the mark: 2.1.

Relevance

The project is highly relevant as it addresses the vital aspects of the Ethiopian economy. It is in line with Ethiopian policies and international practices and considers priorities of the partners and the BMZ. Despite its relevance, the project was not specifically aimed at fostering gender equality and lacked plausibility at the objective level (increased use of QI services), both shortcomings in the project design. The project design had been adapted appropriately to changing conditions (Covid 19, conflicts in the country).

Overall, the criterion received the mark: 1.8.

Coherence

Within German development cooperation, the project was designed to be complementary to other projects, however, potential synergies could have been leveraged to a larger extent. The project is in line with international and national norms and standards to which German development cooperation is committed (e.g., fighting poverty, building peace and realising democracy, protecting the environment, consistency with anti-corruption statutes and human rights conventions); however, it did not consider the reduction of gender-specific inequalities, which has always been an important cross-cutting issue in German development cooperation. The project design complements the partners' own efforts and other donors' activities well (e.g., National Quality Infrastructure Development Project, NQIDP, World Bank loan; Green Innovation Centres for Food and Agriculture, GIZ/BMZ) but in project implementation the activities of other donors were not considered sufficiently. There are no common systems used for monitoring and evaluation (M&E), learning, and accountability – together with partners, other donors, or international organisations.

Overall, the criterion received the mark: 2.0

Effectiveness

The project has achieved its objectives (at outcome level) or is expected to achieve them at the end of the project. The project's activities, inputs and outputs have considerably contributed to achieving the project's

objectives (at outcome level); however, less trainings of trainers were conducted, and trained trainers were not sufficiently supported to integrate their new knowledge into their daily work (Output 3: stakeholder awareness). Some of the risk-mitigation measures identified in the project proposal have not been conducted, such as proactive communication strategy and regular involvement via steering meetings to assure MoA support and the introduction of knowledge management procedures to prevent loss of knowledge due to frequent personnel turnover.

The quality of project steering and implementation insufficiently supported achieving the project's objective at outcome level. More, and more intense/in-depth results could have been achieved with better management, especially in two of the factors of the management model Capacity WORKS, cooperation and learning. However, the lean project management should be considered – with its limited number of staff and comparably small project funds, the project could not accommodate highly sophisticated structures, but should have strategically selected relevant management tools.

For example, to cater to the extremely complex and constantly changing partner and stakeholder landscape, a comprehensive and constantly updated stakeholder analysis would have helped to facilitate the frequent personnel changes - three Project Coordinators, five Project Assistants, three intermittent short-term experts (iSTEs) - and would have supported international project consultants in familiarizing themselves with the project. Also, the project did not sufficiently practice reflection, promote learning and scaling up as well as exchange. After implementing an activity, joint analysis of experiences or results and identification of adjustments could have been conducted and learning experiences could have been discussed with the relevant stakeholders, documented, and disseminated in an appropriate way (knowledge management).

Other factors negatively affecting the project were the late start of the project (implementation agreement signed in August 2020), Covid 19, the conflicts in Ethiopia, the worsened security situation, and the frequent change of project staff mentioned above.

Overall, the criterion received the mark: 2.3

Efficiency

The project's use of resources is deemed reasonable regarding outputs as well as outcomes achieved. Neither could the achieved outputs have been delivered using fewer financial resources, nor would a different use of financial resources have increased project results. However, many outputs (products, equipment, and services) could not be achieved on time – due to the late start of the project, Covid 19, the different conflicts in Ethiopia, inefficiencies in the functioning of the advisory bodies after the restructuring of the Ministries and institutions, late identification of the equipment needed by the two laboratories and delayed customs clearance.

Overall, the criterion received the mark: 2.0

Impact (higher-level development results)

Due to the results achieved by the project, higher-level development changes have taken place or are expected to take place, such as increased income and employment at SME level, increased exports and foreign exchange availability, increased food security, improved food safety, improved health (aflatoxin, pesticide residues), increased international reputation of research results, improved adaptation to climate change, and environmental benefits. The intervention has not contributed to unintended positive or negative higher-level development changes. However, at farmer level, less higher-level development changes than originally expected will arise. Also, successful project activities could have been used as models for multiplication to achieve broad-based impact (e.g., introducing quality systems for SMEs, training of trainers (ToTs) for SMEs and SMS/DAs).

Overall, the criterion received the mark: 2.0

Sustainability

Capacities required to ensure sustainability of project results have increased at the levels of partner organizations and target groups (except for farmers) due to the different project measures. Under the prevailing framework conditions, the results of the intervention are durable for the seven SMEs and public enterprises, but not for farmers as insufficient ToTs and no follow-up had been provided, and not for public laboratories as their funding is not assured.

Overall, the criterion received the mark: 2.3

3. Learning processes and experiences

Learning processes took place due to the different approaches applied for capacity building (e.g., specialized technical training for institutions, trainings for SMEs, laboratories, and agricultural target groups). For EMI and IES staff involved, conducting trainings for target groups of the agri-food sector helped them to understand the limitations of these target groups. However, the trainings weren't adjusted accordingly. The steps of conducting a pilot, evaluating it, adjustment and scaling up have not been applied.

PTB has successfully cooperated with a different partner than usual. With MoA as political partner, this project is in a good position to tackle QI from the demand side, not the supply side as PTB normally does. This ensures that – over time – QI institutions are better able to fulfil the needs of the agri-food sector and that, finally, the stakeholders of the agri-food sector increasingly use the services available. However, at present, quality aspects are tackled at a late stage in the value chain. When products are tested at laboratories, e.g., for export, it is too late for improving their quality. Quality aspects should be introduced at the level of producers, storage, transport enterprises. Farmers should produce better quality products, and the type of storage and transportation should not affect the quality of the products. The project gathered experience on how to better incorporate QI at different steps of the value chain. However, this has not been analysed and documented.

4. Recommendations

The recommendations are described in greater detail in the main report.

Recommendations to the partners and to the project teams:

- Framework conditions: Improve political visibility of the project (e.g., joint project publication)
- Output 1 (quality assurance): Assure sustainability of SME support; Assure the creation of a platform for communication between agri-food SMEs and national QI institutions
- Output 2 (laboratory performance): Decide which institution should become national PT provider(s)
- Output 3 (stakeholder awareness): Increase the use of awareness raising material; Intensify public awareness creation on quality-related issues - at the levels of producers, storage, transport enterprises; Assure sustainability of DAs/SMS support

Recommendations to the partners:

- Framework conditions: Increase sustainability of PTB support
- Output 1 (quality assurance): Assure EMI support to agri-food SMEs
- Output 2 (laboratory performance): Assure accreditation of public agri-food laboratories; Assure sustainability of laboratory performance; Assist Holeta Agricultural Research Center (HARC) to improve its performance as national soil PT provider
- Output 3 (stakeholder awareness): Increase the use of awareness raising material; Evaluate experiences made in DAs/SMS ToT; Assure sustainability of DAs/SMS support

Recommendations to the project team:

- Output 2 (laboratory performance): Support HARC improving as national soil PT provider

- Output 3 (stakeholder awareness): Increase focus on awareness creation for different target groups; Assure making better use of awareness creation materials available; Improve ToTs
- Project management: Improve project implementation; Improve internal and external cooperation; Improve project documentation; Improve monitoring; Improve evaluation and learning

Recommendations to the International Cooperation Department (9.3):

- Conduct training for PTB staff and Local Coordinators in stakeholder analysis and other Capacity WORKS tools
- Support the transfer of information for new PTB project staff and iSTE
- Adjust PTB finance monitoring to support projects in steering and implementation
- Assure that evaluators get updates of project data and new reports before their departure
- Support project staff to implement the gender strategy which will be developed by the two recently deployed gender experts

Recommendations to the evaluation unit of Working Group 9.01:

- Take care that the specific evaluation questions of the evaluation do not overload the limited time available during an evaluation
- Assure that the implementation of the recommendations of evaluations (follow-up sheet) is regularly monitored
- Consider adjusting the format of evaluation reports to support partners in improvement and learning, or ensure this, e.g., through a mandatory debriefing format as developed for this evaluation.