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FAO acclaims Ethiopia's agricultural policies, strategies

• Draws attention to implementation

BY TSEGAYE TILAHUN

ADDIS ABABA –Ethiopia has so far devised viable agricultural policies and strategies that have put the transformation of its agri-food systems in the right direction, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said.

In an exclusive interview with *The Ethiopian Herald*, FAO Country Representative to Ethiopia Farayi Zimudzi stated that the East African nation has been leading the agriculture sector forward. “We need to give credit for Ethiopia’s and concerned bodies’ efforts that have been put into place so far.”

Mentioning Ethiopia’s success in building the right blocks, Zimudzi indicated the country has also developed the right policies and strategies like the recently launched three national strategies.

According to her, the launching of the three national

See FAO acclaims...page 3



Germany donates 16.5 mln Euros to Ethiopia

- Dispatches 1st batch support to 8 teaching hospitals

BY MISGANAW ASNAKE

ADDIS ABABA- Germany has donated 16.5 million Euros to the Ministry of Education (MoE) to capacity building and development programs, the training of biomedical technicians and engineers and to upgrade medical care in teaching hospitals.

Yesterday, the first in a series of procurements of medical equipment worth 3.6 million Euros was donated to eight teaching hospitals.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, NIRAS Germany BM Project Team Leader Gert Klug said that the devices were delivered through the German Financial cooperation and provided by the German Development Bank (KfW).

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Flag carrier to be best world's airlines by 2035

BY BETELHEM BEDLU

ADDIS ABABA- The Ethiopian Airlines, which is Africa's largest Airline, has set a plan to be among the top 20 global airlines by 2035, so said the *Ethiopian's* CEO.

“We aim to be among the top 20 global airlines by 2035, with strategies built on

five pillars, noted MesfinTassew, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Ethiopian Airlines, during his recent interview with African Aerospace Magazine.

Mesfin also noted that the first plan is fleet expansion which has set a plan to double the current size by 2035.

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Authority urges social media service providers to act responsibly

BY ASHENAFI ANIMUT

ADDIS ABABA – The Ethiopian Media Authority (EMA) has urged social media service providers to act responsibly towards mitigating disinformation and hate speech to address the existing problems.

EMA presented its six month national report yesterday under the theme : “Let’s fight hate speech and disinformation in unison,” which mainly focuses on social media utilization in the selected regions in the presence of various government officials, commissioners and other dignitaries.

Speaking at the occasion, EMA Deputy-Director General Yonatan Tesfaye said that aligning with its mandates, the authority has been vigorously engaging on awareness creation mechanisms and reporting the findings to media practitioners and the general public.



Yonatan Tesfaye

Photo: Gebabo Gebrie

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News

Russian companies stepping up cooperation with Ethiopia

BY ESSEYE MENGISTE

ADDIS ABABA— Russian companies are investing in projects closely cooperating with many Ethiopian institutions via signing agreements for cooperation, training, and joint research, said expert.

Sputnik news agency and radio broadcaster held a roundtable discussion Moscow - Johannesburg - Cairo - Addis Ababa - Eldoret on the theme: “Russia - African Union: topical issues of cooperation”.

At the discussion, Policy Studies Institute (PSI), Director General Prof. Beyene Petros highlighted that Russian companies are now investing in cooperation projects with Ethiopia in a wide range of areas. Many Ethiopian institutions have thus signed agreements with Russian organizations to develop cooperation, training and joint research.

He noted that Ethiopia and Russia have rich and diverse historical experience of



interaction between the two countries, which allows them to maintain and develop economic and scientific-educational ties despite political changes in the world.

Sputnik Africa in Ethiopia Information

Head Alexander Shchipin, said, “The Soviet Union supported African countries in their struggle for independence. And now we feel the support of African countries: they support Russia, and we really do appreciate

it. We are aware that our goals are generally the same - to free the world from any form of neo-colonialism and to build a multipolar world, a world of equality.”

Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Asian and African Studies of Saint Petersburg State University Valens Maniragena also stressed the need to promote African languages and culture in Russia, including through the creation of specialized venues in Russian cities: “If there are not only Houses of Russian Culture in Addis Ababa, Bamako, Nairobi, South Africa... But if there is a permanent House of African Culture in Moscow, people will really be able to come and get to know African culture.”

The expert meeting was a continuation of the series of events “Russia’s Cooperation with Asia, Africa and Latin America - Challenges and Prospects”. The project is implemented in partnership with the Gorchakov Foundation and the Center for Assistance to Humanitarian and Educational Programs.

State aspires to be rosemary global player

BY FIKADU BELAY

DURAMME - In a bid to meet the increasing demand, the Central Ethiopia State Agriculture Bureau said it has made consolidated efforts to establish the area as a major player in the global rosemary market.

State Deputy Chief Administrator and Bureau Head Usman Surur told the Ethiopia Press Agency (EPA) that the goal is maximizing production capacity while maintaining high-quality standards thereby positioning the state as a leading supplier of rosemary for the global market.

The area’s high soil fertility, the amenability of its climate towards the cultivation of diverse range of crops and the comparative abundance of water supply make it an ideal place for rosemary production, he added.

Usman, who is also the state’s Agriculture and Rural Development Sector Coordinator, further noted that the exclusive availability of rosemary in the Silti Zone has resulted in a significant amount of revenue of approximately 2.8 million USD in the last fiscal year from export.

Moreover, during the past six months of the current fiscal year, rosemary production has been significantly contributing to the foreign currency earnings, hitting an impressive 3.8 million USD mark.

Noting European customers’ recognition of the quality of the area’s rosemary products, the bureau head mentioned the acquisition of the Global Gap Certificate in Germany. Additionally, over 3,000 farmers have obtained certification that

confirms their products’ compliance with international standards.

“The bureau has been working to maintain the progress that has been made so far and outlined plans for further expansion. Plan is also set to expand the rosemary cultivation to Gurage, Hadia, Kambata, Halabana, and other zones and districts of the Central Ethiopia region. In the Gurage Zone alone, approximately 2,000 hectares of land have been developed for rosemary cultivation, showcasing the commitment to scaling up production.”

Apart from its noticeable economic outcomes, rosemary production contributes to environmental sustainability and it has a drought resistant character and conserves water and resists pests and diseases. By doing this, rosemary reduces the need for chemical inputs and promotes organic farming practices as well as contributes to carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation. “These practices align with sustainable agriculture, preserving natural resources and ecosystem integrity.”

The bureau is providing comprehensive training and resources facilitated by agricultural experts in a bid to support local farmers and increase product and productivity.

As Central Ethiopia State continues to invest in the expansion of rosemary production through leveraging its natural resources and favorable climate, it is paving the way for a flourishing spice industry and offering new opportunities for farmers. The state is also determined to become a leading player in the global rosemary market, the deputy chief administrator remarked.

Startups hail gov’t for unwavering support

- Gov’t initiates funding for startups

BY YESUF ENDRIS

ADDIS ABABA—Startups have lauded the government for its recognition and support amid the launching of funding initiative in a move towards fostering technological advancement.

Innovation is critically important to nurture and support emerging technology companies with no or insufficient capital, startup companies said.

Among the startups showcased at the Startup Exhibition and Expo, Noliga Engineering Deputy CEO, Kassa Dejene said that the government’s stance towards innovation is supporting startups.

He believed that the Startup Exhibition and Expo provides platform for several companies to showcase their innovations and meet potential partnerships, according to Kassa.

Expressing his gratitude for the support, he said that the Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MinT) has funded his company.

Specializing in innovative energy generation technology, Noliga Engineering has developed new turbines capable of harnessing energy from small drainages and even regenerating power from water discharged by hydroelectric dams, he highlighted.

The versatility of this technology is its potential to provide electricity in regions with limited water resources, he said, adding that the wind energy generating technology has passed successful testing phases with the support of the Ministry.

Recognized by MinT, the Deputy CEO noted



Kassa Dejene

that all the facilities are approaching towards mass production.

During the testing phase, Noliga Engineering demonstrated the efficacy of its small hydroelectric generator, producing eight kilowatts of power from unpurified river water, a breakthrough that could potentially benefit up to ten households, he indicated.

Kassa underscored the affordability of the technology, making it accessible to a broader segment of the population.

Simbona Africa Healthcare PLC, Co-founder Hana Birhanu on her part appreciated the government’s vital technical assistance during the design phase of their clinical facilities, paving the way for mass production.

Attending the event last week, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) had stressed the government’s commitment to support technological startups and reaffirmed unwavering approach towards supporting innovation.

The MinT also introduced innovation fund frameworks aimed at empowering startup companies, signals a new era of technological advancement in Ethiopia, *The Ethiopian Herald* learnt.

News

MinT underscores data center multilayered advantages

• Wingu Africa Group receives certificate on construction facility

BY MESERET BEHAILU

ADDIS ABABA – Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MinT) said that building modern data center brings a paramount importance in creating jobs, attracting FDI, and ensuring national security.

The above statement was remarked yesterday by MinT State Minister Yeshurun Alemayehu (PhD) in the achievement of the millstone of Wingu Africa Tier III certification on constructed facility.

As to the State Minister, the government supports such projects as they are the means of job creation, knowledge and skill transformation, regional integration, international competitiveness, and curbing forex crunch.

Encouraging private sectors like Wingu Africa to involve the development projects is crucial to bridge data center gap, he said.

Yeshurun's office establishes standards, policies, and regulation and creates enabling environment in order to protect national interest.

Wingu Africa Chief Strategy Officer, Nicholas Lodge on his part said that his company is focusing on East Africa countries putting its higher standard on achieving customers' satisfaction.

Ethiopia has gain the first high standard Tier III certification this center.

Lodge noted that the achievement of the certification is reinforcing the groups (Wingu Africa) unwavering commitment to

delivering secure and resilient data center solution, meeting the highest industry standards.

Similarly, the certification demonstrates the company's commitment to provide top-tier data infrastructure solutions to meet the evolving needs of its clients, he noted.

Furthermore, the Wingu Africa Group will play its part to realize Ethiopia's digital transformation and access best digital solutions, he added.

It was to be recalled that Wingu is a specialist carrier –natural data center operator focussing on the East African region and provides international and local customers with cost –effective commercial colocation solutions and accesses to grow and dynamic ecosystem.

Flag carrier ...

Being the second pillar, infrastructure involves major expansion and construction. Currently, the airline is expanding airport terminal to add seven aircraft parking spaces and increase capacity to handle more passengers and aircraft, as to him.

Moreover, it is building two hangars to boost maintenance capacity for our growing fleet and a component maintenance shop for in-house repair capabilities of aircraft spare parts, he added.

"A modern warehouse for aircraft spare parts is also under way, enhancing maintenance as our fleet expands. Alongside, we are constructing a new headquarters due to our old one being too small for our operations."

He added: "We have recently launched a new facility for e-commerce as part of our cargo expansion, and are developing five new airports in Ethiopia, improving airport terminals to support our broad plans."

Recalling that the Ethiopian airlines has been operating for 78 years, he said the growth was incremental. Nonetheless, by recognizing opportunity and market potential and developing five year strategy, it achieved great success.

Though many were skeptical, the plan succeeded to the point it developed a 15-year strategy, called Vision 2025, aimed to increase Ethiopian revenue four times, even more, by 2025. The airline generated 1 billion dollar revenue by 2010.

As to the CEO, "The revenue reached 6 billion USD, by 2023 six times in 13 years. There is a plan to exceed those targets by 2025, we will. In 11 or 12 years, between now and 2035, the number of aircrafts is expected to be doubled nearly twice, and would carry more than three times the passengers compared to what it had in 2020."

"Many people still believe that it is too ambitious. It is a stretched strategy, but it is not unachievable. It is practically possible. That means to reach there, we must invest. We must continue investing in our pillars, the five pillars," he stressed.

Currently, *Ethiopian* operates more than 140 aircraft, and has 64 firm orders placed. Once you add options the carrier totals 120 on order. Thus, Mesfin noted that apart from increasing the fleet, the new deliveries will replace older generation aircraft that are operating today.

"In a few years we will have to make additional orders for deliveries during the period 2031 to 2035. So, I have no doubt that we will achieve our goals stipulated in our Vision 2035 - it is doable," he underscored.

Authority urges social media service...

Despite the limited mandates, Yonatan remarked that it has been intensifying efforts to hold engagements with service providers and discharging its responsibilities with a view of controlling disinformation and hate speech.

Revealing the significance of language diversity, he pushed for the companies and other actors in the area to act in the country's context, culture, history and other notable assets to tackle toxic information and other trans-boundary odds.

"Currently, misinformation is aggravating significantly for the sake of seeking individual advantages, provoking conflicts and other evil intentions," he said.

He called on civic associations, government institutions and other stakeholders' proactive participation and part of its efforts to address the ever escalating problems.

Moreover, taking due consideration on the penetrations of social media, they have been undertaking various activities and offering trainings to over 78 high schools and other social media utilizers with a view of strengthening proper utilizations of segments of platforms.

Mainstream media are expected to take the lion's share to address the problem. Accordingly, the report findings would be an alert and input for researchers, service providers and policymakers, he noted.

At the event, stakeholders have also commented to bundle and leverage cutting-edge technologies including INSA and AI to verify and facilitate the proper utilizing social media platforms and reporting mechanisms.

Authority's Capacity-building Desk Head Eden Amare for her part stated that social media platforms has become fueling factors for the disseminations of disinformation and

hate speech that results in impacting the community.

Taking the volatility of social media platforms both at the national level and globally, she urged content creators to act as per the international rules and regulations.

According to the report analysis the sampling was conducted in Amhara, Oromia, Southern nations, Somali, Harari and in Addis Ababa, she indicated that individuals, content creators, activists, politicians, religious leaders are among the main sources of hate speech.

Among the platforms such as Twitter (X), YouTube, Telegram, Tiktok, Facebook remains the main sources of disseminating marginalizing information, as to the sampling. Lack of efficient skilled manpower and technologies were the major limiting factors while conducting the data collection process.

FAO acclaims Ethiopia's...

strategies is critical to achieve food security, gain foreign currency, boost the economy and contribute to nutrition and food safety. They are important not only for the household level, but also to contribute to national and continental level.

Yet, the country representative emphasized the need to bring all stakeholders to the table and Ethiopia's building of partnership with relevant stakeholders to transform the agri-food systems into practice.

"More importantly, we should see more implementation of agricultural policies and

strategies and the proper application of the national strategies is also critical. The next step is very crucial to translate the stated goals in the sector into reality."

In this regard, the FAO would bring some good practices and lessons to Ethiopia to learn from others, and as a technical organization, it advocates the government and other stakeholders for the implementation aspect of those strategies, she reiterated.

In its operation in Ethiopia, the FAO has been engaged in improving agriculture

production and productivity, natural resources management, nutrition and food safety and supporting the country in terms of managing agricultural shocks. These all efforts are global strategic directions implemented in Africa as well.

Along these four broad areas, the organization has been facilitating knowledge transfer among countries and agricultural investment. "In this regard, we have a flagship program to support agricultural investment to make the sector more productive," Zimudzi elaborated.

Germany donates 16.5 mln...

According to Klug, the biomedical project from NIRAS Germany got the mandate from both governments to execute the procurement of equipment and tools, including the installation and the onsite training.

"Today we provide the first in a series of procurements over 843 pieces of medical equipment such as ICU beds, ventilators, oxygen concentrates and monitors as well as 109 pieces of tool kits and instruments for the BM maintenance workshops."

The team leader added, "The items will be distributed to eight teaching hospitals. At six of them we renovated the intensive care units and made sure that the new equipment will be per standards. Furthermore, types of equipment for training are in the process of delivery to the technical colleges and universities."

He went on to say, "We hope those medical equipment would help the doctors and other professionals' lifesaving endeavors and improve the health service delivery."

The Ministry of Education Infrastructure and Input Desk Head Zewdu Kassa told journalists that the German Government has been providing support for Ethiopia's education sector for the last two decades by designing various reform packages.

Accordingly, the 16.5 million Euros grant will be used in seven TVETs, eight university teaching hospitals and three universities to build their capacities and enhance Ethiopia's biomedical sector.

"Today's support focuses on teaching hospitals and will enhance institutional capacity and improve the service delivery in the intensive care units."

The support will bring remarkable impact on the hospitals to ensure quality of education and it also has a holistic importance for human resource capacity development, laboratory, and workshop, build the maintenance capacity and upgrade students' skills in training, Zewdu elaborated.

Opinion

How second-generation Ethiopian Diasporas contribute to national economy

BY ADDISALEM MULAT

The diaspora's experience in numerous areas such as modern technology, medication, financing along with entrepreneurship can assist drive advancement, boost facilities, and also enhance financial industries. By sharing their proficiency, the diaspora can proactively join forming Ethiopia's future and also add to its development.

The second-generation Ethiopian Diaspora returning home can cultivate social exchange as well as enhance the nation's social identification. Having actually experienced various societies and also customs, diaspora participants can aid preserve along with advertise Ethiopia's abundant social heritage. They can work together with regional neighborhoods to revive typical techniques, sustain creative undertakings, as well as maintain aboriginal languages.

This exchange of suggestions plus social variety can improve Ethiopia's social textile as well as produce a dynamic as well as comprehensive culture.

According to the Ministry of Tourism, apart from reconnecting second-generation Ethiopian Diasporas with their ancestral root, the extensive homecoming programs also aim to harnessing their contribution for the national economy.

In a press briefing held recently, Tourism State Minister Seleshi Girma stated that the programs serve as a push factor for the Diaspora to come and do business at home and benefit themselves and their people.

Various programs are underway with the aim of promoting the country's untapped tourism potential to foreign-born Ethiopians and also to the rest of the world. Moreover, such programs are of great significance to familiarize the Diasporas with local cultures and customs during their stay at home.

Accordingly, the nation is preparing different homecoming programs including Ethiopian Week, cultural handmade art show, traditional musical instruments display, musical performances, cultural clothes exhibitions, and fashion shows.

"The visiting program prepared for Ethiopian Diasporas who may come from all corners of the globe and the invitation aims to reconnect them with their ancestral roots and contribute to the nation's economic progress through exploring the vast market and investment opportunities."

Noting the discount made by the Ethiopian Airlines and hotels in all parts of the country, the state minister called for the overwhelming response from the second-generation Ethiopian Diasporas to come and visit their country of origin.

The Ethiopian diaspora's return can help with understanding transfer coupled with ability structure. By developing links with regional colleges, proving ground, as well as occupation training facilities, diaspora participants can share their competence as well as coach the future generation of Ethiopian specialists.



Welcoming session of the second generation Diaspora at airport

This transfer of expertise can aid boost academic possibilities, and equip regional neighborhoods. In addition, the diaspora can join exchange programs, teaching fellowships, as well as collective tasks additional enriching Ethiopia's intellectual funding and also advertising long-lasting understanding.

More than 74,000 second-generation of Ethiopian Diaspora have visited their ancestral homeland in the first phase alone, according to the Ethiopian Diaspora Service.

It is worth recalling that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (PhD) initiated this homecoming program to reconnect the Second-generation Ethiopian Diaspora with their origin and inspire them in order to contribute to the development of the country.

Ethiopian Diaspora Service Community Development Acting Director Nebyu Solomon told local media that the second generation of Ethiopian Diaspora has been invited to come in three-rounds from 30th December 2023 to the end of September 2024.

According to the acting director, the first-phase homecoming under the motto "Connect to Your Culture" was carried out from 30th December to 8th February 2024.

In the first-round more than 74,000 second-generation Ethiopian Diaspora have come to their homeland, adding that it is a satisfactory turn out and was imperative to offer informative events about Ethiopian history as well as culture.

Nebyu highlighted that the first-round homecoming program was successful, stating, second-generation Diaspora members have demonstrated their enthusiasm, and many expressed satisfaction with their experience. He further indicated that those Diaspora members have pledged to play a role in Ethiopia's development endeavors.

The second-generation Ethiopian Diaspora members have also visited various tourism cities of the country and the ongoing development projects in the country, he indicated.

And the second-round homecoming under the motto "Connect to Your History" has been already launched and will last till 8th May 2024, Nebyu stated. In this phase, opportunities will be facilitated to the Diaspora members in order to visit heritage sites including the newly

built Adwa Victory Memorial Museum.

Nebyu underscored that the visit will help them to properly realize Ethiopia's role in Pan-Africanism, stating "We hope to inspire them to carry this legacy forward."

It is recalled that in a press briefing he held lately, Ethiopian Airlines Group Chief Commercial Officer, Lemma Yadecha stated that the Airline has also prepared a tour program for guests at a discounted price through ET Holidays.

The officer further noted that special preparation is underway at Skylight Hotel to warmly welcome those members of second-generation Ethiopian Diasporas who are coming in three rounds.

"Some of them have already arrived, some are on the way and others are preparing to come. We understand that our discount packages have gotten a good response from the Diasporas and they continue arriving here in great numbers."

The ET Holidays on the other hand offer tour packages for members of the second-generation Diaspora to visit tourist attraction sites that are under construction and have been built inside Addis Ababa at the recommended price.

Thus, the guests could get the information and register into the Ministry of Tourism's website if they need to visit such attractions. Also, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Tour and Travel Operators, the Airliner is preparing a one-day city tour program for about 100 guests free of charge, Lemma elaborated.

According to him, the Airline's decision to reduce the price of plane tickets and hotel accommodation is complying with Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's invitation for the second-generation Ethiopian Diasporas to visit their homeland.

"Ethiopian has been contributing its share on several occasions when the PM extended similar calls for members of the Diaspora." Similar homecoming programs are underway for the second-generation Ethiopian Diaspora in a bid to enable the latter to explore the existing opportunities in their country of origin, the officer remarked.

Coinciding with the upcoming major holidays and break time, Ethiopia is expected to enjoy numerous arrivals of second generation

homecoming initiative, the Ministry of Tourism (MoT) announced.

While commencing the second round homecoming program, Tourism Minister Ambassador Nasisie Chali in the recent past said that in connection with Adwa victory commemoration and other related side events, the Diaspora community has been actively taking part in a wide range of involvements thereby registering remarkable achievements.

Aligning with the theme of the second round, "Connect to your historical roots," which will be held from the end of February 2024 to beginning of May 2024, she stated that chains of side events, panel discussions among many others are planned to be carried out with a view of reconnecting homecomers with their history to realize the nation's development.

"As March break and grand holidays such as Ramadan and Easter are observed this time, the number of influxes is increasing. Also, the guests have attended the grand Iftar programs in various areas of the country," she underscored.

Accordingly, "This round would help Diasporas discover the history of their homeland and understand the roots of their ancestral patriotism and selfless scarification paid by our forefathers and foremothers to defend the territorial integrity and sovereignty of their country throughout various periods," she remarked.

During the first round, a large number of second generation Ethiopians have visited various parts of the country thereby experiencing the diverse cultures, traditions, customs and unique features of Ethiopian people, as to Amb. Nasisie.

In their stay, she said adding that the diaspora have also participated in various events and managed to spend a fruitful and enjoyable time.

It is worth remembering that the first round homecoming was held from the end of December 2023 to the beginning of February 2024 under the theme: "Connect to your multi-cultural roots."

Welcoming the arrivals, Ministry of Foreign Affairs State Minister, Ambassador Birtukan Ayano said that this phase is the unique one because it comes while commemorating the nation's successful transformation journey and the 13 anniversary of Abbay Dam, and, thus it would create the opportunity to grasp the continuity of the development of the sovereign nation.

Announcing the successful continuation of the initiative, the State Minister expressed her office's readiness to strengthen the coordination activities along with partners and embassies.

Editor's Note: The views entertained in this article do not necessarily reflect the stance of The Ethiopian Herald

Editorial

Further strengthening multilateralism

The third session of Ethiopia's BRICS+ Senior Officials' Technical Committee meeting took place last Thursday, 11 April 2024 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to information obtained from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs social media site, senior officials, drawn from various government institutions, reviewed the proposal for Ethiopia's draft BRICS engagement strategy; and the levels of participation of Ethiopian institutions in the BRICS+ activities.

The Technical Committee also deliberated on ways to speed up Ethiopia's smooth integration into the BRICS arrangements, advance nation's national interest, and contribute to the consolidation of the BRICS+ platform.

Ethiopia has had a strong aspiration to join the BRICS alliance and be part of the economic bloc with the aim to diversify its economic partnerships, protect its own interest in the global realm, enhance mutual benefits and multilateral relations, expand economic cooperation and solidify its relationship with the other member states thereby expanding its influence in the international stage.

With this in mind, the country has been exerting a lot of energy, including diplomatic efforts, to make its aspiration a success. Accordingly, its request to join the bloc has borne fruit and it has been accepted to be a full member of the bloc at the 15th BRICS Summit held in Johannesburg, South Africa, after meeting all the set requirements.

It goes without saying that Ethiopia is regarded as a representative of African countries. It is also a country serving as a voice for Africa on global forum under the spirit of Pan-Africanism. In a number of platforms where the issues of Africa and Africans have been entertained, Ethiopia has always been at the frontline in amplifying the voice of African countries and promoting their interests.

Just to mention, issues related to climate change, health, peace and security challenges, shared prosperity have been some of the top agendas that Ethiopia champions in the global platforms. In this regard, Ethiopia's presence in the bloc helps to work closely with some of the major world powers, magnify and address the challenges of African countries.

In similar ways to this, it is absolutely necessary to reinforce continental integration, boost Africa's economic growth, strengthen Pan-African aspiration and contribute meaningfully to realize the aspiration of the African Union's sustainable development goals – Agenda 2063.

On the other hand, the entry of Ethiopia to the BRICS bloc will bring about additional potential and reciprocal benefits for member countries in a number of ways. Among other things, the strategic importance of Ethiopia- located at close distance from Europe, the Middle East and Asian markets- being a country blessed with abundant natural resources coupled with its large population and becoming one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, creates additional potential for BRICS countries.

What is more, the industrial parks that have been constructed across the country and the Abbay Hydro Dam are also the other potentials that present bounteous prospects for BRICS+ nations.

Ethiopia believes that being a member of the BRICS+ bloc will have give-and-take benefits for all. As it was stated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ethiopia's BRICS membership is part of its determination to expand the economic opportunities to propel its economic growth and contribute to further strengthening multilateralism. For this reason, the country will remain committed and work actively in implementing the BRICS strategy for economic partnership.



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The Ethiopian Herald

Opinion

Ethiopia's journey to be a bread basket of Horn of Africa

BY GIRMACHEW GASHAW

For long, the East Africa region has been recurrently exposed to drought and famine due to mismanagement of natural resources. Ethiopia is one of these countries that have been struggling to reverse this scenario.

Countries in the Horn of Africa have been making efforts independently to ensure food self-sufficiency, combining their unexploited resources and human power. As a result, some countries are successful in their vision of being food self sufficient and others are still striving to do the same. Ethiopia is among those who are making a relentless endeavor to be secure in food.

Devising various strategies and giving due priority to the assurance of food self sufficiency of its people, the government has fulfilled local demand through producing surplus wheat which can go beyond the vision. In order to be effective in that, the land, which was never cultivated for crop production, has already been used for the same cause. In doing so, the government has met the desire to come out of wheat dependency and has transformed into one of the exporters.

Though wheat production has been increasing steadily in the past decades, the demand for the crop outstripped domestic supply and forced the country to cover about 30 % of the deficit through commercial imports and food aid. The utilization of wheat is rising at 9 % annually, while production is increasing at 7.8 %, showing a continued widening between consumption and production.

With a growing demand due to a burgeoning population, an increase in income, and a preference toward wheat-based products, the country has a long journey to achieve wheat self-sufficiency and save the scarce foreign currency reserve spent on imports. The government of Ethiopia is committed to self-sufficiency through initiatives such as wheat area expansion, irrigation development, and yield gap closure.

As a result, Ethiopia, one of the east African countries, has now extensively engaged in producing surplus wheat. Now, no one has twisted the arms of these countries for the sake of donating tons of wheat. This dramatic shift is expected to be realized in the export of crops such as wheat and other crops. The thing that mesmerized others was the commitment and dedication of the government to achieving its target as per the goal it set. Even some others are trying to defame the reputation of the country rising quality issues. As the production process was not

carried out heedlessly, Ethiopia's wheat farming system is not as they predicted to be.

According to the recent report of the Ministry of Agriculture, more than 58 million quintals of crops have been collected. Of these, 1.7 million hectares of wheat have been obtained through the summer irrigation scheme.

In the summer irrigated wheat cultivation scheme, three million hectares of land have been covered with wheat seeds, and the harvest is in progress. Various tasks have been undertaken on a large scale to obtain about 120 million quintals of wheat. Accordingly, in the activities carried out so far, one point seven million hectares of land have been harvested, and this excludes the task done in the summer irrigation scheme.

In the general farming activity that is carried out until April 8, 2024, 1.2 million hectares of land were harvested in traditional ways, and over 431,000 hectares of land were assisted with combiners. In sum, 1.7 has been proven to be a harvest. Accordingly, it was possible to collect 58.5 million quintals of summer wheat. The work of collecting has also been strengthened.

Summer irrigation wheat plays a significant role in increasing agricultural production in terms of type and quantity. The work has been started since Prime Minister Abiy was sworn in, and it is one of the efforts to improve the food system of society through engaging in large-scale.

As per the vision and desire of the government, the country is now self-sufficient in wheat. By working on the two farming seasons (in autumn and summer), the country is now fulfilling the local demand for wheat. If this continues to be strengthened, the opportunity to export on a large scale will also expand.

Summer wheat is one of Ethiopia's efforts to protect its food sovereignty. In the agricultural sector, wheat, rice, green leaf, and animal husbandry are planned to maintain food sovereignty. The work is being carried out by the top management of the government and experts so that the cultivation of summer irrigated wheat can be completed quickly and with quality during the scheduled summer months.

For sure, Ethiopia has now ensuring food self-sufficiency in wheat. It is clear that the above news is bad for those who wish the country to remain poor. In whatever the case, one thing that I want to make clear for everyone is, Ethiopia will soon be a bread basket for Horn of Africa.

Editor's Note: The views entertained in this article do not necessarily reflect the stance of The Ethiopian Herald

Business & Economy

Endeavoring towards recording economic growth

BY MENGESHA AMARE

It is well recognized that economic growth is a phenomenon of market productivity and increase in GDP, whereas economic development is regarded as a policy intervention aiming at improving the well-being of people. In simple terms, economic growth is one aspect of economic development.

Seeking viable information on how economic growth can be secured, *The Ethiopian Herald* had a stay with Mekonnen Telila, an economist graduated from Dilla University. He said, “Economic growth refers to an increase in aggregate production in an economy, which is generally manifested in a rise in national income. Often, but not necessarily, aggregate gains in production correlate with increased average marginal productivity. That leads to an increase in incomes, inspiring consumers to open up their wallets and buy more, which means a higher material quality of life and standard of living.”

He said, in economics, growth is commonly modeled as a function of physical capital, human capital, labor force, and technology. Simply put, increasing the quantity or quality of the working age population, the tools that they have to work with, and the recipes that they have available to combine labor, capital, and raw materials, will lead to increased economic output.

As to him, economic growth is the most powerful instrument for reducing poverty and improving the quality of life in developing countries like ours. Strong growth and employment opportunities improve incentives for parents to invest in their children’s education by sending them to school. This may lead to the emergence of a strong and growing group of entrepreneurs, which should generate pressure for improved governance.

He said, “Strong economic growth can advance human development, which, in turn, promotes economic growth. But under different conditions, similar rates of growth can have very different effects on poverty, the employment prospects of the poor and broader indicators of human development. A successful strategy of poverty reduction must have at its core measures to promote rapid and sustained economic growth.

The challenge for policy is to combine growth promoting policies with policies that allow the poor to participate fully in the opportunities unleashed and so contribute to that growth. New technologies offer not only ‘catch-up’ potential but also ‘leapfrogging’ possibilities. New science offers better prospects across both productive and service sectors.

Future growth will also need to be environmentally sustainable. Improved management of water and other natural resources is required, together with movement towards low carbon



technologies by both developed and developing countries. With the proper institutions, growth and environmental sustainability may be seen as complements, not substitutes. But ultimately the biggest determinants of growth in a country will be its leadership, policies and institutions.

According to Mekonnen, the positive link between growth and poverty reduction is clear. The impact of the distribution of income on this relationship – in particular, whether higher inequality lessens the reduction in poverty generated by growth – is less clear. Initial levels of income inequality are important in determining how powerful an effect growth has in reducing poverty.

Growth creates jobs and economic growth generates job opportunities and hence stronger demand for labor, the main and often the sole asset of the poor.

In turn, increasing employment has been crucial in delivering higher growth. Macroeconomic factors, such as low inflation, export orientation and low labor taxes, help to determine how much employment is created by growth. Structural factors, such as the balance of the economy between agriculture, manufacturing and services, are also important. While the relationship between growth and employment remains robustly positive, the strength of the link has weakened slightly since the turn of the millennium. This has raised concerns about ‘jobless growth’ in some countries.

“The relationship between growth and employment is not simply about the quantity of jobs created by growth; it is also about the types of jobs created. In particular, there have been concerns that the number of jobs in the informal freelance sectors rises with growth alongside increases in the formal sector. While informal employment is better than none at all, it has been assumed that it is very much second best to formal employment. The combination of excessively regulated labor markets and low levels of development is the principal driver of the informal sector.

Careful deregulation of labor markets will reduce the cost of employment for firms in the formal sector and increase the share of formal employment,” he opined.

Growth drives human development and economic growth is not just associated with reducing poverty. There is also clear evidence for a positive link between economic growth and broader measures of human development. Strong growth and employment opportunities improve incentives for families to invest in education by sending their children to school. This may lead to the emergence of a strong and growing group of entrepreneurs, which will generate pressure for improved governance. Strong economic growth therefore advances human development, which, in turn, promotes economic growth. Equally, weak economic growth implies vicious circles in which poor human development contributes to economic decline, leading to further deterioration in human development.

Yes, as to Mekonnen, political instability, corruption and crime can all threaten potential returns and make investment unattractive and thus damage the prospects for growth. The cost of crime and the cost of security as a percentage of sales are particularly high in low-income regions such as sub-Saharan Africa. Infrastructure Investors need good access to knowledge, to inputs of capital, labor and raw materials, and to markets. This requires transport infrastructure, as well as the provision of a regular supply of electricity and other utilities.

In Africa, transport and energy make up the largest proportion of indirect costs for businesses, weighing heavily on the competitiveness of firms in most African countries. In addition to transport infrastructure, communication infrastructure is crucial in disseminating information about prices and markets across a wide area. In this respect, the spread of mobile communications has been revolutionary. In recent years, limited banking services have even become available using mobile telephones in many parts of the developing world.

He said no country has grown on a sustained basis in recent times without successfully integrating into global markets. There are two facets to this: integration into goods markets and integration into input markets, notably integration into financial capital. The relationship between open capital markets and growth is less clear. Capital market integration allows smoothing of living standards, risk-sharing among countries and technology transfer from the developed world. For many African nations, agriculture will be the centerpiece of their efforts to achieve growth, poverty reduction and food security for the foreseeable future.

As to Mekonnen, a key challenge is to make agriculture more worthwhile by raising its profitability through technological innovation. A growth strategy will involve a combination of economic policy initiatives and plans for expenditure on physical and social infrastructure and other growth-related activities.

“These initiatives or strategies should be fully appraised, and decisions based on estimates of likely returns have to be passed. They should be integrated in overall government decision making, recognizing trade-offs between expenditures in different sectors. The strategies should also be integrated with macroeconomic projections thereby giving a view of future income levels, government revenue and expenditures, and external financing requirements both from donors and from capital markets,” he added.

Public, private, educational, and civic partners in each regional state often come together to help their businesses, industries and workers adapt to new economic challenges or opportunities. Some states of the nation benefit from a robust civic infrastructure; others suffer from weakened civic capacity reflecting years of economic disinvestment, that’s why economic development leaders from across the urban and rural continuum, such as in various states have stepped up to create high-quality, entrepreneurial, and inclusive growth in their communities, he opined.

As to him, this kind of inclusive economic development is hard work and even pioneers in the field face many barriers to implementation. Some states have administrators or leaders typically lack the resources and organizational capacity to plan well, coordinate across sectors, and respond to a patchwork of rural, tribal, and place-based programs alongside other state or philanthropic resources.

In sum, it is quite important for the country to lead the national economic development agenda by promoting innovation and competitiveness, preparing regional states for growth and success in the nationwide economy. Hence, it is high time for all Ethiopians to work hard to make a difference. In so doing, endeavoring towards recording economic growth would bear remarkable outcome.

Art & Culture

Shewal Eid Festival to kick off in Harar on April 18th, 2024

BY TESHOME BERHANU KEMAL

Introduction

The vibrant Shewal Eid Festival, scheduled for Wednesday, April 17th, 2024, in Harar, promises a colorful celebration. Preparation has been underway, with young girls and boys undergoing training for lively parades. The elders and women of Harar will proudly don traditional attires, adding to the festival's vibe.

Cultural diversity will be on display through various performances, including traditional music by talented musicians representing the Harari, Afar, Somali, and Oromia cultures.

But what historical significance underlies the celebration of Shewal Eid?

Historical background for celebrating

Shewal Eid

Harar, one of Ethiopia's jewel cities, boasts a rich history spanning over a millennium, with around 100 rulers having governed its lands, leaving behind numerous funerary sites and monuments. The city is adorned with approximately 300 sacred tombs and memorials, along with 80 mosques, showcasing its deep-rooted Islamic heritage.

Situated close to Zeyla and Berbera ports, Harar has historically enjoyed significant trade connections, attracting traders and scholars from Europe, the Arab world, and the Far East, who traversed long distances to visit its cultural treasures.

As one of the world's oldest and most unique Islamic cities, Harar stands alongside renowned historical sites like Timbuktu and Lamu. It serves as a testament to the diverse cultures and influences, reflecting the traditions of Afar sultans, Somali ugaz, Bale and Arsi Sheikhs, and Mashaikhhs.

Every corner of Harar breathes history, from the awe-inspiring 3 km-long Jigol wall to the enchanting historic gates and trade routes leading to ports.

Indeed, the surrounding areas of Harar, stretching from Zeilaa and Berbera to Jigjiga, Bale, Awsa, and Awash, offer ample opportunities for tourism, showcasing the region's rich tapestry of heritage and natural beauty. Furthermore, Harar's economic significance is evidenced by its historical role in minting currency, a tradition that contributed to the inception of Emperor Menelik's coinage, second only to Aksum.

Harar's cultural legacy extends beyond its borders, fostering connections with regions like Eritrea, Tigray, Gondar, and Wollo, where descendants of prominent figures like Aw Abadir are found. Additionally, the city shares historical ties with the Jimma Sultanate, reflecting its broader influence and significance in Ethiopian history and beyond. The scholars of Harar spread Islam throughout East Africa for at least 1000 years. Although the number of scholars who came to Harar from all over East Africa to learn the knowledge of Harari scholars is not known, their footprints can still be found throughout East Africa of today.

Therefore, scholars of Harar do not need to be taught that Islamic holidays are only Eid al-Fitr



and Eid al-Adha. However, why did they decide to celebrate one more Eid in Shawwal? Is Shawwal Eid associated with other peripheral cultures? Or is there a historical reason?

To answer the aforementioned questions, it is necessary to thoroughly study the history of Hariri. Let's look at some of them below. Shewal Eid is a special festival celebrated in the month of Shewal in Harar, and Hararis explain that this festival is traditional and not religious abided by Sharia. In fact, if this festival was not so peripheral, the scholars of Harar, who spread Islam throughout East Africa, would have influenced it to be celebrated by all. This issue is not seen in others except Tigray, Wollo and Gondar.

Even in these areas, the 8th day of Shawwal is celebrated by slaughtering chickens, sheep and goats and praying. Even in every mosque, it is not beyond imagination.

So why only in Harare? Scholars who link the issue with history explain that Shewal Eid is the day when Imam Ahmed Ibrahim won the battle of Shimbra Kure.

In actual fact the victory Imam Ahmed in Shimbra Kure was not on the 8th day of Shawwal? Although there are different opinions on the exact day of victory, it is likely to be on 7th March 1529, which is the month of Jumadel Kali 935, which is 30th March 1521 in our calendar.

Others say that the victory of Shimbra Kure is on March 11, 1529 in our calendar, April 3, 1521, which is Rajab 1, 935. The difference between the two calendars is 3 days. Some suggest that it was made to be on Shewal because he arrived in Harar at this memorable day.

Another hypothesis about Shewal Eid

As it is well known, studies indicate that before the spread of Islam in East Africa today, there

was widespread traditional worships in Harar and its surroundings. It was a time when trees were worshipped, rivers were revered, sorcerers and astrologers were worshipped. Some worships may lead to human sacrifice. Young men and girls used to sing dance and select their future partners given this opportunity. However, such a loose culture is not allowed in Islam, so it must be replaced by another Islamic culture. That mere reason led to the celebration of ShewalEid.

It can be said that Harar Shewal has its own tradition of celebrating Eid. The tradition came after a long period of history and reasons, and it did not happen all at once. Many religious leaders of the day have celebrated it, so it has received their approval. The scholars are famous not only in the country, but also in different countries, so they know the secret. In any case, Shewalid, like other abstract and tangible cultural heritages of the Hariris, is currently receiving much attention. It is recognized by UNESCO as intangible heritage last year. It is also accepted as medium that is reflecting a culture of peace, love and tolerance.

Conclusion

Hence, whether the rationale behind celebrating the Shewal Eid festival is fully understood or not, the people of Harar hold the rightful prerogative to preserve this tradition and transmit it to the future generations of Harari. Preserving and transmitting cultural traditions like the Shewal Eid festival holds profound importance for several reasons.

Firstly, these traditions serve as repositories of collective memory, reflecting the beliefs, values, and practices of a community across generations. By safeguarding and passing down such rituals, societies maintain a sense of continuity and identity, anchoring themselves in their cultural heritage amidst rapid societal changes. Cultural traditions

like Shewal Eid foster a sense of belonging and solidarity among community members. Participating in these celebrations strengthens social bonds, promotes mutual understanding, and reinforces shared values, thereby fostering social cohesion and resilience in the face of challenges.

Moreover, cultural festivals like Shewal Eid provide opportunities for intergenerational learning and exchange. As younger generations partake in these traditions, they gain insights into their cultural roots, learning from elders and connecting with their heritage. This transmission of knowledge and values from one generation to the next ensures the preservation of cultural heritage for posterity. Cultural traditions often carry intrinsic artistic and creative value, encompassing various forms of music, dance, attire, cuisine, and craftsmanship. By preserving and showcasing these artistic expressions, communities contribute to the enrichment of global cultural diversity, fostering appreciation and understanding across borders. Cultural festivals like Shewal Eid can also run serve as platforms for promoting cultural tourism and economic development. As visitors from diverse backgrounds engage with local traditions, they contribute to the vitality of local economies, supporting artisans, performers, and small businesses while fostering cross-cultural exchange and understanding.

In essence, the preservation and transmission of cultural traditions like Shewal Eid are essential for maintaining social cohesion, fostering intergenerational connections, celebrating artistic expressions, promoting cultural diversity, and stimulating economic growth. As custodians of their heritage, communities play a vital role in safeguarding these traditions for future generations, ensuring that the tapestry of human culture remains vibrant and resilient for centuries to come.

Global Affairs

Women affected by 'gender-biased' climate change deserve justice

While research into the unequal impacts of climate change on women is growing, more is needed to enable them to realize their rights to climate justice. Researchers argue that women and girls have unequal access to food, water, health, education, and even income, thanks to climate change. This makes them more vulnerable. Pedi Obani, an Associate Professor at the University of Bradford, explains that women and girls experience the negative impacts of climate change differently than men.

"Climate change affects women more and very often adversely," Obani told IPS. "If climate change is leading to droughts or water scarcity, it automatically means less water for a woman to drink and hygiene, and for those who have caring responsibilities, it means less water overall. The burden becomes even greater for the women, who often also have to find the water, often traveling long distances to get it."

Climate Change Widens Gender Pay Gap

A new report from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has found that climate change has a disproportionate impact on the incomes of rural women, people living in poverty, and older populations. The report analyzed data from over 100,000 rural households across 24 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). It found that women's capacity to respond and adapt to extreme weather events is unequal to that of men.

The Unjust Climate report highlights that in LMICs, female heads of households in rural areas suffer significantly greater financial losses annually than men. For instance, heat stress results in households run by women losing 8 percent more of their income each year compared to households run by men. The economic losses translate to a per capita reduction of USD 83 due to heat stress and USD 35 due to floods, totaling USD 37 billion and USD 16 billion, respectively, across all LMICs.

According to the report, if the average temperatures were to increase by just 1°C, women would face a staggering 34 percent greater loss in their total incomes than men. Unless climate change is addressed, it will widen the income gaps in years to come.

A study by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) found that climate change impacts in India's Maharashtra state have reduced rainfall and caused recurring droughts affecting women and girls. As a result, women have been forced to migrate to look for jobs in sugarcane fields. The women migrants have often been obliged to get hysterectomies so that they can work without taking breaks during menstruation or giving birth.

Women often have less access to resources such as land, credit, and education, which are essential for adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change, says Buhle



More research is needed into the negative impacts of climate change on women for them to access climate justice. Credit: Busani Bafana/IPS

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Gender-responsive climate policies are crucial to closing implementation gaps and gender-responsive finance can accelerate climate action and resilience for all

Francis, a researcher and activist with the Environmental Learning Research Centre (ELRC) at Rhodes University in South Africa.

Francis says, for instance, that in some regions, women are responsible for collecting water and firewood, which become scarce due to climate change, and their burden increases as they have to walk long distances to access these resources.

"Women have increased workloads, and climate change exacerbates existing gender inequalities by increasing the unpaid work that women do. For instance, after extreme weather events, women bear the primary responsibility for caring for children, the elderly, and the sick," Francis told IPS, adding that women should be included in the decision-making process on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Legal Aid for Climate Justice

Obani explained that while there was a focus on empowering women through

representation and on women's sexual, reproductive, and land rights, for instance, there was little research on these rights and climate change. As a result, women were excluded from justice processes.

Climate lawsuits are an important way for women to access justice, particularly in Africa, as a growing body of research shows climate change affects them more than men in terms of health, farming, migration, and conflict.

Obani noted that to improve access to climate justice, data needs to be collected on women's and girls' experiences of climate change. Additionally, women need legal aid to take up climate lawsuits and gender-sensitive climate laws to protect them.

"Legal representation is expensive, and building a legal case is expensive too. So, if you put all that together, the fact that we are not seeing women in the courts litigating against climate change may not necessarily be because the women do not want to litigate. It could be because they do not have the resources to do so, which is where the case for legal aid and gender-sensitive laws comes in," Obani told IPS.

Obani emphasized the need to expand the amount of legal aid funding and its coverage to include climate change and environmental matters. In addition, legal aid must be accessible to all based on their needs.

A Dearth of Data Affects Gender Evidence

Obani admits that women face a weak case for taking legal action because of the difficulty of proving climate change impacts without hard facts.

Obani stated that African women have a very slim chance of being able to sue for damages brought on by climate change in

the absence of specific data on how it affects them.

She cited the case of a group of Swiss women over the age of 64 who tried and failed to convince the Federal Supreme Court of Switzerland that women were more vulnerable to climate-induced heat waves than men, using medical evidence showing that more women of this age died of heatstroke more often than men. While the Swiss court dismissed their case, saying it wasn't convinced that the women had suffered enough damage to bring a climate justice lawsuit, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Switzerland violated human rights by not taking action against climate change to protect its citizens.

Gender-Sensitive Laws and Policies

A 2022 analysis of agricultural policies in 68 low- and middle-income countries by the FAO found that 80 percent of policies did not consider women and climate change. Women plot managers were found to be as capable as men of adopting climate-adaptive agricultural practices. However, they lost income and off-farm opportunities when exposed to extreme weather events, the report found.

Simon Stiell, the Executive Secretary of UN Climate Change, asserts that gender-responsive climate policies are crucial because gender equality is not a 'nice-to-have', but a right.

"Gender-responsive climate policies are crucial to closing implementation gaps and gender-responsive finance can accelerate climate action and resilience for all, so they are key to achieving the highest possible climate ambition," Stiell said in a message, marking International Women's Day 2024.

(SOURCE: INTER PRESS SERVICE)

Law & Politics

Ethiopia- EU: 40+ years of cemented partnership, overcoming challenges

BY EYUEL KIFLU

The relations between Ethiopia and the European Union (EU) are founded on the Cotonou Agreement, which aims to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty, and contribute to the gradual integration of the African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries into the world economy. Articles 8 to 13 of the agreement define the bilateral political dialogue between the two parties, as well as a set of other conventions and political commitments.

Ethiopia and the EU look back on 42 years of constructive bilateral relations in areas as diverse as development cooperation, trade and economic development, consolidation of democratic institutions, regional peace and security, and migration. Ethiopia is one of the EU's important partners on the African continent, active in regional peace and security as well as on thematic international debates such as climate change.

According to an EU report, the two parties decided to enhance the level of their partnership. On June 14, 2016, the then Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Hailemariam Desalegn, and the former European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, signed a Joint Declaration towards an Ethiopia-EU Strategic Engagement. This committed both sides to an annual ministerial meeting and six sectorial dialogues: governance and human rights; regional peace and security; countering terrorism and violent radicalization; migration; social and economic development, investment and trade; and climate change and environmental cooperation.

In this engagement, the two sides also affirmed their commitment to the fundamental principles of sustainable development, democracy, human rights, good governance, and the rule of law, as well as regional cooperation and integration. Moreover, the two sides intend to enhance their cooperation to maintain Ethiopia's dynamic economic growth and the country's ambition to join the group of middle-income countries, based on green and inclusive economic growth.

In a recent media briefing, Roland Kobia, the EU Ambassador to Ethiopia, addressed questions from local journalists on different issues based on relations between Ethiopia and the bloc. Ambassador Kobia confirmed the interest from member states of the Union to foster the cooperation during the press briefing. He stated, "We have enjoyed a strategic partnership with Ethiopia in health, economy, education, infrastructure, trade, migration, people-to-people ties, and other arenas, and it is in the interest of the union to advance the collaboration."

The EU has also been trying to help Ethiopia's digitalization process and its efforts to connect with the East African



region as well as at a continental level. Moreover, the EU has been facilitating political and development activities in Addis Ababa. According to the ambassador, the EU is the second-largest trade destination for Ethiopian exports, and as part of the economy and trade, the union has made different agreements to promote the private sector of the latter. Kobia added that 180 EU companies are operating in Ethiopia and export 20% of its goods, worth a total of 130 billion birr, to Europe - creating job opportunities for thousands of Ethiopian citizens.

Ethiopia is one of the EU's strategic partners globally, and the two sides have established strong political and economic cooperation. The union is also committed to elevating the collaboration in different fields of significant importance.

Addressing the conflicts in different parts of Ethiopia, Kobia stated, "We don't make any distinctions between wars, whether it is in Amhara, Tigray, Oromia, or elsewhere. The EU always takes a stance of principle in terms of condemning wars and trying to contribute to solutions." The ambassador expressed his concern over the targeting and victimization of civilians during the conflicts, stating, "We felt, during the war on Tigray but also now in Amhara and Oromia, that sometimes the civilians are the targets and are the victims of these wars."

Kobia emphasized the EU's advocacy for political settlements and negotiations, rather than military solutions. "We believe that a political settlement, a politically negotiated solution, is the best," adding, the EU has expressed its concerns through statements from the High Representative, Josep Borrell.

Regarding the EU's involvement in mediating the conflict in Amhara region, Kobia explained that the bloc has not been invited to participate in the process, despite

its willingness to contribute. "We proposed ourselves. We said, look, we can help. We are ready to take our responsibilities. We are ready to contribute. But we have not been invited."

In the meantime, the EU continues to provide support directly to the population through non-governmental organizations and the United Nations, ensuring that the overall funding envelope for Ethiopia remains unchanged.

Similarly, it also recalled that before three years, the EU suspended Ethiopia's budget support worth around 107 million dollars due to the conflict in the Tigray region. As the ambassador stated, the EU is continuing support for Ethiopia despite the budget suspension, and the bloc has pledged 650 million euros in assistance to the country. According to reports, the aid package to Ethiopia, announced half a year before, is the first since the conflict in the Tigray region was ended.

Commenting on the deforestation regulation, Ambassador Kobia stated that Ethiopia has a real interest in fighting and mitigating climate change and adopting the regulation as its integral law.

Recently, The EU Deforestation-Free Regulation (EUDR) declared aims to combat deforestation caused by forestry and agricultural activities on a global scale and mitigate its negative consequences. The new Regulation (EUDR) states that coffee growing process should not involve the clearing of forest or any related activities. For this to take effect, the union has given a grace period that ends at end of this year, 2024. As Ethiopia is the high coffee exporter country to EU, some express their assumption that the law may harm the country's coffee export.

However, Speaking with *The Ethiopian Herald*, Kabtamu Girma, Chief Executive

Officer of Ethiopian Forestry Development's Natural Forestry Division, argued that the EUDR legislation is correct and that Europe will be putting it into effect before the end of the year. He claims that Ethiopia has made a concerted effort to lower carbon emissions in accordance with the several climate change accords it has already joined. Additionally, it has helped to replenish deforested areas, floodplains, and droughts.

According to Kabtamu, Ethiopia will not have too much trouble if the new EUDR legislation is to be effective. He also mentioned the green legacy initiative, specifically Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and other programs, which have been the main emphasis of the country during the previous five years. But he underlined how critical it is to assess and enhance the nation's current green economy policies and strategies.

Gizat Worku, General Manager of the Ethiopian Coffee Association, on his part stated that no unlawful activities, including child labor, were included in Ethiopia's coffee production. It is not that much difficult for the government to produce proof and documentation of its inspection on everything. Since we do not grow coffee on deforested farmland, even EUDR would not be such a daunting task especially for Ethiopia.

Overall, the relationship between Ethiopia and the European Union is characterized by mutual respect, cooperation, and shared values. Both sides benefit from their partnership in various economic, political, and social ways - making it a vital component of their foreign policy agendas. As they continue to work together on common challenges and opportunities, it is clear that their bond will only grow stronger in the years to come.

Planet Earth

Rosemary plant becomes new, lucrative cash crop in Central Ethiopia

BY FIKADU BELAY

Owing to its diverse agricultural landscape Ethiopia is well known for its big share in the global spice market. Spices, such as rosemary, ginger, pepper, chili pepper, turmeric, cinnamon, and cloves, have been an integral part of Ethiopian cuisine and culture for centuries, adding unique flavors and aromas to traditional dishes.

The production of spices in Ethiopia is primarily carried out on small-scale farms in rural areas, utilizing traditional cultivation methods and organic farming practices, often relying on natural rainfall. The country's varied climate and topography provide suitable conditions for growing a wide range of spices, with different regions offering diverse temperatures, altitudes, and soil types.

In recent years, Ethiopia has made concerted efforts to promote spice production and increase exports. Recognizing the economic potential of the spice industry, the Ethiopian government has implemented policies to support farmers, improve infrastructure, and facilitate trade worldwide.

Within the spice industry, rosemary production has garnered significant attention. Rosemary, with its unique flavor profile, is highly valued for its various culinary applications, including frying meat and traditional Ethiopian stew. Moreover, rosemary's inclusion in essential oil production and herbal and cosmetic products has further driven its global demand.

Rosemary has a potential health benefits that contains compounds with anti-inflammatory properties, supporting cognitive function, digestion, and reducing inflammation. Research suggests that rosemary may enhance memory and concentration, while its aroma improves cognitive performance and mood. It aids digestion by stimulating digestive enzymes and relieving discomfort.

Also, Rosemary's antimicrobial properties help fight foodborne pathogens, reducing the risk of illnesses. Its odor promotes relaxation and stress relief in aromatherapy. Rosemary is beneficial for the skin, hair, and scalp, combating certain conditions and promoting hair growth. It may also help manage inflammation associated with various health conditions. However, individual responses may vary, and consulting a healthcare professional is recommended for personalized advice.

As a result, Ethiopian farmers have recognized the economic opportunities presented by rosemary cultivation and have shifted their focus to meet this growing demand. This shift has led to transformative changes in the lives of farmers, with rosemary becoming a valuable commodity in the domestic and international markets, contributing to increased foreign currency earnings for the country.



Ethiopian spices, including rosemary, are sought after globally, particularly in the Middle East, Europe, and North America, due to their unique flavors, organic nature, and cultural significance. The export of spices not only generates foreign exchange earnings for Ethiopia but also provides employment opportunities for rural communities.

Agriculture and Rural Development Sector Coordinator and Head of the Agriculture Bureau with the Rank of the Regional States Vice President, Usman Surur, told the Ethiopia Press Agency that the region's emphasis on cultivating rosemary and other spices. Effective market linkages and support provided to farmers have resulted in a rapid expansion of rosemary cultivation in the Silte Zone.

According to data from the Silte Zone Agriculture Bureau for the 2012 E.C. harvest season (2019/20) rosemary fields in the zone covered only 560 hectares. However, by the 2015 E.C. harvest season, the cultivated area had expanded to over three thousand hectares, accompanied by a corresponding increase in annual production from 8 thousand quintals to 31 thousand quintals in the stated period (An average of 10 quintals per hectare). Usman emphasized that the region's natural resources and favorable climate have enabled it to capitalize on spice production, particularly rosemary.

Last year, the Silte zone alone generated a staggering 2.8 million USD in export revenue from rosemary products, he said. However, in the fiscal year, the state's rosemary farming endeavor resulted in a six-month income of 3.8 million USD, highlighting the economic viability of rosemary cultivation, he mentioned.

One of the key advantages of rosemary

is its resilience to diseases, drought, and acidic soil, attributed to its inherent natural properties. Usman emphasized that the European market has recognized the quality of rosemary products by the region's farmers, as evident in the acquisition of the Global Gap certificate in Germany. Additionally, over three thousand farmers have been granted the certification, which ensures compliance with international standards.

He stated that the bureau was working on the progress made and outlined plans for further expansion. The region aims to extend rosemary cultivation to Gurage, Hadia, Kambata, Halaba and other zones within Central Ethiopia. In Gurage Zone alone, approximately two thousand hectares of land have been developed for rosemary cultivation, showcasing the commitment to scaling up production.

Apart from its economic benefits, rosemary cultivation contributes to environmental sustainability. Rosemary cultivation in Ethiopia promotes environmental sustainability by provide habitat for beneficial insects, supporting biodiversity. Its drought tolerance conserves water resources. Rosemary absorbs carbon dioxide, contributing to carbon sequestration and mitigating climate change. These practices align with sustainable agriculture, preserving natural resources and ecosystem integrity.

Its resistance to pests and diseases reduces the need for chemical inputs, promoting organic farming practices. Rosemary plants also have the potential to improve soil quality, prevent erosion, and reducing chemical pesticide use, preventing soil erosion, supporting biodiversity, conserving water resources, and contributing to carbon

sequestration and contributing to overall ecosystem health.

Furthermore, to support farmers in this endeavor, he emphasized the provision of training and resources facilitated by agricultural experts. The goal is to enhance production capacity while maintaining high-quality standards, enabling the region to emerge as a leading supplier in the international market.

To ensure the success of this expansion, the region is actively providing training and resource support to farmers. By collaborating with agricultural experts, the aim is to enable local farmers to produce high-quality rosemary products, positioning them at the forefront of the European market.

The drive to increase spice production in the Central Ethiopia Region not only promises economic benefits but also contributes to the overall development of the agricultural sector. By harnessing the country's natural resources and favorable climate, the region is paving the way for a flourishing spice industry, offering new opportunities for farmers and bolstering the country's export potential.

Besides, rosemary production in Ethiopia is an emerging agricultural sector that offers significant economic and environmental benefits. With Ethiopia's favorable climate, diverse topography, and growing global demand for rosemary, the cultivation of this spice holds great promise for Ethiopian farmers. Continued support and investment in rosemary cultivation can contribute to the country's agricultural growth, employment opportunities, and export earnings, while also promoting sustainable farming practices.