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Commercial Farm Service Program (CFSP)

Bishoftu Farm Service Center

Ribbon Cutting Ceremony Remarks

Mission Director Dennis Weller

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Bishoftu, Ethiopia

It is a pleasure for me to be here today to officially open the Bishoftu Farm Service Center, the first of six centers to be opened through USAID's Commercial Farm Service Program. USAID is proud to be part of such an important event that epitomizes the success of working together to provide smallholder farmers with the tools that enable them to earn a decent livelihood and contribute to the development of their country.

I would like to begin today by sharing USAID's overall optimism about the future of Ethiopia's agricultural sector and our perspective on the important role of access to quality production inputs in Ethiopia's agricultural growth. We see great potential in the future of Ethiopia's agriculture sector. Ethiopia has a comprehensive and ambitious development agenda that recognizes the critical importance of agriculture.

Today, under the government's Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), the role of agriculture is recognized as essential to achieving national goals to maintain high annual growth. This includes an ambitious target to maintain an average annual agricultural growth rate of more than six percent.

In pursuit of the GTP, the government committed to a number of agriculture initiatives, including the Policy Investment Framework under the African Union's Comprehensive

African Agriculture Development Program, the creation of the Agriculture Transformation Agency, the Agriculture Growth Program, and most recently the G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition to bring private sector technology and know-how to achieve public goods.

With these commitments, come ambitious objectives for Ethiopian agriculture, including annual increases of 12 percent in agribusiness investment, 10 percent in agricultural production, and five percent in the number of agro-dealers and cooperatives. Of critical importance in the success of this ambitious development agenda is building an efficient agricultural input market.

The agricultural input sector has a critical impact on the agricultural productivity of the nation as it influences farmers' access to and use of productivity enhancing high quality seeds, fertilizer, plant protection products, tools and equipment, and veterinary services and supplies. Through the application of such quality inputs, Ethiopian farmers can achieve significantly higher productivity, contributing directly to income generation and household food security.

In order to address these challenges in accessing improved inputs and improving the effectiveness of the sector, the USAID Commercial Farm Service Program is developing a pilot network of locally-owned, private retail input supply and farm service businesses in the Oromia Region. These farm service centers provide increased access to high-quality, reasonably priced inputs, training, technical advice and output market linkages for at least 30,000 smallholder farmers.

At the same time, they also serve as an innovative model for scaling up private farm supply and service networks in other regions of Ethiopia and other nations of Africa.

Having taken just one look at the supplies and services available at the Bishoftu FSC, it is clear to see how the model will achieve the overall program goal of improving smallholder productivity, food security and income through the development of sustainable, private-sector driven agricultural input supplies and services.

I would like to commend the members of the Bishoftu FSC on their dedication to this important venture that will transform the lives and livelihoods of many Ethiopian farmers.

I would also like to extend my thanks to other partners of the farm service centers including the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Oromia Bureau of Agriculture and various private sector input supply companies – your collaboration is both essential as well as rooted in the same objective of alleviating poverty and improving livelihoods of the Ethiopian people.

On behalf of the U.S. Government and the American people, we are pleased and gratified to make this effort possible. Please accept my sincere congratulations for your efforts thus far and my best wishes for the success of the Bishoftu Farm Service Center.

Thank you.