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**Dennis Weller, Mission Director**

**Feed the Future Chickpea Innovation Lab Launch**

**Ethiopia Institute of Agricultural Research**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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I am pleased to announce the new Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Climate Resilient Chickpea. This is a 5-year, \$4 million dollar award for our distinguished team of partners: The Ethiopian Institute for Agricultural Research (EIAR) where this project will be based, the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRSAT), and the University of California at Davis (UC Davis).

As you know, Ethiopia is the largest chickpea producer in Africa and the sixth-largest in the world. More than one million of the country's rural households cultivate chickpea. In recognition of the crop's potential benefits, the Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency prioritizes chickpea in its current five-year strategy, which aims to double the country's yield by 2015.

Beyond Ethiopia, the new project also holds great promise for chickpea productivity worldwide. In recognition of that, public and private partners in Australia, Canada, and the U.S. also are assigning another \$8 million dollars for related international chickpea research. Ethiopia's contribution through this Innovation Lab will enhance its stature in the research community.

USAID's assistance will support the introduction of genetic diversity from chickpea's closest wild relatives into Ethiopia's national chickpea breeding program. The ultimate goal is to develop and deploy higher-yielding, climate-resilient chickpea varieties preferred by smallholder farmers, consumers and international markets. The effort will also help train Ethiopian scientists to apply advanced molecular technologies to crop breeding efforts and build global research networks between the U.S. and Ethiopian scientists.

Over the next five years, scientists from the partner institutions will identify new genes and traits from wild chickpea species and introduce them into Ethiopian breeding programs. At USAID, we expect that the new genetic resources and improved varieties developed will help us meet our shared food security and agricultural economic development goals in Ethiopia. Some of the potential outcomes of the program are:

- Drought- and heat-resistant chickpea varieties that will increase the productivity and resilience of Ethiopia's chickpea farmers, helping them maintain food security in the face of climate change.
- Improved nitrogen-fixing qualities which will contribute to soil fertility for other products and sustainable land management.
- Higher yielding chickpea varieties that can enhance nutrition by increasing protein consumption and farmer household income to purchase food.
- And more broadly, the new program will also strengthen Ethiopia's participation in global scientific networks, and provide scientific training in genomics and advanced breeding techniques.

In supporting the new Chickpea Innovation Lab, USAID recognizes the power of scientific innovation to drive economic growth and development. But to realize their promise, new technologies must arrive together with extension support, appropriate inputs, and new market opportunities. That's why the new Chickpea Innovation Lab complements other U.S investments in Ethiopia's chickpea value chain:

- USAID's AGP-Agribusiness Market Development (AMDe) project works with farmers to improve chickpea value chain production and marketing, primarily the improved 'kabuli' variety.
- Through the G8 New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition, USAID, the World Food Programme, and private U.S. and Ethiopian enterprises are collaborating with the Ministry of Agriculture to strengthen legume seed systems, like chickpea.

Cumulatively, these investments will help ensure that new varieties developed by the Chickpea Innovation Lab will actually reach smallholder farmers, boost production, improve nutrition, and expand the market.

Thank you.