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## Becho Weliso Fertilizer Factory Inauguration

Remarks by Dennis Weller, Mission Director, USAID Ethiopia

Tullu Bollo, Oromia, Ethiopia

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I am pleased to represent the U.S. Government and to be here today in Oromia on this important occasion. Today marks a major milestone in Ethiopia's agriculture development as we inaugurate the very first fertilizer factory in Ethiopia's history. Congratulations to our partners at the Ministry of Agriculture, the Agriculture Transformation Agency (ATA), the Becho Woliso Farmers' Cooperative Union, and to thousands of Ethiopia's smallholder farmers who will benefit from this new facility and others like it.

USAID is honored to be your partner in this achievement, representing yet another step toward achieving Ethiopia's Agricultural Growth Program (AGP). Through the [U.S. Feed-the-Future Initiative](#), the U.S. Government is one of Ethiopia's strongest partners in developing agriculture, nutrition and food security. These investments are paying off and show tremendous potential. The increase of the availability of modern inputs, such as high yielding seeds and fertilizers, is a critical aspect of USAID's Feed the Future support to the AGP.

Up to now, the traditional fertilizers of DAP and Urea have been the only available options for Ethiopia's smallholder farmers and limited yields. However, this strategic initiative to establish fertilizer blending plants will introduce fertilizers that are tailored to Ethiopia's unique regional soil conditions and are proven to increase farmers' yields.

Led by the Ministry of Agriculture, with support from ATA and USAID, this facility is expected to benefit thousands of smallholder farmers, who will have access to this modern technology for the first time. USAID invested \$1.2 million in this new facility in a cost-share agreement with the Becho Woliso Farmers' Cooperative Union.

Results from the soil fertility testing showed the critical need for blended fertilizers as Ethiopia's soil is deficient in sulfur, boron, potassium, zinc and copper. In tests, new blended fertilizers proved to

increase maize and wheat yields up to 35 percent, when compared to conventional fertilizer application of DAP and Urea. Maize, wheat, and chickpea yields also doubled when the blended fertilizers were used with improved seeds.

Most importantly, these increased yields mean new income for Ethiopia's smallholder farmers and the nutrition and food security of their families.

Once again, let me extend congratulations and my thanks to the Ministry of Agriculture, Agriculture Transformation Agency, Becho Woliso Farmers' Cooperative Union, and finally, to our implementing partner, ACDI VOCA, whose staff work diligently to carry out USAID's Agribusiness Market Development Program (AMDe) and helped to make this new factory a reality.