

Press Release



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For further information, call 011-130-7033
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USAID Celebrates Women Leaders in Agribusiness

The Women in Agribusiness Leadership Network (WALN) celebrates the growth and innovation of women entrepreneurs in agribusiness

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 21, 2015 – As part of the ongoing strategy to empower women in agribusiness and to address gender equity, the U.S. Government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), celebrated the graduation of 100 women leaders from the Women in Agribusiness Leadership Network (WALN). U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia Patricia Haslach and Ethiopia's First Lady Roman Tesfaye opened the event that recognized the women entrepreneurs for their outstanding efforts to improve their agribusinesses.

Ethiopian women make up nearly half of the agriculture workforce and provide a significant amount of the farm labor to produce agricultural products consumed or sold by their families. However, they are not involved in the decision-making process on what crops to grow or when to sell them. They have limited opportunities to training, market information, market access and credit that restrict their ability to participate in agribusiness.

USAID, through its Agribusiness Market Development (AMDe) activity, launched the WALN in May 2014 to provide members with support and resources needed to better plan and manage their businesses as well as information on savings and loan services. Coming from Addis Ababa and the Amhara, Oromia, SNNP and Tigray regions, the 100 women leaders received training in agribusiness leadership, business mentoring and networking. The WALN involves female business leaders who own and operate enterprises of all sizes, across the agribusiness sector, including producing, processing, trading and exporting products.

“Many of you are bold women traders and exporters in the male dominated sectors of agricultural exports such as coffee, sesame and maize. Challenging the status quo, you are truly role models of women leadership in agriculture,” said Ambassador Haslach. “Today, we honor you for your commitment to participate in this business leadership program.”

At the event, five women entrepreneurs received grants to expand their businesses and initiate new innovative businesses. In addition, USAID recognized 17 farmers' cooperative unions for successfully promoting women membership in their organizations. The competition—organized by USAID between March and December—included 42 farmer cooperative unions and almost 1,700 cooperatives in the four regions. USAID awarded walking tractors and motor bikes to 16 farmers' cooperatives and the opportunity to participate in an international trade fair to one farmers' cooperative union that registered more than 5,400 new women members.

Agribusiness Market Development (AMDe) is USAID's flagship activity under the U.S. Government's Feed the Future Initiative in Ethiopia and represents one of USAID's largest contributions to the Government of Ethiopia's Agricultural Growth Program. The USD \$3.5 billion global hunger and food security initiative sustains the U.S. Government's commitment as one of Ethiopia's largest partners in developing the agriculture sector, which is a fundamental cornerstone of the Ethiopian economy.