

# Press Release



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## **ANNUAL CONFERENCE CELEBRATES WOMEN AGRIBUSINESS LEADERS**

*USAID honors business plan winners from the Women in Agribusiness Leadership Network*

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 13, 2016** – The Women in Agribusiness Leadership Network, through the United States Agency for International Development’s (USAID’s) Agribusiness Market Development and Livestock Market Development activities, honored the winners of the 2015 Business Plan Competition at its second annual conference today with the Rahel Mulatu Poultry Farm earning the top award. USAID also gave certificates to new network members who completed the six-month leadership and business training and mentorship program and awarded a total of \$1.1 million in innovation grants to 13 women entrepreneurs.

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 access to training, market information, and credit that restricts their ability to participate in agribusiness.

The network targets high-potential women leaders in agribusiness sectors to build skills in business planning, management and marketing and to develop leadership skills that enable growth and confidence. In addition, network members participate in a mentorship program that supports women-led micro and small enterprises to share experience, skills and knowledge about business management and marketing communications.

“The U.S. Government is committed to support initiatives that empower women. The opportunities for women leaders and business-owners are tremendous and continue to expand,” said USAID Deputy Mission Director Ramona El Hamzaoui. “The network’s growing success proves the importance of the role of women in agribusiness and signifies the role they play in the development of Ethiopia.”

USAID initially launched the Women in Agribusiness Leadership Network in May of 2014 with 94 participants from Addis Ababa and the Amhara, Oromia, SNNP and Tigray regions. In the first year, 90 percent of network members successfully completed the program. The network has now reached more than 1,200 women and is building a block of agribusiness leaders to support the interests of Ethiopian women, proving there is an urgent demand for women business organizations and leaders.

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*The Agribusiness Market Development and Livestock Market Development are the [Feed the Future](#) initiative’s flagship activities in Ethiopia and represents USAID’s contribution to the Government of Ethiopia’s Agricultural Growth Program. The \$3.5bn 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.*

For more information, see <https://www.usaid.gov/ethiopia>