SUCCESS STORY - 10

Farmer-Research-Extension Group (FREG): Strengthening Linkage

USAID/AMAREW's goal is to bring a paradigm shift in the research-extension (R-E) system whereby R-E linkage becomes a reality rather than being a rhetoric

Photo: AMAREW Project

FREG members evaluating the performance of improved faba bean varieties in Lay Gaiynt woreda. Among the varieties obtained from research due to the already functional R-E linkage, the seed of those that are selected by FREG members for meeting farmers' need will be multiplied under a community based participatory seed multiplication scheme for their seed to reach farmers through the local seed supply system under different transaction arrangements.

U.S. Agency for International Development
www.usaid.gov

Amhara Micro-enterprise development, Agricultural Research, Extension, and Watershed Management (AMAREW) Project
www.oired.vt.edu/amarew/

Agricultural research and extension in the Amhara Region has attempted to play its role in increasing and stabilizing agricultural productivity. An effective agricultural development, in general, and technology development and delivery system in particular, requires a good linkage mechanism particularly between research, extension and farmers.

The research-extension services, however, have been criticized for two reasons: first, the research problems being investigated are generally not in accordance with the priority needs of farmers; second, the technologies and information generated by the research system have not been effectively transferred to the farmers. The major reason for these problems is the weak or ineffective linkage between research and extension functions.

In order to ensure the participation of stakeholders and strengthen the research-extension linkage, the Adet Research Center with the support of AMAREW Project introduced the concept of Farmer-Research-Extension Group (FREG) in two pilot Kebeles (Gobgob and Yedoro) in Lay Gayint woreda. FREG serves as a mechanism for research-extension linkage in technology development and transfer.

The two FREGs in the pilot Kebeles have been involved in the technology adaptation, demonstration and multiplication of improved crop varieties such as potatoes, faba bean, barley and some others. The FREG members, comprised of 20-25 farmers both male and female and meet at critical times in the season to evaluate, using their own criteria, the performance of the on-farm trials in the presence of both researchers and extension workers. This has enabled the research-extension system obtain feed back on the technologies being demonstrated and allowed projection of the extent of adoption and potential impact of the improved crop varieties in increasing production and productivity in the growing area, which is a primary goal of AMAREW Project. It is believed that the FREGs could also serve in the long run as nucleus for establishing community based seed production cooperatives in the woreda(s) to work towards addressing the unsatisfied improved seed demand of various crops.