
Addressing challenges in access to ecological inputs at the smallholder level in Ethiopia: The case of Veggies 4 Planet and People Project

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Introduction

Challenges in the agricultural input supply system severely hampered crop production and productivity in Ethiopia. Government institutions and farmer unions largely controlled the system, with little involvement from the private sector. Smallholder farmers often face stumbling blocks in accessing high-quality inputs in the quantities needed, in small packages, quality, at an affordable cost, and at the right time. Conventional inputs suppliers mainly utilised existing input supply systems, while suppliers of ecological inputs largely targeted sizeable horticultural farms, neglecting the smallholder farmers. Access to quality agroecological inputs at the smallholder level is one of the main limitations towards farmers transition to agroecology. Ecological input suppliers need to be open to supplying their inputs through existing input supply structures to tap into the smallholder farmer market. Linkages to agrodealers at the district and kebele level is critical to enhancing smallholder access to ecological inputs. Agrodealer shops are facing challenges in accessing high-quality inputs from reliable sources. They typically buy inputs from small retailers in Addis Ababa and stock their shops. This results in a lack of diversity of the inputs retailing at a higher price.

Methodology

To promote the use of ecological inputs as well as create awareness and build demand for ecological inputs, the project adopted the following approach: Conducted an agricultural input assessment within the Woredas of project implementation, provided technical training to improve the functional capacities of agrodealers as advised by the assessment, and facilitated business-to-business linkages between the input distributors and agrodealers.

Results & Discussion

The Veggies for Planet and People project is facilitating linkages between agrodealers and ecological input distributors to enable the agrodealers stock a variety of ecological inputs at better prices and to enhance smallholder farmers access to quality inputs. This will ensure the sustainable transition of smallholder farmers to agroecology. The linkages facilitated between distributors and agrodealers are proving to be profitable. Six agrodealers sold various inputs worth 8,731,440 birr (USD 164,744) to approximately 14,000 farmers in 2022.

Conclusion

The success of these agrodealers over the last year suggests that the approach can be replicated and scaled to assist smallholder Ethiopian farmers to adopt and transition to ecological farming.

Keywords

Agro-dealer, stockist, Ecological inputs, Regenerative agriculture, Planet, SNV