

Eritrean Agricultural Experts Seek To Address Environmental and Agricultural Challenges

Written by Kesete Ghebrehiwot



Joint venture of different professionals in the agriculture sector would positively impact the over all agro industrial activities that have been under way through out the country. Though the role played by individuals cannot be disregarded, joint or group efforts make a task very easier. So integration among experts of various specialties helps to create an atmosphere where matters are easily addressed in an incorporated manner.

In this connection, the existence of an association that embraces experts of various specializations within the agriculture filed becomes a necessity.

The Association of Eritreans in Agricultural Sciences (AEAS) that comprises 311 registered agricultural experts in Eritrea and abroad was established in 1994, with the objective to challenge possible threats, and to contribute its share in the endeavors for the achievement of food security and in environmental conservation activities by conducting researches and experiments the could help to boost agricultural production.

The association conducted its annual meeting from October 22 to 23 under the theme "Integrated water management for food security: trends, challenges and opportunities." During the occasion different research papers that included the impact of drought on plant genetic resources, long-term monitoring soil erosion: soil and water co



nservation, innovative management options for improved utilization of water resources and other various topics were presented.

In his presentation on strategies of combating land degradation in Eritrea Mr. Redae Teklay, from the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) said: "Considering that land degradation poses one of the most compelling developmental challenges in the country, the people of Eritrea are implementing innovative measures to address land degradation and broader desertification related issues through social mobilization in soil and water conservation and reforestation. However, the sustainability of the campaign will need active involvement of all stakeholder and support from its development partners."

Mr. Tekeste Wolde'abezghi, also from MoA presented a paper on improving users' perception of weather forecast in agriculture, with a special focus on early warning and planning. "Today, the national weather centers can routinely provide useful forecast with a -5-7- day forecast accuracy comparable to the 2-day forecast of 25 years ago," he added.

Mr. Amanuel Mahdere, from MoA's Plant Genetic Resources Unit (PGRU) on his part elaborated that the PGRU priority has been to collect PGR genetically threatened. With this regard he pointed out that the unit has conducted research on 320 sample species most of which are herbs and some shrubs. According to him more than 72% of the species were in abundance, most found patchy in distribution. The cause for the disappearance of some

Eritrean Agricultural Experts Seek To Address Environmental and Agricultural Challenges

Written by Kesete Ghebrehiwot

indigenous species was that sensitive plant species dropped out and few aggressive ones persisted at the expense of others.

Mr. Berhane Habte from National Agricultural Research Institute also gave briefing on the diversity, use and conservation of indigenous fruit trees in Gash-Barka and Southern regions. "Eritrea has many wild fruits that are highly nutritious and rich in vitamins which are locally available and adapted to local conditions and more importantly, their contribution to the nutritional value of the local diet is great. However, these fruit trees are under constant risk," he said.

According to Dr. Iyassu Gebretatios, Chairperson of AEAS, the association drafted a strategic plan for the time period 2010 to 2018. The plan encompasses issues such as: strengthening research activities and encouraging students to join agricultural science, promoting professional linkage with other professional organization in the domains of agricultural science, promoting environmental protection and sustainable development and mobilizing resources through various creative means towards the attainment of the association's objectives.

In the meeting it was disclosed that one indicator of land degradation has been the loss of biodiversity. Even though the country was once rich in wildlife, due to loss of habitat and vegetation cover, the number and the sp



ecies of wild animals have decreased or disappeared. There are small populations of African elephant, leopard, Dorcas & Sommering gazelle, Ostrich, and other species. But species such as, African wild ass, Nubian Ibex, Dugong and Sea turtle are endangered.

Mr. Redae pointed out that the national green campaign, which was officially launched on May 15, 2006 is at the core of the Government strategy to address land degradation. Through an accelerated and sustainable forestation programme, the Government has been encouraging and assisting individuals, communities, and other concerned bodies to engage in combating land degradation activities.

The association was primarily established to address and identify agricultural problems, conduct researches and experiments, and to train farmers and agricultural experts through out the country. In this regard the meeting highlighted a number of topics and gave a brief insight on environmental concerns, agro industrial activities, and the researches that are enriched through extended discussions. The members of the association also discussed on ratifying the new strategic plan. The meeting was closed by nominating and electing new AEAS executive board members.