GOVERNMENT NATIONALIZES NEW AND IMPROVED NUTRITION SENSITIVE AGRICULTURE CURRICULUM

Building the capacity of students ensures a skilled workforce

In a country where 80% of the population is engaged in agriculture, the potential of the agriculture sector to impact household nutritional status is immense. In recent years, Ethiopia has set out to tackle undernutrition by promoting diversified production and consumption of foods through its five-year nutrition sensitive agriculture plan. Unfortunately, however, agriculture workers that have graduated from Ethiopian universities lack the necessary competencies to bring this plan to its fruition.

USAID is supporting capacity building of pre-service education institutions in the country through Feed the Future Ethiopia Growth through Nutrition Activity, a five-year program working to ensure graduates are well-equipped with the skills necessary to contribute to the country’s nutrition sensitive approach.

In April 2017, USAID’s Growth through Nutrition, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and Ministry of Education, identified and integrated core knowledge, skill, and attitude competencies into existing courses of various agriculture disciplines such as animal sciences, plant sciences, natural resource management, and rural development and agricultural extension.

Capacity building trainings were provided on the new competencies for 212 instructors delivering the courses in four regions. Students learned basic principles of human nutrition, production and promotion of diversified foods, postharvest handling, behavioral change communications, and management of agriculture related nutrition interventions.

Following a recommendation by instructors to create a stand-alone Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture course, however, a rigorous revision process ensued involving experts from a number of disciplines. Four new curricula were developed, as a result, which were endorsed by the Ethiopian government on February 2nd, 2018.

Today, agriculture colleges across the country are mandated to integrate the new nutrition sensitive agriculture curricula and will deliver the courses to students beginning in the 2018/2019 academic year. The Ethiopian government’s proactive role in the revision process, and demonstrated leadership throughout, also suggests the integration of nutrition in agriculture pre-service education will continue in the coming years.

Thanks to USAID’s support, the next generation of agriculture experts and practitioners will be better equipped to push the government’s nutrition sensitive agenda forward, and expectedly leverage the current momentum to continually advance the agriculture sector to address undernutrition in the country.

“This is how the agriculture sector can contribute to reducing malnutrition in the country – by working on the agriculture education system, by building a strong foundation, and by bringing up a generation that recognizes the great impact that can be made.”

– Wondale Habtamu
Extension Director General, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources

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