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Pond Irrigation – Two Birds with One Stone



Photo: The chicken coop perches on the edge of the fishpond - Magdalawit Ghirma, Growth through Nutrition

***“Since the introduction of the ‘Belete’ Potato, there has been a sizable increase in demand from the farmers in the Woreda”
- Fekede Leta, FTC Development Agent***

Access to water significantly effects ability to produce fresh and nutritious vegetables as the majority of water withdrawals are utilized for agriculture. Despite receiving priority status in access to water, the Were Babo Megna Farmers’ Training Center (FTC) in Waya Tuka, West Oromia recognizes the importance of also having strong vegetable varieties that can endure limited water conditions.

In the 2.8-hectare FTC, water from the pond collects nutrients from poultry manure which acts as feed for the pond’s fish. The pond is embanked by 800m² of vegetation, which produces many fruits and vegetables for the center, and seedlings for the local community and other FTCs in the woreda. While this impressive feat is significant, the FTC encountered two challenges early on. The first was the initial breed of chicken used - Bovans Goldline - which could only produce eggs for direct consumption and did not meet the more sustainable demand of fertile egg production. Secondly, there was a shortage of drought-resistant vegetable varieties available to meet the existing demand from farmers.

Growth through Nutrition introduced Koekoek chickens (45 pullets and 5 cockerels), which have since produced fertile eggs and offspring. Furthermore, vegetable seedlings, such as the “Belete” or Irish potatoes, that were provided by the project have generated great demand from farmers in the region, with 15 households taking around 1,000 kilos of the crop so far. These seedlings are then distributed to other FTCs in the area and community, including cabbage (seven farmers), orange-fleshed sweet potatoes (four farmers) and haricot beans (nine farmers).

Growth through Nutrition, a USAID activity, also supports the FTC by emphasizing the importance of nutrient-dense food consumption and guiding the FTC on diffusion practices. The center shares this knowledge through its cooking and agro-economy demonstrations, which have been attended by 143 community members so far.