

JICA signed a project with Ethiopia for horticulture farmer empowerment

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The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed a Record of Discussions with the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa for the Project for Smallholder Horticulture Farmer Empowerment through Promotion of Market Oriented Agriculture Phase 2, a technical cooperation project.

In Ethiopia, almost 80 per cent of the population lives in rural areas, and agriculture is the main source of income for approximately 70 per cent of all people. Agriculture is achieving steady growth every year at an annual rate of about seven per cent and is one of the most important industries in the country. Recently, the Ethiopian government has identified the promotion of horticultural crops (vegetables, fruits, and flowers) as one of the highest priority agendas for long-term economic development, and, by promoting horticulture, the government is aiming to achieve enhanced agricultural competitiveness and improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. However, a specific extension method to promote horticulture has not been well established, and the majority of government extension workers need to learn more about agricultural technology as well as the concept of market-oriented agriculture. This lack of an effective agriculture extension service reflecting the needs of the market has been one of the major factors hindering the improvement of farmers's livelihoods.

In response to such a situation, the "Project for Smallholder Horticulture Farmer Empowerment through Promotion of Market-Oriented Agriculture" (Ethio-SHEP Phase 1) was conducted from January 2017 until January 2023 in the regions of

Amhara and Oromia. The target of the first phase of the project was smallholder farmers, who, through the project, were taught to become sensitive to market needs, including having knowledge of which crop variety is in demand and the appropriate timing of sales for enhancing their production, as well as marketing and farm management skills. This phase of the project brought remarkable results, on average doubling the horticulture income of the target farmers. During the second phase, the project will expand the target areas from two to four regions, adding Sidama Region and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region, and intends to introduce a sustainable horticulture extension system in wider areas.

Through the promotion of market-oriented horticulture agriculture, this project will contribute to the improvement of smallholder farmers' livelihoods in Ethiopia and to the achievement of SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) Goals 1 (No poverty) and 2 (Zero hunger).