



Behind a bulky wooden desk, a map of Amhara decorates the cream wall. The region in the north of Ethiopia is the third largest and one of the most ecologically diverse areas of the country. Locals call it the ‘water tower’ of Ethiopia. Its main water source is Lake Tana north of Bahir Dar that sends off the river Abay to feed the green lush fields in the Western part of the region before continuing northwest into neighbouring Sudan. “Our ancestors gave [it] the name of Blue Nile, now it is brown,” says Dr Teshome Walle, the man behind the desk.

After twenty years of working in agriculture, he has seen the changes first-hand. Before being appointed as Deputy Head of the Bureau of Agriculture in 2003, he worked in the draught prone areas of Eastern Amhara for eight years. “We also had best practices, but not well-documented. The data was not analysed on a scientific basis. If we had a good performance in one zone, we simply took it and

applied it to other areas.” The region’s diverse agro-ecological conditions did not comply. One approach did not fit all.

Value-chain

New perspectives were needed, which he found in Bangkok, Thailand where he completed his PhD degree in 2011. The two and a half years in the home of the biggest rice exporter in the world left a deep impression on him. “The Thai are industrious people. They talk little and work hard,” he recounts. After his return, he worked on getting the right people talking in Ethiopia. Now, development agents exchange views with suppliers and the Bureau of Agriculture links up with the universities in the area. In order to apply this integrated approach in the existing extension system, CASCAPE proved a valuable partner. “They work on the complete value-chain: from Field to Fork as we say in agriculture. In our case, we only focused on the production part; we never looked for market opportunities,” he admits.

First results show that production can be tripled, further confirming the region’s reputation of being a ‘breadbasket’. Amhara already produces 40% of the national supply of tef, a nutritious food grain used in everyday cooking. However, success has not spread to the eastern part where 30% of the people are still food insecure. “I want to see my region to become prosperous and 100% food secure,” he says. According to him, food security is about “not to starve - to simply live an optimum life [...], also independence in the sense that you don’t have to think about what you’re going to eat tomorrow.” He hopes that future generations will continue his legacy and adopt a more sustainable lifestyle. His eyes fixed on the map behind him following the stream of the Abay river Dr Teshome says: “What we need is to see a Blue Nile again.”

Source: <http://www.foodsecurityethiopia.nl/case/1/teshome-one-big-family/story>