

## From soil conservation to land management

Mr Bekele Erdo, a farmer in Handosha micro watershed, Gibe woreda, is among the early adopters of innovative soil and water conservation approaches introduced by the Resilient Landscape and Livelihoods Project (RLLP).

The RLLP supported land productivity enhancement through soil and water conservation measures is believed to enhance environmental and economic benefits in degraded areas, such as Gibe woreda.

The woreda is located in south nations and nationalities and peoples (SNNP) region and mainly known for production of maize, wheat, 'enset' and coffee. However, in the past few years, as there had been insufficient soil and water conservation interventions, the productivity has significantly declined.

"When my farmland gradually lost its potential to produce crops due to

erosion, I shifted to planting eucalyptus and 'enset'. But this traditional way of treatment has not helped me to heal the land and most of the time concentrated only enset based food" Said farmer Bekele.

Then, with the support from SLMP, farmer Bekele started implementing different soil and water conservation practices.



*Figure 1 Bench terrace built in the farm plots of Bekele, Gibe woreda Hadiya zone*

"I have constructed bench terrace and minimized the soil erosion that affected the soil fertility; then, based on the woreda agricultural office experts'

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advice I cleared the farm from eucalyptus tree that drained the soil and reduced fertility,” said Bekele. In addition, Bekele and farmers in the Gibe woreda adopted a trend of keeping livestock in the backyard instead of letting them graze freely. Other fellow farmers also adopted the innovative farm management techniques of farmer Bekele.

Ato Bekele explained that, planting desho grass on the top of the ridge of bench terrace helped him feed the cattle using cut and carry technique. Furthermore, he earned 2000 ETB from the sale of desho tillers.



Figure 2: Farmer Bekele’s farm covered with Enset

As a result of all the sustainable land management efforts, in just a year, Bekele and his fellow farmers cleared eucalyptus tree planted on more than a hectare of farmland and deployed various soil and water conservation techniques that could enhance soil fertility and crop production. Ato Bekele further engaged in various income generating activities such as beekeeping with support of RLLP, which substituted the income, he could have earned from the eucalyptus tree sale.



Figure 3: Farmer Bekele’s bee keeping farm Handosha micro watershed, Gibe woreda

*“I have sustained my income with diversified efforts, I could now manage to harvest wheat, maize and honey*

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from my farm. I have built a house and saved more than 10,000ETB in a bank. Thanks to the RLLP now I'm a better off farmer!" said farmer Bekele.



*Figure 4 wheat produced and stored in Ato Bekele's store*

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