

Speech by His Excellency Mr. Tefera Derbew

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**Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am very much pleased to speak on this occasion to discuss on Agriculture development for food and Nutrition Security.

As a matter of fact, agriculture is the leading sector in the national economy of most member states of the Organization, which engages the majority of the population and contributes the largest portion of export earnings.

The importance of agriculture to the Ethiopian economy cannot be overemphasized as it has already become a motto in Ethiopia that “As agriculture goes, so goes the overall economy”.

It might be well known to you that in Ethiopia agriculture contributes to most of the foreign earnings, employment generation, supplying agro-industrial raw materials, and generally most of the country’s GDP. The Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has always given priority to the agriculture sector and the fruits of this informed and well-meant focus are being harvested for quite some time now. The double-digit economic growth rates over the last nine

years tell a lot about the importance of the agricultural sector and thus the appropriateness of the agriculture led economic development strategy of the government.

This was not simple coincidence,

Ethiopia has laid strong foundations to transform its agriculture sector via:

- a well-articulated **agriculture policy** and **investment framework**, and a **growth and transformation plan**, with clear outcome targets and objectives, articulated as *“To build a market economy in which (i) a broad spectrum of the Ethiopian people are beneficiaries, (ii) dependencies on food aid is eliminated, and (iii) rapid economic growth is assured”*
- a focus on **small holder productivity** and production of **high value crops**, with a special focus on **scaling up of best practices, intensified commercialisation**, and support for development of **large-scale commercial agriculture** where feasible
- Capacity building of **implementing institutions** – in particular **extension** and **research** – to deliver on the four key pillars of the government agriculture policy – **productivity and production, rural commercialization, natural resource management, and disaster risk management and food security**
- establishment of **transformational institutions** to support agricultural growth and market development (ATA, ECX)

- A strong **government-donor coordination platform** – Rural Economic Development & Food Security (RED&FS) – to coordinate, strategize, and provide technical implementation support to three multi-million flagship programs – **Agriculture Growth Program (AGP), Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), and Sustainable Land Management Program (SLMP)**
- significant public investments has been also made in:
 - large scale infrastructure (power, roads, transport) to catalyze agro-industrial development
 - human development (education, health) to build a skilled labor force
- Domestic resource mobilization effort has increased the capacity of the country to finance development endeavors.
- Supportive policies – access to land, finance - to incentivize foreign direct investment are in place.
- **In addition Ethiopia is among few countries that has exceeded CAADP targets**
 - Ethiopia’s strong agriculture sector foundation has enabled it to align its policy and strategies with the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) compact
 - Ethiopia has already **exceeded the CAADP budgetary target** of 10% to the agricultural sector and **agricultural growth target** rate of 6% per year.
 - Ethiopia’s **Policy and Investment Framework** – a strategic framework for the prioritisation and planning of investments

that will drive Ethiopia's agricultural growth and development
– has been designed to operationalize the CAADP.

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As a result of all the above mentioned comprehensive interventions the country is coming out of dire poverty that it had for many decades. It is, indeed, gratifying that since 2003, the economy has grown at a higher rate and the growth has been sustained. The overriding development agenda of Ethiopia is to sustain rapid and broad-based growth path witnessed during the past several years and eventually end poverty in a foreseeable short time.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The achievement in the food security program is also encouraging as a result of clear objectives and goals the Government has set for implementation.

The core objective of the Food Security Program includes enabling chronically food insecure people attain food security through addressing the root causes of the problem. The program components designed to attain the core objective are voluntary resettlement, productive safety net, household asset building program and complementary community investment program. These programs are comprehensive and complementary. In order to sustainably address the root-cause problem PSNP protects asset depletion of food insecure households, increase food availability at household and community level and at the same time by engaging them in public works on soil and water conservation activities;

it addresses the root cause problem which is the natural resource depletion. So far well above six million households have received PSNP transfers enabling them to meet consumption needs, reducing the risk they faced and providing them with alternative options to protect selling of productive assets. Since graduation is the ultimate target of the Food Security program, up until now, more than 194,000 households have graduated from the PSNP.

The household asset building program builds the asset of the PSNP beneficiaries through technology intervention and market access. Making the food insecure households benefit from increased productivity of crops and animals as well as increased incomes both from agricultural and non-agricultural income sources are the major targets of the household asset building.

The voluntary Resettlement program in other hand provides access to fertile land. As a result of implementing the resettlement component, well over 224,000 households have been resettled and almost 98% of these people have already attained food self-sufficiency through the implementation of the resettlement program component. The last but not the list is the community complementary investment program which focus on water and community infrastructure development and is mainly implemented in the pastoral areas. Except the PSNP which is funded by our development partners the other three programs are financed by the government budget. This clearly shows the real commitment of the Ethiopian government to tackle the food security and malnutrition problem through specific targeted programs and sector focused and country wide development interventions.

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We have now come to conclude that having all this efforts exerted alone is not a sufficient condition to tackle the problem of food insecurity and malnutrition. There is a global problem that is diluting our effort for example in our drought prone areas. Africa is suffering from this climate change. It is already severely affecting Africa as a result of which the lives of millions of Africans are at stake as the extra-ordinary drought in the horn of Africa shows. This issue needs to be addressed and addressed as fast as possible before it reaches point of irreversibility. At this juncture, I would like to urge FAO to continue supporting vulnerable countries as it has been the case in the past.

Last but not least I would like to express my government's full support for the reform measures taken by the Director General to introduce a new management system that increases the efficiency, transparency and accountability of the organization and reduce its transaction costs. We are also of the opinion that the Director General's request for a modest increase in the budget of the organization is necessary for the effective implementation of the proposed work program and has to be endorsed.

I thank you for your kind attention!