

## Commercial Farm Service Program launched

By Eskedar Kifle

Monday, 11 February 2013 09:34 -

---



The Commercial Farm Service Program was launched on Monday February 4th in support of the Ethiopian Government's Agricultural Growth Plan (AGP). At the launching event it was stated that the new two-year program will provide grants and trainings to rural entrepreneurs to help create one wholesale and six retail Farm Service Centers (FSCs).

"We see great potential in the future of Ethiopia's agriculture sector. Ethiopia has a comprehensive and ambitious development agenda that recognizes the critical importance of agriculture. Today, under the government's Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), the role of agriculture is recognized as essential to achieving national goals to maintain high annual growth. This includes an ambitious, but achievable, target to maintain an average annual agricultural growth rate of over 6 per cent," said Jason Frason, the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Deputy Mission Director.

The farm service centers are designed to meet the operational needs of farmers and will reach at least 30,000 smallholder farmers in the Oromia Region.

FSCs are medium to large-scale suppliers that provide an array of agricultural supplies, or inputs, such as fertilizers, seeds, agricultural tools and other equipment. The centers will also provide extensive services including machinery rental, processing, veterinary consultation and marketing.

"In order to address these challenges in accessing improved inputs and improving the effectiveness of the sector, the USAID Commercial Farm Service Program will develop a pilot network of locally-owned, private retail input supply and farm service businesses in the Oromia Region," Jason stated.

Teshome Lakew, Director of Agricultural Input Supply at the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), also said that farm service centers build value chains that are very important to participating farmers and their families.

The Commercial Farm Service Program will also help establish a wholesale buying cooperative, owned by and dedicated to serving the FSCs and link them to national and international suppliers.

Through improved access to technical expertise and supplies, it was stated that the program will stimulate increased productivity and competitiveness in agribusiness, which will in turn improve smallholder productivity, food security and incomes through the development of sustainable, private sector-driven agricultural input supply and services.