



## LOW INPUT SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN THE RIFT VALLEY, ETHIOPIA

### A partnership project of;

- University of Saskatchewan and
- Awassa College of Agriculture, Southern Region University
- Awassa Agricultural Research Center
- National Soil Research Laboratory
- Addis Ababa University

Sponsored by the University Partnership in Cooperation and Development (UPCD) Tier 2 of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

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### Introduction

It is our pleasure to announce the launching of the first issue of the NEWSLETTER. Primary goals of this project are to enhance the capabilities of the four Ethiopian agriculture, training, research and service institutions: the University of Addis Ababa, College of Agriculture in Awassa, the Awassa Agricultural Research Center, and the National Soil Research Laboratory. The project will upgrade Ethiopian faculty members' qualifications, and increase their knowledge of land degradation problems such as salinity, erosion, soil quality loss, and provide research experience for scientists and extension specialists. The University of Saskatchewan's College of Agriculture, will help prepare the Ethiopian counterpart institutions to address the land degradation problems in the Rift Valley of south-central Ethiopia and search for innovative and environmentally sustainable technologies to increase food production on drylands.

The Project is in the first year. This year emphasize is on data gathering and organizing a multifunctional computer training which will mirror many of the functions now being carried out at the U. of S. College of Agriculture. The aim is to establish a communication network with the idea that each institution will have a direct link to the Internet with a *www home page*. The long term goal is to ensure that the individuals using these facilities become self-sustaining, self-educating, and capable of directing its use towards their own needs.

### Project Activities

- **Ethiopian Team Members** ; Drs. S.Beyene, S. Sertsu, and F. Itanna were in Saskatoon for general discussion on the project, between April 11- 26/98.

#### Project Management Committee

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A view from the Ethiopian highland with highly degraded slopes. Intermountain plains are suitable for crop production.

## Information

About other UPCD Tier-2 projects, please see **UPCD Voices (LE RANDEZ-VOIS)** and AUCC website:

[www.aucc.ca](http://www.aucc.ca)

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### UPCD Tier-2 team members at CIDA's Canadian Partnership Branch

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Ethiopian Project Directors (from left to right; Drs. F. Itanna, S. Sertsu, S. Beyene) during their visit to Canada April/98.

- **A. R. Mermut** has spent 5 weeks in Ethiopia in May and early June/98. Management Committee contacted several NGOs, such as the Institute of sustainable development (Coordinator Mrs. Sue Edwards). Dr. Mermut together with scientists from the National Soil Laboratory visited University of Mekele in Tigray, just before bombing of the city.
- **France Tremblay** from AUCC has visited Ethiopia between May 4 and 10/98 and had a chance to see and talk with partners from different institutions.
- **Awassa College of Agriculture** has signed a memorandum of understanding with the College of Agriculture in Saskatoon. Ethiopian partners have already signed a memorandum of understanding to work together within the framework of the project.
- His Excellency **Ministry of Agriculture** (Dr. Seyfu Ketema) has received the delegates from the partner institutions together with Project Director (June 3/98). The group briefed the Minister about the project, discussed on the issue of land degradation, and received his full support for project activities.
- **A World Wide Web site** was set up but it is still in the initial stage. It is linked to CIDA, AUCC, U. of S., and U. of S. International. Similar web sites will be constructed in the partner institutions.
- Selection of students for training is underway.
- Detailed field program is prepared, but due to growing season, it will be started in early 1999.
- Several contacts were made with the Canadian Embassy. The Canadian Government places great importance on food security and good governance in Ethiopia. A soil and water conservation program is already going on by the scientists from PFRA in the Prairies, in Tigray region of Ethiopia. The UPCD Tier-2 project was considered a welcome addition to the Canadian Government initiatives.
- Four computers are already in place and a first course on computer training, especially on Internet, will take place within the next two months.
- Ordering books and other equipment are on the way.
- All partners feel that they are at a learning stage both technically and scientifically.