# Girar site-specific topic: Catholic Church agricultural experimentation station

An interview was conducted with the vice head of the Catholic NGO Social and Economic Development unit. The centre was established three years back.

According to the respondent the agricultural experimentation centre is established to enable the community to produce vegetables and fruits. The NGO has launched a project on food security and the agricultural experimentation centre is therefore under the food security project. The centre is three kilometres away from the office of the Catholic NGO. There is a site supervisor employed and constantly working in the experimentation centre.

In previous years the local farmers had no experience of vegetable and fruit farming. There was a high dependence on *enset* products. Thus, the centre intended to diversify their means of livelihood. The respondent pointed out that the centre is 99% successful.

**Available Services**-in the experimentation centre, farmers are advised to come and see what is being done in the centre. They are provided with loan for production materials and agricultural inputs. After obtaining the necessary skills from the centre, farmers are advised to replicate these techniques in their own garden. Basically, the centre works with super-model farmers. Then, these farmers are used as an instrument to address the needs of other farmers who are resistant and who do not come to the experimentation centre. The local farmers copy from those super model farmers who initially worked with the centre. The super model farmers are given extra agricultural inputs so they could share to other farmers who would copy from them. Currently, the centre is providing the local farmers with professional support in horticulture production. Starting from six months of its establishment, there has been farmers who are complaining about joining the centre. The number of people who want to be part of the centre is increasing from time to time.

**Challenges**-the first challenge of the centre is the low awareness of the farmers regarding horticulture and their reduced participation in the affairs of the centre. In the beginning, most of the farmers do not even think horticulture is part of agriculture and worthy of their time and resources. Therefore, they have given low attention to diversify the crops they produced. The next challenge is faced with regard to water problems. Besides, the agro climate of the area is also not that much conducive for horticulture and other cash crop production. There was also a problem of time management in the sides of the farmers. Since they do not use their time properly, they often complained when they are asked to come and work with the centre.

**How these challenges resolved**-to deal with the aforementioned challenges, the centre used the following resolution strategies. The first and widely applied method was awareness training and continued professional support to farmers who do not participate regularly. There was also another training organised for model farmers on how they could transfer the skills they have acquired. Second, to solve the water problems, they introduced water harvesting to the farmers. In addition to these, there was also a watershed management training for the farmers.

**Resistance-**there was no much resistance faced from the community. The super-model farmers who are working with the centre are those models who are awarded by the regional government. Three of these farmers are given condominium houses in Wolkite town as an award. Therefore, as the other farmers in the community strive to grow towards them, there is not much resistance encountered.

**Involvement of women in the activities of the centre**- the other question I posed was regarding the involvement of women in the activities of the centre. He mentioned that all wives of model farmers are involved with the centre. Some of these wives are given training on watershed management and currently they are applying these skills in their gardens. There is also a demonstration on food preparation to the wives. The food preparation demonstration is done in collaboration with HEWs and the wereda Agriculture Office Home Science Department. Most of the local farmers’ wives attend the demonstration. Some men also volunteered to take part in the demonstration. Moreover, the experimentation centre is run by 14 members of whom there are four women who are actively involved in the leadership and management.