

 FARM AFRICA

Beshir becomes a farming role model

In Ethiopia's arid Somali region, people rely on livestock and food aid to make ends meet. Regular droughts have seen grasslands shrink and water sources disappear.

The region hosts thousands of Somali refugees fleeing conflict and food insecurity, which places additional pressure on the area's dwindling natural resources and creates friction between refugee and host communities.

Limited business opportunities trap refugee and host communities alike in poverty.

Farm Africa and the World Food Programme worked together to equip groups dependent on aid with the knowledge, resources and access to markets they need to become self-sufficient. The project brought 1,000 refugees and 1,000 Ethiopian hosts together to address common challenges: environmental degradation, climate change and poverty.

Beshir Tahir, a goat keeper and crop producing farmer, has been working with the project in the Dolo Ado district of Somali region. He mainly produces maize, sorghum, fruits and vegetables.

Bashir lives in Buramino kebele with his wife and three children. Sources of income for the family come from three hectares of farming land and goat rearing. However, Bashir was not able to earn enough to provide for the family.

"My annual income from all my sources was not enough. Sometimes, I needed to look for additional earnings as the produce is not sufficient. Those times, I worked as a daily labourer taking care of other people's farms. This got me 300 or 400Birr (\$10) per day. I ploughed their farmland, did the weeding, including all farming activities and they paid me on a daily basis," said Beshir.

For a long time, with the traditional way of rain-fed farming with oxen, Beshir was not able to increase his production. With the support of the project, he has started practising irrigation farming on half a hectare of farming land.

Farm Africa provided the farmers with tools and inputs they needed, including a tractor. Beshir explains: “Before joining Farm Africa, I used to plough with oxen, but now, I do this with a tractor. This has increased my harvest significantly. I have started to produce twice a year. My harvest from maize this year was 10 quintals. I have kept half of it for our household consumption and I sold the remaining five quintals for 3,500ETB (\$87.50).”

Beshir is a member of Hormud Cooperative, which was set up by the project to help farmers produce crops and vegetables using an irrigation system that draws water from Genale river.

“The project has brought a big difference to my production. Now, my farming practice has changed. It helps us get necessary farming tools; my colleagues and myself have access to a tractor any time we want to plough. This has increased our production significantly.”

Members of the cooperative including Beshir received training on climate-smart agriculture as well as irrigation farming. Applying the skills he learnt, Beshir has been able to increase his production. Using market linkages facilitated by the project, for the first time in his farming life, Beshir managed to earn 100,000ETB (2,500USD) from his onion production in the 2020 harvest season.

“On the first round, we all produced maize, and onions in the next season. I bought a motor pump generator for 50,000ETB (1,250USD). I have a unique name for my generator, I named it after Farm Africa, because I am excited and grateful to the organisation.”

Beshir continues: “I bought the generator aiming to expand my farm so that I could boost my capacity to own a private firm. With the rest, I bought farming inputs including seeds. For the first time in my life, I am able to get money in thousands. I had never experienced such a success before. I am wealthy now, I have 100,000Birr. Thank God! I am a role model in my village and people talk about my achievement all the time.”

This was not the only success he reaped. Before producing onions, Beshir earned income from farming maize, which he invested in increasing the size of his goat herd.

“With the money I earned from maize production last year, I bought five pregnant goats. Now, they have all given birth, multiplying to ten. Those are blessings summing up the total number of goats I have to 17. Whenever I run out of money to provide my family, I could sell one or two of them, and get money. These clothes I have on are bought with money I made from my onion production. I bought clothes for my children and wife as well.”

Encouraged by his results, Beshir has plans to expand his irrigated farming by growing coffee and garlic using water from Genale river. To villagers who admire his success, Beshir replies they would be much more successful than himself if they work hard.

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A selection of images from the project can be downloaded from:

<https://farmafrica.resourcespace.com/?c=1960&k=772ee09d6f>

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About Farm Africa:

Farm Africa is a leading international development charity that reduces poverty by unleashing the ability of farmers across eastern Africa to grow more, sell more and sell for more. We apply practical approaches to development, providing inputs, tools and expertise to enable farmers to double or triple their yields.

Farm Africa helps farmers to become more resilient to the effects of climate change and to access markets so they can increase their income and build sustainable businesses. We work closely with communities, the private sector and governments to make sure we're finding the most effective ways to sustain natural resources, increase food production and help end Africa's need for aid.

Typically, Farm Africa's staff are from the local area, can speak the local language, and have a deep understanding of the local context. With 35 years' experience working on the ground in rural Africa, we have a unique ability to spark change.

For more information please visit www.farmafrica.org or follow us on Twitter @FarmAfrica