

 FARM AFRICA

### A brighter future for Meriem's family

The Dolo Ado area of Somali region in Ethiopia plays host to thousands of refugees from Somalia, who cross borders to escape conflict and food shortages. But this area is already suffering severe water shortages and degradation of farming land as a result of climate change.

The additional pressure has made both host and refugee populations dependent on food aid, as well causing heightened tension between the communities.

Aiming to support both groups in addressing their shared problems, Farm Africa's Livelihood and Resilience Building project, funded by the World Food Programme, supported communities to come together and set up irrigation cooperatives. Farm Africa then delivered training to the cooperatives in how to manage their land during hot spells.

Forty-five-year-old mother of six Meriem Mohammed Ibrahim lives with her husband and children in Helewin refugee camp in Ethiopia. Escaping war and the effects of climate extremes, her family members left their homeland, Somalia. It has been ten years since they set up life in the camp. Over these years, the survival of her family has relied on food aid from humanitarian organisations. This had been challenging for her family, which used to have various sources of income back home. Before they left, Meriem and her family used to do crop and animal farming, both of which were difficult due to war and the shortage of rain.

Hoping to meet the family's basic needs, Meriem and her husband tried different alternatives to increase their income and make their life better at the camp. Finding someone with farming land from the host community, Meriem made a deal to produce crops and share the yields equally with the land owner.

"Agreeing with my husband, we used to rent farmlands and produce crops. We do every farming activity from the beginning to the end. We plough, sow seeds, take care of the weeds, do the harvest and everything but finally the whole produce will not be ours. We share it with the owners," Meriem explained.

Meanwhile, good news came to Meriem. She became a member of Hormud cooperative set up by Farm Africa and Mercy Corps, which has helped her gain access to farming lands and agricultural inputs and to produce her own food. The project provided support to both refugee and host communities to boost crop and vegetable production and increase their incomes. A water pump generator with fuel to do irrigation, agricultural seeds, pesticides and technical support on the practice of climate-smart agriculture were among the support given to cooperative members. Meriem recalls the time she joined the project:

"It has been three years since I joined the Farm Africa project, which has supported us to fully benefit from our own produce. Like my cooperative members, I was given a half hectare of land. Within the last three years, I have produced maize, watermelons, tomatoes and onions in different seasons."

Working hard, Meriem started to meet the needs of her family by earning her own income. She was able to improve their accommodation by building a new house.

"I made 80,000Birr (\$ 2,000) from onion production in the last harvesting season. I am so happy I built a new house with corrugated iron. It cost me 40,000Birr. The old house is a hut and very small for my family. It was about to collapse, rainwater leaked in through the roof, and we were exposed to wind and dust. I am so delighted I own a new house, I have curtains inside making it beautiful, my children are safe now."

Meriem is visualising a bright future. She plans to own family businesses rearing goats and opening a commodity shop.

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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](http://www.farmafrica.org) or follow us on Twitter @FarmAfrica