Welcoming Address

Desta Hamito

On behalf of myself and the Ethiopia Sheep and Goat Productivity Improvement Program, I would like to welcome you to the workshop which deals with the sustainability of the program beyond the project years. Special and warm welcome is due to those of you who travelled close to 15,000 miles just to participate in this conference.

As is well known to many of you, the program is the brainchild of His Excellency Mr. Addisu Legesse, Deputy Prime Minister of the Federal Ethiopian Government who, upon returning from an official visit to the United States, sanctioned a study which culminated in the establishment of the program.

Although for various reasons the first year did not see much activity, the Ethiopia Sheep and Goat Productivity Improvement Program has been operational since September, 2005. As the name implies, the objective of the program is to improve the productivity of indigenous sheep and goats of the country. This objective is fulfilled through the importation of improved germplasm, improving feeds and feeding management, and providing health and technical services to the farming and pastoral communities.

The program operates in six regions, namely, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State and Tigray. So far, its activities have been concentrated in 26 woredas: five each in Amhara, Oromia, Southern Nations and Nationalities, four in Tigray and three in Afar.

The program implements its activities through close cooperation and support of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, regional Bureaus of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ethiopian Agricultural Research Institute, regional agricultural research institutes, and Haramaya, Hawassa and Mekelle universities.

A number of results have been achieved within the past three and one-half years. Improved genotypes of Dorper sheep and Boer goats have been imported from the Republic of South Africa. They are being multiplied as well as crossbred with indigenous goats and sheep. Several applied research and demonstration activities have been performed on feeds and feeding. Training on various aspects of sheep and goat production has been given to over 1,437 kebele development agents. Seventeen different technical bulletins have been published addressing various aspects of sheep and goat production. The Sheep and Goat Production Handbook for Ethiopia, which is the first of its kind in the country, was prepared, printed and distributed to governmental as well as nongovernmental organizations that work with small ruminants. Some of the technical bulletins are being translated into Amharic, Oromifa, Tigrigna and Somali languages to expedite the rate of adoption of these technologies. To control external parasites, which have a devastating effect on the quality of sheep and goat skins and hides as well as the
overall health of small ruminants, training has been given to 135 spraying/dipping service providers on the use of spraying and dipping equipment.

This workshop marks an important milestone in the implementation of the program. It is time to think about the future of activities and outcomes that have been produced and those planned to be accomplished in the coming two years. The theme of this workshop revolves around "Sustainability." As you know, sustainability of project outcomes implies that the relevant outcomes and/or activities are maintained after the end of donor support. This program has generated, and is expected to generate outcomes that, if sustained, could make significant contributions towards productivity improvement in sheep and goats.

I believe this workshop will help us find ways to maintain and broaden program interventions to achieve sustainability of project accomplishments after the project’s termination when funds are no longer forthcoming from the donor agency.

I cannot conclude my address without recognizing the donor agency, the USAID, for making 5.5 million dollars available for the implementation of the program; the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and others for enabling us to construct facilities by purchasing cement at a factory gate price when the market price was more than double that and also making available funds for the translation of our technical bulletins into four local languages; Hawassa University for providing funds for fencing the project premises; Haramaya University for allocating its own funds for constructing one Breeding, Evaluation and Distribution site; the Somali Pastoral, Agro-pastoral Research Institute for providing additional funds of 200,000 birr for completing the Nucleus site at Fafen, financing the construction of two bore holes to develop irrigated forage and provide water to the animals, and constructing a temporary facility for housing indigenous animals meant for crossbreeding; the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research for permitting our program to renovate and use one of its facilities as a sheep barn and also for providing funds to fence the sheep barn premises at Worer; the Oromia Agricultural Research Institute for fencing the Nucleus and Breeding, Evaluation and Distribution farms at Adami Tulu; and the Amhara, Southern Nations and Nationalities and Tigray Agricultural Research Institutes for providing temporary shelters for housing indigenous sheep and goats. These contributions are over and above the provision of trained manpower to maintain the farms and animals. We are most grateful for these generous contributions.

I would also like to recognize Dr. George Wright, President of Prairie View A&M University, for taking time out of his busy schedule to come to Ethiopia three times to follow up the implementation of the program and give guidance; the project directors Drs. Freddie Richards and Tilahun Sahlu for overseeing project activities as well as being directly involved in the initiation and implementation of the program; and the short-term technical assistance provided in all four program components by scientists from Prairie View A&M and Langston Universities.
Last, but not least, I would like to recognize the Prairie View A&M Research Foundation for expediting the implementation of the program by making funds available on time.

Finally, I wish you a successful workshop and a fruitful stay in the town of Hawassa, which southerners think is the most beautiful city in the country.