

AGRA **impact series**



Widowed Farmer Finds Hope on the Radio

Weyzero Welete-Berehan Berhe is a 53-year old farmer living in a small kebele called Lesaleso, in the generally rain-starved Tigray region of northern Ethiopia.

This minimal rain in a region where virtually all the agricultural practices are dependent on rain, makes it very difficult to make a living as a farmer. After her husband died suddenly, Welete-Berehan was faced with the responsibility of raising four daughters alone while taking over the farming operation that is the main source of income and food.

She owns a 0.5 hectare farm where she mainly cultivates teff, wheat and chickpea. Losing her husband, raising the girls, performing household chores, and the labor intensive farm work were overwhelming at first.

“I was very frustrated with all the responsibilities that came down on me and it was difficult to be a widow in a patriarchal community like ours,” she said.

Since she wasn't able to work on the farm and raise her children at the same time, she initially rented out her farmland in return for half of the produce from her land.

I learned the value of information through the years. I was initially blinded because I believed that I couldn't be a farmer because I thought I knew nothing about it and I couldn't learn farming because I am a woman. The improved farming practices I learnt through the radio showed me better ways of managing my farm and increasing my income,” she said

The crop that she received under that arrangement was barely enough for her own family consumption so she was forced to sell “Tella” (a local beer).

However, with the development of the agriculture extension system, their strong educational and technical support and by investing the money she saved from her business over the years, she started hiring workers for her farm, instead of renting it for a half share of the produce. She is a designated a TPA (Technology Adoption Plot) farmer.

She also has a radio that she plays for her customers while they are drinking the beer she sells and she listens to the radio along with them.

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When we arrived at her house for a visit, she was talking to one of her workers about the safe application of chemical pesticides. She was advising him about protecting his face and mouth from contact with the chemical and to wear different clothing during the process of applying chemicals - all of the information she used she heard from the radio.

“Being a mother of four daughters and being a woman myself, I learned from the radio programs broadcast on Demtsi Weyane Radio a day before, that extra caution should be taken when applying chemicals.”

Welete-Berehan said that she hopes to continue to learn new and better ways to farm, from the radio programs. Increased production on her small farm will give her family a better future.