



Inauguration of Chickpea and Oilseeds Industrial Processor at Agro Prom

Remarks by Dennis Weller, USAID Ethiopia Mission Director

August 25, 2015

It is a pleasure for me to be here today to help officially inaugurate the Agro Prom chickpea and oilseed processing facility. This modern facility, which is one of the largest of its kind in Ethiopia, will expand market opportunities for Ethiopian chickpea farmers.

Chickpeas are a healthy and essential staple food in Africa, in countries around the Mediterranean and the Middle East. As the health benefits of those diets are becoming well known, more and more people around the world are turning to chickpeas for a healthy and delicious source of fiber and protein.

Ethiopia ranks sixth in the world and first in Africa in chickpea production, with one million smallholder farmers producing 400,000 metric tons of chickpeas annually.

The investment we have witnessed today presents an opportunity for Ethiopia to gain a greater share of the growing international market, especially in the higher-value markets of Europe and the United States.

USAID is pleased that we were able to enter into a public private partnership with Agro Prom to make this facility a reality. Agro Prom has invested 600,000 dollars in this modern facility. USAID assisted Agro Prom with 168,000 dollars to purchase and install machinery because we firmly believe that facilities like this will provide more access to markets and help to put more money into the pockets of Ethiopian farmers.

While the installation took longer than expected due to some challenges such as power cuts, I think what we see here has made the wait worthwhile. I am personally pleased to see the commitment from Agro Prom to work with farmer cooperatives and procure directly from them using premium pricing agreements. Agro Prom has recently signed agreements to procure 1,000 metric tons of chickpeas, which will benefit more than 2,000 Ethiopian farmers.

This linkage between farmers and markets is at the heart of President Obama's Feed the Future Initiative. During his recent visit to Ethiopia, he was pleased to see how Feed the Future is helping to reduce poverty levels for smallholder farmers by helping them to grow more and better crops and then to connect to more lucrative markets.

To support this high-level goal, our Feed the Future work includes an entire portfolio of complementary activities, which span the chickpea value chain.

We have provided 40,000 smallholder farmers with access to an improved variety of chickpeas known as Kabuli and, so far, 13,000 farmers have received training in more efficient chickpea production.

We are also supporting research on further variety improvements for Ethiopian chickpeas through the Feed the Future Climate Resilient Chickpea Innovation Lab. At that lab, we are helping Ethiopian researchers and breeders to utilize drought and heat tolerant characteristics to develop new improved chickpea varieties that are best suited for growing in Ethiopia. I understand that a group of scientists from this project also visited that lab this week and I hope that was an informative visit.

Through our technology-scaling work with the International Center for Agriculture Research in Dry Areas, Feed the Future is increasing the production and dissemination of improved chickpea seeds.

Finally, through our work with GutsAgro, a chickpea-based Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food has been developed to ensure that Ethiopia's most vulnerable can reap the full benefit of a stronger chickpea value chain.

To make all of this great work possible, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to our government partners who have contributed to the success of this partnership including the staff at the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Trade, as well as at the regional bureaus of agriculture. This partnership works because we share the common commitment to alleviate poverty and improve livelihoods for the people of Ethiopia.

Please accept my congratulations for your efforts thus far and my best wishes for the success of the Agro Prom chickpea processing facility.

I am looking forward to trying, and sharing with my friends and family, *shiro* [a nutritious, savory and popular Ethiopian meal] and hummus that come from the chickpeas processed in this impressive facility.

Thank you