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**Feed the Future Ethiopia Farm Service Center Project
Grant Award Ceremony
Remarks by USAID Mission Director Leslie Reed
December 21, 2016
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
(As prepared for delivery)**

It is a pleasure to be here today on behalf of USAID to join our partners from ATA, as well as CNFA, to officially congratulate the 20 private entrepreneurs and farmers' cooperative unions selected to receive matching grant awards to establish farm service centers.

The realization of 20 more farm service centers, on top of the six which are already up and running, is testament to what we can accomplish when we all work together to enable smallholder farmers to get better returns on their hard work.

I think we are all optimistic about the future of Ethiopia's agricultural sector. I certainly am. In the short amount of time I have been here, I have seen how Ethiopia is embracing its potential through key initiatives and by working with donors and the private sector. It is clear that our colleagues in Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and at ATA fully recognize the important role the agriculture sector can play in achieving national economic goals and that they set ambitious goals for growth in the sector.

The U.S. Government's Feed the Future Initiative supports these development goals. To sustainably reduce poverty and hunger, the initiative focuses on improved nutrition, research and training, gender integration, climate-smart development, inclusive agriculture sector growth and private sector engagement.

All of the experts in this room—and there are many—have long known that the expansion of the agricultural supply sector would be critical for supporting growth in the agricultural sector. Through access to and availability of quality seeds, fertilizer, plant protection products, tools and equipment, and veterinary services and supplies, Ethiopian farmers can achieve higher productivity. This, in turn, directly contributes to increased income generation and food security for farming households.

With this in mind, we began working through our Commercial Farm Services Program, implemented by CNFA, to see how supporting locally-owned private retail and farm service businesses could contribute to increasing the availability of quality and affordable farm supplies. We started by supporting the establishment of six Farm Service Centers in the Oromia Region in 2013 to 2014. Just a couple of years later and those six farm service centers are now collectively serving more than 30,000 farmers, have leveraged more than \$3.2 million in new private sector investments, and have created more than 50 jobs.

One of those centers, the one located in Shashamene, was opened by Wezero Adanech Zewdie. I'm sure many of you now know her, as she is a truly dynamic businesswoman and she knows how to network. Through her business, she has met many other people who share her passion for improving

Ethiopia's food security, and she has connected with numerous other female entrepreneurs who are looking to increase their families' incomes. After two years, her business is doing extremely well and Adanech fully supports the farm service center concept, saying, "Today, Ethiopian entrepreneurs like me have more opportunities to improve our livelihoods while contributing to our country's prosperity."

Based on Adanech's success and that of the other five farm service center owners, we agreed to provide additional funding for the Ethiopian Agricultural Transformational Agency, with technical support from CNFA, to help establish 20 more farm service centers. The 20 new centers are expected to provide high-quality, reasonably priced farm supplies, training, technical advice and market connections to more than 100,000 smallholder farmers in the Amhara, Oromia, SNNP and Tigray regions.

These farm service centers also serve as a model for expanding farm supply and service networks in Ethiopia and other nations of Africa. Based on past success, it is easy to see how the model will improve smallholders' productivity, food security and income by nurturing the development of sustainable, private-sector driven agricultural supplies and services.

I would like to commend the ATA for its dedication and hard work in selecting the right candidates to establish the upcoming centers, as well as CNFA, for your continued training and capacity building support to ATA.

I would also like to extend my thanks to other partners including the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries along with their respective regional bureaus and woreda offices, and various private sector supply companies. Your work is key to efforts aimed at alleviating poverty and improving livelihoods for the Ethiopian people.

In closing, I want to leave you with a quote from U.S. Vice President Joe Biden from the Global Entrepreneurship Summit two years ago. He said, "Fostering entrepreneurship is not just about crafting the right economic policy, or developing the best education curricula. It's about creating an entire climate in which innovation and ideas flourish."

Congratulations to the 20 grantees here today on receiving your grants. I wish you all great success in your respective farm service centers, and I hope to have the opportunity to visit some of your stores in the near future to see for myself how your centers are helping local farmers. On behalf of the U.S. Government and the American people, we are pleased that we were able to help make this initiative possible.

Amasegenalehu and thank you.