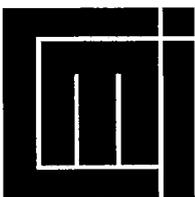


Constraints for a Conservation-Based Agricultural Development Policy in Ethiopia

A Baseline Study in Fedis Awraja

Fantu Cheru

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Summary:

A baseline survey was conducted in the Hararghe region in Ethiopia in 1989 to identify constraints to agricultural production and environmental protection measures. The survey included not only agricultural support services, but also people's assessment of rural institutions, the rural energy crisis, environmental constraints and community participation. In the concluding chapter, the author gives his assessment of an alternative strategy which avoids the identified constraints by putting the peasants in the centre of attention and supporting their efforts with integrated institutional and material support services.

Sammendrag:

En undersøkelse ble gjennomført i Hararghe-regionen i Etiopia i 1989 for å identifisere hindringer for tiltak for å styrke landbruksproduksjonen og bevare naturmiljøet. Studien omfattet ikke bare støttetiltak til landbruket, men også folks oppfatning om lokale institusjoner, miljøbegrensninger, energimangelen, og allmenn deltakelse i planleggingen. I sluttkapitlet gir forfatteren sitt syn på en alternativ strategi som unngår de flaskehalser som studien viste, ved å rette oppmerksomheten på bøndene og støtte deres initiativ og tiltak med et integrert institusjonelt og materielt støtteprogram.

Indexing terms:

Energy crisis
Environmental protection
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Foreword

This report builds on a baseline study conducted in 1989 by Fantu Cheru in the Awraja of Fedis, Eastern Hararghe, in Ethiopia. The study was financed by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO), and was part of a preparatory process for planning a reforestation programme in Hararghe region, particularly in the area around the towns of Harar and Dire Dawa. UNSO had already financed some other reforestation projects, near the towns of Nazareth in Southern Shoa and Debre Birhan in Northern Shoa, mainly aiming at supplying fuelwood for these towns without depleting the last remains of natural forests in the surroundings. But the two projects faced difficulties with the local communities. Peasants seemed unconvinced about the value of the eucalyptus plantations, and resented the fact that their grazing land had been taken for reforestation. Even generous social programmes offering local communities help in building schools, water and other facilities did not eliminate the peasants' resentments against the plantations.

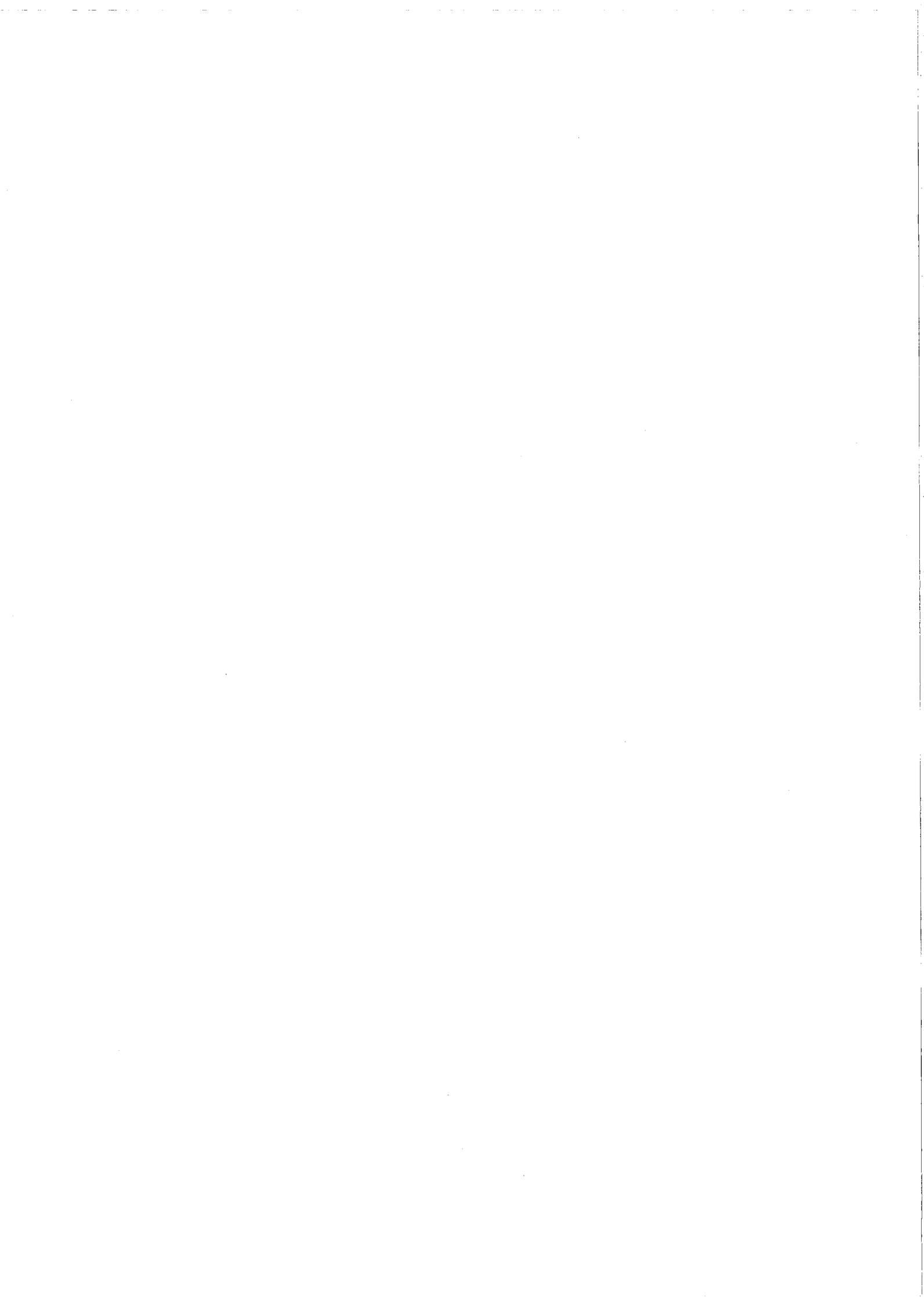
This, probably, was the background for UNSO to engage in a social baseline survey before new similar projects were to be started. The report from the survey was submitted to UNSO in 1989. But the author wished to make the material collected available for a wider interested circle. When the Chr. Michelsen Institute offered him the opportunity, he spent some weeks in December 1991 in Bergen to complete this report for a wider public.

In the meantime, conditions in Ethiopia had changed considerably. The Mengistu government collapsed in June 1991, and a new government was planning for a democratic development and a new economic policy. This situation naturally coloured Fantu Cheru's presentation in this report, especially the concluding chapter which tries to put the findings of this baseline survey into a context of Ethiopia's new start, reflecting his view on how to create an enabling environment for agricultural development.

Convinced that the information contained in this report is important especially in a period where major decisions on the future course of development policies in Ethiopia has to be decided, the Chr. Michelsen Institute makes the report available to researchers and the general public.

Bergen, September 1992

Siegfried Pausewang



Introduction

The performance of Ethiopian agriculture has been disappointing since the 1974 revolution. Prior to the revolution, the feudal land tenure system that existed was cited as the major cause of agricultural stagnation and ecological degradation. It was obvious that some form of land reform was necessary to eliminate the ill-effects of the pre-revolutionary agricultural system. Fundamental change was brought about in Ethiopian agriculture through enactment of the "Public Ownership of Rural Lands Proclamation" of April 29, 1975 (Negarit Gazeta No. 26, 1975). The proclamation outlawed private ownership of land and tenancy. All the land was to be held by the Peasant Associations which were to give peasants user rights based on family size. The maximum size of land allowed to each peasant family is 10 hectares.

The demise of Imperial rule and abolition of feudalism, however, did little to change peasant perceptions about central government directed development initiatives. Forced villagization after 1979, excessive taxation through the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC), forced conscription of peasants to the army, lack of tenure security and inadequate support for farmers had been the major impediments to agricultural production and resource conservation.

This report is based on a baseline survey conducted in Fedis Awraja, Eastern Hararghe Administrative Region, between August 13 and 26, 1989, a month after the failed coup which jolted the foundations of the Mengistu regime. Although the government introduced piecemeal reforms before and after the coup to revive agricultural production in the country, the reforms were too little and too late to reverse the general resignation of the peasantry. The conclusion of this study is that, despite the rhetoric of the government on the importance of the peasantry in socialist agriculture, it concentrated its investment policy on establishing large-scale mechanized state farms patterned after the East European model, and operated on strict production schedules that required accurate planning. Between 1976 and 1980, the Mengistu regime imported thousands of tractors costing millions of dollars from Eastern Europe. The underlying assumption was that large-scale, capital-intensive production would enable the country to increase food production and foreign exchange earnings in the shortest amount of time. This unquestioned assumption that modernization and mechanization were synonymous was a critical mistake. A high degree of dependency on imported inputs and technology soaked up virtually all government investment in agriculture while small peasants were left to fend for themselves.

Long before the drought of 1983 hit Ethiopia, there was ample evidence that the state farm approach had failed. Still, the government of Ethiopia pushed for more, not less, emphasis on state farms. The recurrent expenditure for expanded state farming was met by extracting more resources from the peasantry in the form of low producer prices for their crops and a mandatory quota whereby the peasants were required to sell a quarter of their output through the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC). Peasants were also forced by local authorities to contribute to national and local campaigns, which simply increased their tax burden. In some cases, peasants had to sell their assets, such as cattle, to pay for these contributions or to meet grain delivery quotas.

In short, the policy of land reform by itself was inadequate to stimulate agricultural production in Ethiopia. There were other factors that constrained peasant output and resource conservation: lack of incentives such as remunerative pricing, access to credit, fertilizers, extension, transport, marketing policies and access to social services. As long as these services are missing, it is unlikely that peasant output will increase and ecological degradation be arrested. The result from the baseline survey confirms this conclusion.

Sampling and data collection

The population of Fedis Awraja, like those in other parts of the country, have been organized under peasant associations and reside in villages up to 300 households. In the Awraja, there were 54 peasant associations at the time of the survey. Two sets of questionnaires were administered: a socio-economic and biomass survey; and an assessment of the role women in development. A multi-stage intensive sampling technique was employed. At the Awraja level, 10 per cent of the Peasant Associations (PA) were selected at random. At the PA level, 5 per cent of the households were sampled, the number of household sampled in each PA depended on its size. For the socio-economic and biomass survey, 115 households were surveyed. Because of logistic problems, the women and development questionnaire was administered separately. This meant sampling 2.5 per cent of the women in the six Peasant Associations randomly chosen for the first survey. A total of 59 women were asked to respond to the questionnaire.

A total of 10 enumerators, who speak the Oromo language, were hired. The enumerators were 4 male and 6 female high school students. Four groups were organized in a pair of two, a male and a female, assisted by a supervisor seconded from the local Ministry of Agriculture office. The supervisors are the subject matter specialists attached to the Awraja office of the MOA. The fifth group, whose primary task was to conduct the women and development survey, included two female students. The survey took 12 days to complete.

Table 1
Sample size of peasant associations

Zone	PA	No. of households	No. sample households	No. of women
Genna	Genna	218	11	8
Eftu	Lencha	237	11	4
Belina	Belina	213	11	5
Fetchatu	Berida	278	28	14
Bobassa	Chechebisa	372	18	10
Medega	Robi	617	36	18
Total sample		1935	115	59

1. The social history of land and state-peasant relations in Hararghe region

Until 1975, land tenure in Hararghe region was predominantly feudal and owner/tenant farms were relatively common. This system of tenure was introduced when Hararghe was incorporated as part of greater Ethiopia in the late 1800 when Amhara kings from the highlands conquered the territory. The Oromo, the predominant ethnic group in this region, were subjected to heavy taxation and compulsory unpaid labour by their landlords. In addition, over a quarter of their agricultural output went directly to the landlord. Since expulsions were common for non-compliance, farmers had to work extra hard to meet their quota and their own food requirements.

With Italian occupation of Ethiopia, the feudal like tenancy disappeared temporarily. After the war, however, feudal land tenure practices reappeared under the guise of private ownership, and the Oromo, once again, became tenant farmers. The success of commercial farming in the adjacent provinces of Arsi and Bale further intensified the scramble for land by wealthy landlords from the northern highlands. Consequently, this system of tenancy contributed to agricultural stagnation and environmental disruptions.

After World War II, Emperor Haile Selassie began granting tracts of land to retired soldiers from the highlands who volunteered to resettle in the Hararghe region. To extend Imperial rule, northern highlanders were sent here as governors and emissaries of the Emperor. With the ever growing threat to Imperial rule from Somali nationalists in the 1960s, more highlanders were settled around Gursum in the east and the Garamuleta mountains in the west. With the complete imposition of Amhara rule, resentment grew under the surface. The demise of Imperial rule and the abolition of feudalism in 1975, however, did little to change the peasants' perception of central government directed development initiatives. Forced villagization after 1979 and fear of being resettled somewhere else, again disrupted agricultural production and proper management of natural resources as farmers felt less compelled to grow trees or build terraces on the farm their were working on.

1.1 Description of project area

Fedis Awraja is situated in Eastern Hararghe region, 500 km. east of Addis Ababa and 24 km south of the town of Harar. The vast majority of the population is Oromo. They are predominantly Muslims although a few Christians can be found among them. Population density relative to cultivable land is very high in all the

54 Peasant Associations and the average family is about 5. Only 3 per cent of the population surveyed can read and write. The other 97 per cent are illiterates.

Annual rainfall ranged between 300 and 800 mm in the years from 1981/82 to 1988/89. The average monthly rainfall ranges between zero in December to around 200 mm in April. Most of the rain falls between March and September. The remaining months are relatively dry. The growing period is around 120 days. It is therefore near to a marginal land for crop production.

Soil erosion problem

The consequences of deforestation and soil erosion can be seen in the form of serious shortages of wood for both fuel and construction, declining agricultural output due to loss of soil fertility, making the Awraja a chronic food deficit area. Vast areas of land are washed out, forming huge gullies that can be seen from every direction. Whatever trees were available to protect the soil were cut during the villagization campaign to construct new settlements. Since the Hararghe region was the first area where the villagization programme started, peasants had stopped growing trees for fear of being moved again.

The lack of fuelwood and fodder has also compounded the problem. The vast majority of peasants use agricultural residues for fuel, for constructing huts and to feed their cattle. This deprives the soil of nitrogen, while accelerating the process of wind erosion because of the removal of vegetation cover.

1.2 Description of the farming system

Agricultural practices

The farming system in the Awraja is traditional. Most of the peasants own one or two drought oxen which they employ in cultivating. Weeding is done manually and it is thorough. Cultivation is primarily the responsibility of men. Women are responsible for household work which includes fetching water and fuelwood, marketing of agricultural produce. Occasionally, they help weed the field and store crops after harvest. As will be shown later, chemical fertilizers, pesticides and improved seeds are rarely used by the peasants in the region.

Sorghum is the most important crop in the region because of its multi-purpose use. While the grain meets the food requirements of the peasants, the leaves are used for fodder and the thick stalks for construction and fencing.

Land availability

According to the 1975 Land Proclamation, each peasant is entitled to land for his own use, up to a maximum of 10 hectares. The baseline survey reveals that the average cultivated land per household in the awraja ranges between 1.5 to 2 hectares. Although each PA is supposed to have 800 hectares of land in theory, the average cultivated land relative to total land available for each PA is very low. With an average family size of 5, there is practically no land left for grazing or growing trees on individual farms. Therefore, agricultural land is exhausted and the scope to rotate with legumes is nearly nonexistent. Crop residues are used for fuel, house construction and animal feed. Thus, there is not much organic fertilizer left, except some animal waste, to rehabilitate the soil.

Table 2
Average landholding and pattern of land-use
(in hectares per family)

PA Name	Total land	Cultivation	Grazing	Forest
Genna	1.1	1.1	-	-
Lencha	1.5	1.4	0.1	-
Belina	1.5	1.5	-	-
Berida	2.0	2.0	-	-
Chechebisa	1.0	0.8	-	0.2
Robi	1.5	1.5	-	-

Source: Compiled from baseline survey.

Problems of livestock production

Besides crop cultivation, livestock keeping is an important economic activity in Fedis Awraja. In general, cattle, sheep and goats are major sources of cash for peasants. Cattle provide crucial inputs for crop production, like manure and draft power, as well as milk for children. However, the survey found out uneven distribution of draft animal among peasants. Most farmers own only a single ox and this is known to disrupt planting and cultivation schedules. Donkeys and camels are the only source of transportation of agricultural goods to the market given the lack of road transport.

On the basis of the baseline survey, interviews with the executive committee members of six peasant associations and reconnaissance to selected PAs, the estimate of average cattle holding per household is probably not more than 2.5. Lack of fodder and grazing land is the number one problem peasants identified in

the survey. The fact that they depend on a cut and carry system indicates that they cannot keep large numbers of animals on their farms.

Table 3
Planned and completed veterinary activity at the
Eftu Development Centre, 1979/80 E.C.

Type of service	Planned	Completed
Antracs/black leg vaccination	10,000	1,600
Other vaccination	3,000	15
Parasite vaccination	3,000	4,135
Gendi	400	15
Training:		
Animal husbandry	3	15
General veterinary	3	15

In addition, livestock production is constrained by lack of access to veterinary services. The existing veterinary service, with only one veterinary doctor, is inadequate to serve the entire awraja of 54 peasant associations. Planned vaccination targets are rarely met for lack of vaccine and trained personnel. Subject matter specialists assigned to the Awraja are often overburdened with such tasks as tax collection and dispute settlements which have little to do with their profession. The only available vehicle assigned to the Awraja MOA office was being used by central administration in the provincial capital. Extension agents and subject matter specialists did not even have access to a bicycle.

2. Constraints to agricultural production: The policy dimension

2.1 Lack of inputs and weak extension

One of the major impediments to improved agricultural production in the Awraja is the lack of government support to peasant farmers. Inadequate extension and training, credit services, lack of agricultural inputs and price incentives have had a negative impact on agricultural production.

The sampled population were asked to identify the major reasons why they do not use chemical fertilizers on their farm. Some 64 per cent of the respondents identified lack of money or credit as the major constraint while 18 per cent complained that supplies are not available in their respective service cooperatives. Only 2 per cent said that they do not know the use of chemical fertilizers.

Table 4
Use of fertilizer and improved seeds

Reasons for not using chemical fertilizer		
	(N=115)	Per cent
Don't know about it	2	2
Not available here	21	18
Lack of money	74	64
Reasons for not using improved seeds		
	(N=115)	Per cent
Don't know about it	6	5
Not available in SC	35	30
Lack of money	67	58
Other	1	1

A similar response was given with regard to the use of improved seeds. When asked why they do not use improved seeds, 58 per cent of the respondents said they do not have money to purchase seeds. Another 30 per cent complained that supplies are not available at the service cooperatives. Only 5 per cent of the respondents said that they do not know about its use.

The conclusions that can be drawn from the above information is that the service cooperatives in Fedis Awraja are not doing their job. The reasons for this has to do with the fact that only 8 of the 18 service cooperatives are licensed to borrow money from the Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank which enables them to purchase inputs in large volumes and to extend credit to their members. The remaining 12 service cooperatives do not have the capital to expand their services to their members. It is not surprising, therefore, that peasant output has persistently been declining due to lack of access to essential inputs.

Weak extension service

Most government services in Fedis are far from being efficient and reach only a fraction of the peasantry. These services are also more concentrated in accessible areas than remote areas of the district. Demonstration plots are non existent or far from the peasants. Since there are only 4 development agents serving the 54 peasant associations, training of peasants in agricultural production and soil and water conservation measures is inadequate.

Table 5
Peasants and agricultural extension

	(N=115)	Per cent
MOA Agent in the PA?		
Yes	22	19
No	93	81
Total	(115)	(100)
Last visit by DA:		
Never	104	92
1 month ago	5	4
3 months ago	4	4
Total	(113)	(100)
Last visit to demonstration ctr:		
Never	109	97
Last year	3	3
Total	(112)	(100)

The sample survey highlight the extent of the problem. Only 19 per cent of respondents reported the existence of an extension agent near their village. The majority, or 81 per cent of the respondents, said that they do not have an extension

agent near their village. Among the respondents, 92 per cent reported that they have never been visited by an extension agent. When asked if they ever visited a demonstration centre, almost 97 per cent of the respondents reported that they have never been to one.

The above information is consistent with actual reality. There are only 4 extension agents in the Awraja serving all the 54 peasant associations. The Awraja office of the Ministry of Agriculture has only one vehicle in a region which is completely inaccessible. Although the office is supposed to have subject matter specialists (i.e. veterinary, forestry or soil and water conservation), the existing staff are poorly trained and overburdened with other tasks.

2.2 Marketing, transport, and services

Experience from other countries shows that, for peasants to increase agricultural production and preserve the natural resource base, there must be in place an efficient marketing, storage and transport system. To the extent that these important services are absent, peasants will not be compelled to produce more or to adopt conservation measures on the land.

Accessibility

One of the impediments to marketing of agricultural goods is the lack of transport. A one time all-weather road built 15 years ago connects the awraja capital, Boko, to Harar city. Currently there are 2 Land rover taxis serving the region, each making about two trips a day due to the fact that the access road is in a very bad shape. Some parts of the road are completely destroyed and are difficult to pass through, especially when it rains. As a result, the majority of farmers are unable to take their goods to the big urban centres where they can fetch better prices. Instead, they are forced to market only a portion of their goods at the village level or the nearest market centres at below market prices in order to purchase necessary items as matches, salt and oil.

On the average, peasants walk 6 km from their villages to reach the market. When asked what mode of transport they use to transport goods to the market, 52 per cent of the respondents said they use donkeys while 89 per cent reported that they carry the goods themselves to the market. The data further reveals that 83 per cent of the 63 people who responded go to the market once a week. Only 17 per cent of the 63 respondents said that they go to markets twice a week. It is clear from the above data that lack of transport is an important disincentive to increased agricultural production in rural Fedis.

Table 6
Marketing practices

	Frequency	Per cent
Goods marketed:		
Sorghum	88	47
Maize	25	14
Onions	72	39
Total	(186)*	(100)
Channel used:		
Open market	97	85
AMC	14	12
SC	4	3
Total	(115)	(100)
Transport mode:		
	(N=115)	
Donkey	60	52
Carry self	102	89
Go to the market:		
	(N=115)	
One a week	52	45
Twice a week	11	10

* multiple response.

Lack of markets and price incentives

The most important agricultural goods marketed by peasants are sorghum (47%), onion (37) and maize (14), in that order. When asked what channels they use to market these goods, 85 per cent of the respondents reported to have used the free market while another 12 per cent used official channels such as the Agricultural Marketing Corporation (AMC). What this implies is that, because AMC prices are controlled by the government and below market prices, peasants try to avoid the official channels in as much as possible. Such practice is so widespread in Fedis that officials close down the entrances to the awraja town of Boko daily at the close of the market day to collect taxes from peasants.

Table 7
Supplies procurement

	Frequency	Per cent
Goods purchased:		
Grain	65	24
Oil	36	13
Salt	114	41
Sugar	17	6
Coffee	21	8
Chat	22	8
Total	(275)*	(100)
Source:		
	(N=115)	
SC	34	23
Open market	113*	77
Type of payment:		
Cash	114	96
Credit	5	4
Total	(119)*	(100)

* multiple response.

Almost all the goods purchased by the peasants is primarily consumer goods, with salt and grain accounting 41 and 24 per cent of the goods consumed respectively. When asked where they procure supplies, 98 per cent of the respondents said from the open market. Only 29 per cent purchase their supplies from the service cooperatives. With respect to type of payment, 96 per cent involve cash while only 4 per cent is made in credit. What these figures imply is that the majority of peasants are forced to purchase their goods from merchants at exorbitant prices. The service cooperatives are poorly stocked or carry goods not wanted by the peasants. Even though the service cooperatives sell relatively cheaper than the open market, they can not satisfy the peasants' needs.

Lack of storage facilities

Another factor which constrains agricultural marketing in the area is the lack of storage facilities. In addition to post-harvest losses, peasants end up losing a significant amount of the crop they harvested to pests and insects. The traditional method of storing grain under ground in a hole has proved to be detrimental since the grain is destroyed either by humidity or is eaten up by ants.

While much of the grain produced in the awraja is consumed by the peasants themselves, the lack of storage facilities affects particularly the marketing of onion, the major cash crop of the awraja. The combination of inadequate transport system and storage facility limits the capacity of peasants to make money from the sale of onions. While a quintal of onion (100 kilos) can fetch up to 65 Birr in Harar town, the same quintal of onion can barely fetch 20 Birr in Boko, the awraja capital.

The awraja had the potential for growing Chat for export to such markets as Djibouti and Somalia. Unfortunately, this potential has not been realized since the marketing of Chat requires a very good and efficient transport system. Chat leaves are harvested daily and must be consumed fresh. Because of transport limitations, whatever Chat produced in the awraja is consumed locally.

Lack of non-farm employment

All the peasants surveyed reported that rural non-farm activities, such as beekeeping, carpentry or weaving do not exist in the awraja. One reason for this is the lack of credit to farmers. Despite the establishment of the Handicrafts and Small Scale Industries Development Authority (HASIDA), rural entrepreneurs and crafts people are neglected. As a matter of policy, the Authority operates in urban areas only. Peasants are expected to work in agricultural production only. Their potential in other non-farm activities is not recognized. Since they are not given legal recognition, they do not have access to credit either from the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia or the Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank.

The Government ought to develop and implement appropriate policies so that rural cooperatives within PAs/SCs engaged in handicraft and specialized activities can gain credit and other forms of support.

2.3 Inadequate social services

Fedis Awraja received little government attention in the way of development since the brief Somali occupation of the region in 1978. The infrastructure, particularly roads, have been in a state of disrepair and agricultural extension, education, health and other services have also been neglected. Schools, clinics, flour mills and other social services are in short supply. It would not be wrong to conclude that the area has suffered from a deliberate policy of "benign neglect".

1. Health facilities: The whole awraja, with a population of 100,000, is served by a total of five clinics and most of the population have to travel long distances to get to these centres. Communicable diseases, such as fever, respiratory infection and skin infection, are widespread. The existing facilities are often overcrowded and basic medical supplies are not available.

2. Water supply situation: The permanent surface water system for the entire awraja consists of two watershed systems, one forming the western boundary, the other the eastern boundary of the Awraja. This system provides water for both humans and animals who live close by. But the majority of the people who live far from the permanent surface water sources, uses rain water collected in communally constructed water ponds. The ponds are in general simple depressions with rarely any improvement to reduce losses from infiltration. As a result, most of them retain water for only a short period, one to two months a year. After the rains, the communities have to seek water from elsewhere, usually far away from their homes, and on the average a 6 hours' walk round trip.

Ground water supply is poor. At the time of the survey, 15 wells have been sunk at different locations of the Awraja by Catholic Relief Services and the government's water exploration agency. The experience is not encouraging. The water level ranges between 150 to 230 meters, and the cost of drilling is exorbitant. Besides, the supply of water from the wells is relatively low.

3. Educational opportunities: Like the rest of Ethiopia, access to educational opportunities is limited to the residents of Fedis Awraja. Schools and qualified teachers are in short supply and the quality of education and infrastructure has deteriorated significantly over the past 17 years. Female enrolment lags far behind male enrolment. Given the relative backwardness of the Awraja, few peasants could afford to send their children beyond 8th grade. It is the female students more than the male who will most likely be forced not to pursue higher education.

4. Flour Mills: One important social service not adequately provided in the Awraja is flour mills. At the time of the survey, there were only four mills serving 54 peasant associations. One reason why there are few mills has to do with the fact that only the service cooperatives, depending on their financial position, can establish flour mills. Only 8 of the 18 service cooperatives in the Awraja were licensed to borrow money from the Agricultural and Industrial Development Bank to establish mills and undertake other development tasks. Since the unlicensed cooperatives have no other source of financing, they are unable to provide service to their members. In addition, the restriction on private ownership has exacerbated the paucity of services. In rural Ethiopia, owning a mill used to be a lucrative business.

In summary, the policy of land reform has failed to stem agricultural decline and resource depletion since the government lacks the resources to upgrade infrastructure and social services. Inadequate marketing, storage facilities and weak extension systems have constrained agricultural production and proper management and utilization of natural resources.

3. Assessment of rural institutions

The 1975 revolution profoundly changed not only land tenure relations, but also social relationships and introduced new rural institutions throughout the country. Subsequent proclamations gave legal definition to Peasant Associations and extended their functions to include the establishment of cooperative societies, women's and youth associations (Proclam. No. 75/1975). In theory, the people, through their respective Peasant Associations, are supposed to administer their own affairs and participate directly in the political, economic and social movement. Therefore, the PAs were given broad functions including the administration of public property to establish service cooperatives and to build schools and health centres.

Unfortunately, peasant associations have so far not been able to encourage local initiatives and translate them into tangible actions. While most of the PAs suffer from poor leadership quality, they are also burdened with the responsibility of enforcing directives coming from the central government. This has contributed to peasant perception of the PAs as an extension of the central government.

3.1 Peasant associations

Fedis Awraja has 54 peasant associations with a total membership of 18,930 households, or 91,531 people. All rural residents above 18 years of age are members of the peasant associations. There are variations in the number of households from one peasant association to another. For example, within the PAs in our sample survey, the Belina peasant association reports 617 households as members. In addition, there are variations in the size and fertility of land available to each peasant association. Although all PAs are supposed to have 800 hectares of land, some have less while others report land holdings in excess of 1000 hectares.

When asked if they are satisfied with the performance of the Peasant Associations, 69 per cent of the respondents said they are satisfied considering the unreasonable demand put on the PAs from the central government. Another 31 per cent said they are not happy with peasant associations. The reasons for significant levels of dissatisfaction has a lot to do with poor leadership competence of peasant officials and their inability to put into action initiatives coming from the members. Peasant leaders are illiterates or poorly trained to administer their area and initiate development activities. Although different committees are set up within each peasant association for purposes of administration, these responsibilities are poorly

coordinated and committee members can seldom discern their specific assignments. This leads to confusion and delay, further alienating the membership.

Table 8
Peasant's view of PAs

	Frequency	Per cent
Satisfied?		
Yes	79	69
No	36	31
Total	(115)	(100)
Ideas listened to?		
Always	23	20
Sometimes	55	48
Never	37	32
Total	(115)	(100)

Source: Compiled from baseline survey.

When asked if their ideas are listened to by the executive committees of the peasant associations, a mere 20 per cent responded in the affirmative. Another 48 per cent of the respondents said that their ideas are listened to sometimes. Almost a third (32%) of the respondents expressed that their ideas are never considered by the leaders of the peasant associations. The low level of response in the affirmative indicates that the peasant associations suffer from serious leadership crisis and that decision making tends to be top-down rather than participatory. As appointments to the Executive Committees have become political, chair persons display dictatorial tendencies in order to build their authority.

Producer cooperatives

As an outgrowth of the 1975 land proclamation, two types of rural cooperative institutions play an important role in rural Ethiopia. Although the initial aim of these institutions has been to empower the peasants so that they can solve their own local problems, the effectiveness of these institutions has been quite disappointing for reasons outlined below.

Producer cooperatives (PCs) are established voluntarily by peasant associations. They are essentially collective farming units and the members are paid according to the quality and quantity of their work. Despite official rhetoric of the

