

## GO ORGANIC PROJECT - Activity Report 2022 -



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## Activity Report – 2022

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In 2022, the Green Flower Foundation continued to implement the second project, called “Go Organic”. This project started in November 2021 and will end in June 2024.

## **Green Flower in a few words**

From 2018 until 2021 the Green Flower Foundation (GFF), in collaboration with the Bishoftu Polytechnic College (BPC), has successfully put in place and developed a new organic horticulture training programme, “Organic Farming”. In parallel, the Foundation contributed to the establishment of a new official curriculum for organic farming that is now available in all Ethiopian TVET’s Colleges (Technical and Vocational Education and Training).

This first project was focused on building new and specific tools for the teaching staff, the establishment of a large organic garden and the organisation of short internships for the students in organic farms. At the same time, the project also aimed at improving the graduates’ chances of securing employment or enhancing their skills to help them launch independent businesses in this sector.

In November 2021, GFF launched a new project named Go Organic. This project provides further support to Organic Farming graduates who are willing to develop businesses within the organic horticulture value chain. The Green Flower Foundation strive for the graduate students to be successful in their startups and this, in turn, will create new job opportunities, inspire other young people to join the training programme (at BPC) and inspire farmers to adopt organic farming practices.

### **Structure of the Foundation in December 2022**

<b>Board</b>	Elisabeth Assal-Bouchardy (President) Mathieu Assal (Secretary) Andreas Wigger (Treasurer)
<b>Advisory board</b>	Anne Guimond Kostecki Ruth Avison Dang Charles Milo Eric Cooper
<b>Operational team</b>	
<i>Geneva Office</i>	Patile Minassian – Head of projects and operations
<i>Ethiopian Office</i>	Adem Girisa Dale - Project manager and In-country representative Getachew Abraha - Accountant Esrom Tesfay - Agronomist & Farm coordinator Fikirte Beyene – Hub Coordinator

## General information

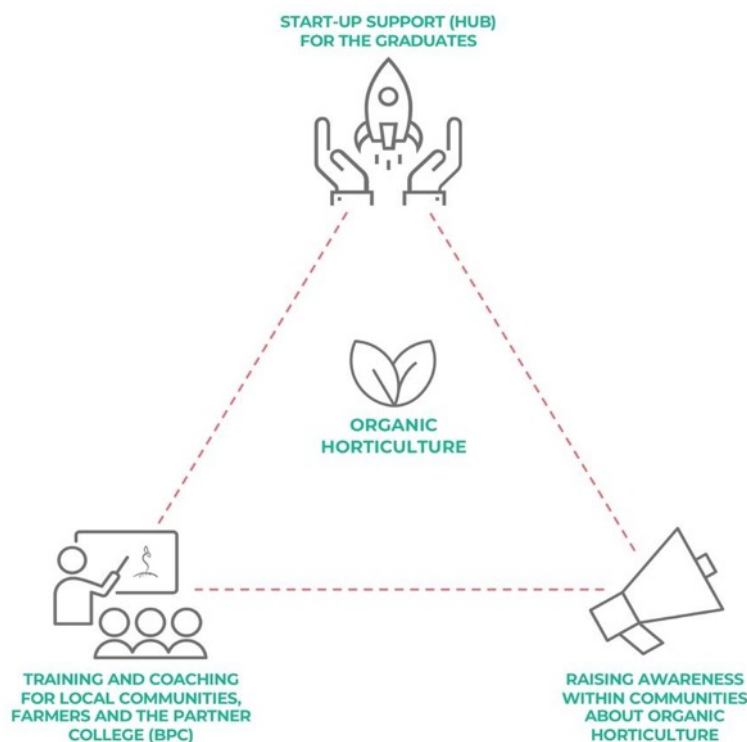
The goal of Go Organic is to “Facilitate access to market opportunities in the emerging organic food sector.”

To reach this goal, GFF offers training and advice to young entrepreneurs willing to start a business in the organic field. Since this second project is a direct follow-up from the first one, the beneficiaries are the graduates of our first organic class in BPC. Since we assist them from a central location in Bishoftu, we call them the “HUB members.” They are between 20 and 25 years old and come from the countryside around Bishoftu. We started with 34 entrepreneurs (14 men & 20 women), but currently, we support 28 entrepreneurs (11 men & 17 women) as 6 young farmers have decided to leave the programme to pursue other interests. GFF contributed up to 90% of the total start-up budget for the Hub Members to start their businesses, which corresponds in total to 2'162'136 birr (CHF 48'092).

In addition to providing support to help the HUB members succeed, we aim to inspire people from the community to join this promising sector. Therefore, GFF also provides organic agriculture training to local farmers in the vicinity.

GFF continues to support the Bishoftu Polytechnical College with some specific activities, such as strengthening BPC's capacity to continue, after the 2024 handover to provide high-quality training in organic horticulture, be recognized as a centre of excellence in organic horticulture and supporting BPC with the management of their gardens as well as the sale of the vegetables and the honey they produce in their garden.

The Go Organic project has three components:



## Activities carried out in 2022

The following section will present a detailed report of the different activities which were followed through during the year of 2022. It is based on the full activity plan that was submitted before the start of project Go Organic.

### 1. Business Launching

After graduating, the Hub members were given the opportunity by Green Flower Foundation to set up and launch their businesses to sell the vegetables they produce and generate a sustainable income. The Hub members decided to divide themselves into groups of 2 to 4 people, so 11 start-ups were created.

#### 1.1 Develop and provide a business guidebook

A business guidebook was developed and shared with each Hub member. In addition, since the beginning of the development phase of their companies, the Hub members have been supported by the GFF team in Bishoftu who follow their progress daily and support them with their financial planning, budget needs, access to markets, legal procedures, logistics, production, planification, motivation, crops and harvest.

#### 1.2 Work sessions for business plan

To facilitate access to markets and commercial opportunities in the emerging organic sector, the Hub members benefit from the support and expertise of two business coaches (group training and two days of individual coaching sessions every week). During these sessions, hub members learned about the Business Model Canvas development, the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion). They learned how to calculate their margins and profits, establish market opportunities, contact potential customers, and pitch their products, create appealing visuals to communicate about their products and more.

After a year of experience, one Hub member group has decided to change their business activity and open an organic vegetable supermarket instead. They want to concentrate their activity on selling rather than farming. To do so, they are currently working on their business plan updates, including their financial and profitability forecasts, to ensure their business will be viable and sustainable. The GFF team in Bishoftu is providing ongoing support to Hub members for any business plan update.

#### 1.3 Open the Hub Centre/Office

The Green Flower Foundation has opened a Hub Centre in their premises, to provide the most suitable support to our Hub Members. All the Hub Members have access to the Hub centre, where they can use the computers, printers, and facilities. The Centre is open daily from Monday to Friday during business hours, and Hub members can visit at any time to seek help or advice, whether it be practical advice for their farm and agriculture or business affairs.

Furthermore, the Centre offers young entrepreneurs training programmes and personalised coaching sessions for developing their chosen professional activities. The training includes a variety of programmes such as English, Business management (accounting, budgeting, marketing, etc.), and organic horticulture.

### 2. Business Development

#### 2.1 Facilitate financial access – Start-up

A well-prepared financial investment is an essential part of any successful start-up business. Access to capital is necessary for entrepreneurs to launch their businesses, acquire resources, and maintain operations.



The financial support is spread over three years and may be adapted depending on the needs and development encountered. 29 entrepreneurs started their businesses and received a grant, and 1 entrepreneur decided to stop her activities in 2022. Hence to date (end of 2022), GFF is supporting 28 Hub members and, in total, 11 start-ups.

In addition to educational and business support, GFF contributed up to 90% of the total start-up budget. Since November 2021, the young entrepreneurs supported by the foundation have been working on developing their own small companies with the provided total capital of 2,182,500 birr (CHF 47'300.-).

*Amounts of Money Provided for Hub Members as Start Up Capitals:*

S/ N	Name of enterprise	Total planned Amounts	Groups Contribution	Types Business Engaged
1	Oli Supermarket	82,500.00	7,500.00	Shop
2	Family Juice bar	75,000.00	5,250.00	Shop
3	Ethio Organic	300,000.00	30,000.00	Farm
4	Tesfa Allen	150,000.00	15,000.00	Farm
5	Walin Organic farm	300,000.00	30,000.00	Farm
6	Hawi Boru	150,000.00	15,000.00	Farm
7	Biftu Genema	150,000.00	15,000.00	Farm
8	Promise Organic Farm	150,000.00	15,000.00	Farm
9	Walin Gudana	225,000.00	22,500.00	Farm
10	Gudatu	300,000.00	30,000.00	Farm
11	Hunda-Ol Sabaf	300,000.00	30,000.00	Shop
<b>Total in Birr</b>		<b>2,182,500.00 Birr</b>	<b>215,250.00 Birr</b>	

## 2.2 Technical support in Organic Horticulture

In Ethiopia and many other parts of the globe, the excessive use of inorganic fertilisers, herbicides, and insecticides to maximise crop yield resulted in the deterioration of agricultural lands' physical and biological health.

Organic agriculture is still in its early stages in Ethiopia, so to ensure that students are at the forefront of knowledge in the field, they have been receiving since

September 2022, a bi-monthly technical support. This is realised thanks to advice and support given by our expert-consultant in organic agriculture to the young farmers on their lands.



## 2.3 Provide training on business management skills (accounting, marketing, reporting, market linkage, etc.)

Having mentors or teachers is a valuable way to learn, grow and avoid making classic entrepreneurial mistakes. Although the young graduates sincerely wish to make a positive change for themselves and their country by producing food organically, being an entrepreneur requires another set of skills they did not have at the time.



Thus, in addition to the daily support offered to the Hub members by the dedicated GFF team in Bishoftu, they also have the opportunity to join specific training sessions led by business coaches, organic experts, and English lessons held at the Bishoftu Polytechnic College (BPC).

Our business coaches provided group training and personalised coaching sessions every week. With their support, the Hub members have developed essential business skills such as accounting, marketing, selling, and logistics (identification of customers, negotiation of contracts, organisation of transport).

**Progress achieved:** Thanks to the help and guidance of our business coaches and GFF team, many business opportunities have been created with international schools, hotels, restaurants, and supermarkets in the capital. Aside from Addis, the students sell their vegetables at the Zuqala market in Bishoftu every week. One of our hub members, Meheret, has also launched her new shop on Bishoftu's main road, where she sells fresh juice and organic vegetables which she mainly buys from her former classmates.

## 3. English classes

### 3.1 Organize the English class, 1x 2 hours

GFF continues to offer two English class hours per week to the Hub members.

To make the programme effective, GFF has facilitated the transportation allowance for all Hub members and hired a competent English teacher.

Bishoftu is located near the capital, Addis Abeba, home to many expatriates and an affluent population that wants to consume organic vegetables. Only a few expatriates or foreigners speak Amharic hence being able to communicate in English is also an excellent opportunity to sell organic vegetables to the international community in Addis.



## 4. Organic Farming Techniques

### 4.1 Organize training on organic horticulture techniques for the HUB members

Our organic expert has provided four sessions of training for our GFF's hub members on the following topics: Soil fertility management, Crop planning and management in organic agriculture, Organic nursery management, and composting. Continuous training will be reconducted in 2023.

## 5. Private Standard

### 5.1 Develop a private standard – organic products

This activity will be accomplished in 2023. In 2022, consultants and experts were consulted on private standard options for organic products. Based on the existing certifications and labels, GFF will develop a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS). "*Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) are locally focused quality assurance systems. They certify producers based on the active participation of stakeholders and are built on a foundation of trust, social networks, and knowledge exchange.*" (IOFAM, 2008).

## 6. Training & Support

### 6.1 Organize training for the local community on the best practices of organic horticulture

To raise awareness and increase knowledge in the local farmers' communities on organic farming techniques and practices, our organic expert gave four sessions of training to about 80 farmers on different training topics in 2022. The training covered soil fertility management, compost preparation and use, organic alternatives for crop production, as well as water and irrigation management. BPC and the relevant offices selected the farmers who received the training.



In general, it was observed from the training courses that experienced farmers are very interested in organic farming. They realise that the use of pesticides impoverishes their land, is very expensive and causes them health problems, and they want to be able to switch to organic farming.



## 6.2 Open a help desk centre to provide organic horticulture advice to local farmers



To continuously support the local farmers in organic horticulture, GFF, in collaboration with BPC, has opened a farmers' help desk at BPC Compound. The farmers may ask for free advice from this centre regarding organic horticulture. It is open for the local farmers twice a week. So far local farmers have not yet used this opportunity.

## 7. Networking & Promotion

### 6.3 Organize events on organic farming for the local community - Raising Awareness

This year, the foundation and its Hub members have participated in and organized several local community events to bring people closer together and raise awareness among the local community in the organic agriculture field.

GFF has organized markets and conferences with farmers and local communities in Bishoftu. Furthermore, the Hub members have participated several times in the ICS (international school) and Hyatt Regency markets in Addis, where they could sell their products and present their projects to customers.



Besides, BPC regularly welcomes farmers and other TVET (vocational schools) officials to show them the vegetable garden and the organic project, allowing experience sharing with GFF and BPC about organic agriculture and its curriculum.

### 7.2 Organise networking events to promote organic farming



Organic products are almost non-existent in Ethiopia, hence a critical part of the Green Flower Foundation and the Hub members is to promote organic products to develop the market for organic vegetables and increase production and sales.

Therefore, the Hub Centre has organized several events and conferences on the subject in 2022, which is crucial to establishing a solid network that diffuses the benefits of using organic products.

Furthermore, by training local farmers and their family members, we aim at inspiring farmers in the usage of organic techniques and developing the supply chain for organic products.

On World Organic Day in September 2022, a large market was organised by GFF to raise awareness of organic principles. Hub members sold vegetables from their first harvest and used the opportunity to advertise.



In 2023, we plan to organise "open doors" (visits to production sites) to allow customers to come and see how the vegetables they eat are produced. In addition, a special event will be organised for Organic Day in September 2023 in collaboration with local authorities and various local NGOs active in the field.

## 8. Seed Gardens

### 8.1 Establish a seed production garden.



To solve the problem of a lack of organic seeds for the organic farming practice, GFF decided to establish a seed bank garden in 2021, called "Passion Garden." The Passion Garden, which is 3'000 m<sup>2</sup>, is used only to grow vegetables to make seeds and has become an excellent source of organic seeds in the region.

It produces salad, courgette, carrots, green beans, cabbage, onions, hot pepper, garlic, beetroot, and swiss chard seeds. Our Hub Members and local farmers benefit from the organic seeds produced in our garden. The collected seeds were distributed to our Hub Members, local farmers, and the Bishoftu Polytechnical College.



Passion garden's activity is ongoing.

## 9. General Support BPC

### 9.1 BPC's garden management

In 2019, GFF developed a 4'500 m<sup>2</sup> garden with all the necessary facilities for the students of BPC to carry out organic horticulture during their studies.

Through the development of this training, GFF's objective was to make BPC a centre of excellence in organic horticulture. GFF wishes to continue organizing training for farmers and the community at the HUB Centre, and we believe that BPC is the most suitable place to carry out this training. Thus, for BPC to become a real Centre of Excellence, GFF extended its support to the college by contributing to garden management and the sales organization.



Furthermore, the vegetables produced in the garden are sold as an organic vegetable basket to customers in Addis Ababa every week to allow BPC to generate incomes to maintain the garden facilities. These facilities include water pumps with solar panel system, irrigation system, greenhouses, preparation and storage area, water tanks, expansion of production areas etc.

Currently, the vegetable baskets are delivered by GFF, but a long-term delivery solution is being discussed with BPC.

BPC will take over all the activities by June 2024.

### 9.2 BPC's garden veggies & honey sales optimization



Thanks to the sale of the quality organic vegetables produced at BPC, the College generates revenue and is able to reinvest in the maintenance of their organic garden. Sales are mainly in the form of organic vegetable baskets and herbs delivered to customers in Addis Ababa.

Based on our experience, we noticed that the demand for organic products is rising in the country, from expatriates (especially embassies), residents looking to improve their health, and companies that want to offer quality food to their clients (restaurants, hotels, etc.).

This business model also shows our students that producing 100% organic vegetables is possible and profitable. Hence, we aim to awaken their entrepreneurial souls and encourage them to pursue their organic farming activities.

### 9.3 Manage the beehives at the BPC's college.

The beekeeping project began in 2021 and continued in 2022. In the BPC compound, we have five beehives managed by our expert in apiculture. These hives are used for training students in beekeeping. In addition, they are a source for honey production. In 2022 we were able to harvest 21kg of our honey. Hence, with the continuous support of beekeeping experts, the management of a beehive in the BPC compound is going well.



### 9.4 Beekeeping: Students training.

Two 10-day trainings in beekeeping combining practice and theory were organised in cooperation with BPC. In 2021, 8 students graduated, and 13 students successfully completed the programme in March 2022.

All the participants were animal science students following the night program at BPC. Most of the participants are involved in other businesses to support themselves and were very motivated to start a beekeeping business to get an additional source of income.



In April 2022, as part of the Green Flower Foundation support, the graduated beekeepers received all the beekeeping equipment and two hives with colonies to bring back home and to start their beekeeping activity. Accordingly, some graduates installed hives in their family gardens to produce honey. In contrast, some of the 2nd batch graduates organized themselves as a cooperative to access lands from the governments and to start their beekeeping activities as a group.

To ensure the successful development of their hives, GFF continues to support and coach them for one year. To do so, experts regularly visit them and guide them through all the critical steps of the bee's life (harvest, feeding, etc.).

## 10. Project Management

### 10.1 Organize Project Steering Committee meeting (PSC).

During this reporting period, two Steering Committee meetings were organized with representatives from the Oromia Bureau of enterprise and industry development to discuss the project status and evolution and to operate in compliance with the government requirements.

### 10.2 Project Evaluation by the Authorities.

The organization and external stakeholders conducted the evaluation of the project to measure progress toward project objectives and goals. Midterm and terminal assessments (at the end of the project) will be evaluated with the involvement of representatives of the co-signatory offices.

This year, the Project evaluation was done on 9th December 2022 with the presence of stakeholders from different government offices as well as the GFF Ethiopia and Geneva team.

Two hub members came to testify and to explain their journey and the development of their organic vegetables farming businesses. One of the main challenges they expressed is to have access to proper land and water. For the moment, the Hub members rent the lands to a farmer but they expect the government to help them access new lands. In Ethiopia it is the government who assigned lands.

The conducted evaluation highlighted the effectiveness and efficiency of the project and indicated the possible areas of improvement.



Furthermore, the project is subject to an external financial audit by the end of each annual year in Ethiopia and Switzerland.

## **Challenges encountered during the reporting period 2022**

- Commercial opportunities, access to market for Hub Members products.
- Consistency in the production of the vegetables.
- Shortage of water.
- Awareness of organic vegetables.

## **Solutions / opportunities**

- Conduct different market assessments to identify the potential buyers in both Bishoftu and Addis Ababa, contact and meet the customers.
- Provide business coaching and facilitate several training sessions to enhance the capacity, business hard skills and knowledge of Hub Members.
- Continuous training and coaching on site on organic horticulture and planification.
- Conduct different awareness, creation of sessions for all stakeholders to increase the importance of Organic agriculture.
- In order to irrigate their lands, the hub members have invested in two solar panels and pumps as part of their budget. Due to technical issues the water capacity of this pump was not enough, hence we are exploring different options such as drip irrigation, solar pump with more capacity, wind electricity.

## **Conclusion and recommendation**

A business owner requires agility, planning, hard work, determination, trial and error, failure, and, most of all, believing in themselves and doing what they do with passion.

GFF is glad to see that most young organic farming entrepreneurs give themselves the means to succeed. They try, they fail, and they get up again. GFF is impressed by all the work and accomplishments carried out by the Hub members during the past year and strongly encourages them to continue their efforts. When asked what their motivation is, the Hub members reply: "we hope to extend our farm, increase the sale of our organic vegetables to improve the health of many, teach more people about organic farming, and create job opportunities for others."

With adequate funding, entrepreneurs can quickly find themselves able to launch their projects or take them to the next level. Providing financial support for start-up businesses is essential to ensure they get off the ground and have a chance to succeed. Hence, our Hub Members have to use the financial support given by GFF effectively and efficiently to improve their livelihood and create jobs for the community.

To continue benefiting from Green Flower Foundation's financial and advisory support during 2023, each group and its members must show their motivation, willingness, and interest to continue the



program, by providing regular activities and financial plans. Consistency of production, motivation, hard work, and ownership is fundamental to maximizing the chances of success.

The Green Flower Foundation continues to work jointly with different stakeholders and partners.

Achieving overnight success is extremely rare. Building a sustainable business is a long-term process. However, slowly but surely, with the means and the right mindset, we are confident that they will achieve their goals.

## 11. Appendices

- Financial reports :
  - o Closing accounts document
  - o Budget use, financial utilization 2022
  
- Objectives evaluation



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