



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Go Organic Project
Ethiopia

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A Message from Our President

Having access to a good education is essential for both national and personal development. When young people have enjoyed the solid foundations of vocational education and training, it is a win-win: skilled young people are a valuable asset to companies, and if they have additionally acquired an entrepreneurial mindset, they can create jobs for others who follow.

Ethiopia has the second-largest population of young people in Africa, with about 37.4 million people between 10 and 24 years old, making up more than 40% of the population. The Green Flower Foundation's priority is to provide these young people with practical training in organic farming and help entrepreneurs to launch their businesses to become employable, in meaningful and impactful jobs. Our grassroots projects in Ethiopia in just the past six years have already helped one polytechnic college, 36 students, 21 beekeepers and 80 farmers.

The Green Flower Foundation's priority is to provide these young people with practical training in organic farming and help entrepreneurs to launch their businesses to become employable, in meaningful and impactful jobs.

Elisabeth Assal-Bouchardy
President

I am happy to report that, with the help of our dedicated donors, partners, board members and employees, we have met the ambitious goals we set ourselves for 2023. Despite the difficulties, we have worked together well to accomplish the many fantastic outcomes highlighted in this report, changing course when necessary, and seizing new opportunities as they arose.

In the current economic and geopolitical climate, our mission and efforts in Ethiopia are more important than ever. Organic and agroecological practices can provide sustainable livelihoods for smallholder farmers. That is why training for young people, and enabling them to become entrepreneurs, is so important to the country's success.

Working together, towards common objectives, with partners who share similar values, is essential to bringing about long-term, constructive change.

Let's continue to change the lives of more young people and their communities, generating better employment opportunities and the satisfaction of contributing to a better future.

About the Green Flower Foundation

The Green Flower Foundation is a Swiss foundation which aims at developing educational projects and at promoting new techniques that encourage sustainable development of organic horticulture. We work through partnerships with institutions, companies and individuals who share our passion for innovative education and entrepreneurship in agroecology.

Structure of the Foundation 2023

Board

Elisabeth Assal-Bouchardy (*President*)
Mathieu Assal (*Secretary*)
Andreas Wigger (*Treasurer*)

Advisory Board

Ruth Avison Dang
Eric Couper
Anne Guimond Kostecki
Charles Milo

Operational Team

Bishoftu Office

Adem Girisa Dale – Project manager and In-country representative
Fikirte Beyene – Assistant Manager
Esrom Tesfay – Farm coordinator
Getachew Abraha – Accountant (until May 2023)
Kidane Adane – Accountant (since June 2023)
Bekele Getachew – Garden Assistant
Wondiye Tesgaye – Garden Assistant

Geneva Office

Patile Minassian – Head of projects and operations (until May 2023)
Adeline Provent – Head of projects and operations (since September 2023)
Ines Bächinger – Scientific Coordinator

Sustainable Development of Organic Horticulture

INTRODUCTION

The challenges for those who continue the development of their small enterprises remain high.

The central focus of the current project is the comprehensive ongoing support of the Green Flower Foundation (GFF) to the Bishoftu Polytechnic College (BPC) organic horticulture graduates in their development of small enterprises. Throughout the year 2023, we have gradually become aware that this second project is quite ambitious within the Ethiopian context.

We launched this project in 2022 based on our assessment of the skills and motivation of the graduate class members. Once they had started, it became rapidly apparent that these graduates had clearly benefitted from the solid training in organic horticulture and in the basics of management but the practice of the day-to-day management of a small enterprise in a tough environment has proven, for most, a very challenging task. In order to mitigate the difficulties and the risks for their businesses, at the beginning of 2023 we organised individual and group coaching sessions for the various management practices and for the production of organic vegetables.

That has helped half of them. The other half of the 36 members of the hub have quit horticulture, employed elsewhere largely thanks to their skills acquired through the classes and practices provided by GFF. This is regrettable, but we must acknowledge the fact that not all young people are mentally and physically prepared to sustain the time consuming and risky reality of being a young entrepreneur.

The challenges for those who continue the development of their small enterprises remain high. On a macro level, they have to do business in a country with a very high consumer price inflation (around 30% annually) and a general environment that is still fuelled by droughts in parts of the country, the fallout from Covid 19 and a two-year conflict in the Tigray region. Costs for basic commodities, such as fuel, transport and food have been soaring. This, in turn, has negatively affected the budgets of the hub members.

One basic topic of the current project, is the question of land availability for the hub members, which could not be solved in 2023. We launched this project with the promise of the local authorities in Bishoftu that they would provide agriculture land to the hub members. Unfortunately, the authorities have not kept their promise and GFF had to step in and rent land for this first year. The amount of financial support that we calculated at the beginning did not take the land rental into account. This important question remains a subject of discussion between the authorities and GFF.

Another concern has been the proper production of organic vegetables in the given context. The hub members got some general training at BPC for organic horticulture. That was certainly important and of good quality but not sufficient for the young farmers to produce in an optimal way. To address this very practical need, we hired a scientific coordinator, with the objective to discuss with the hub members and analyse their challenges and then to produce a manual for organic farming in Ethiopia. This manual has proven to be a tremendous asset for GFF, since it is a very practical tool that offers solutions with the ingredients available in Bishoftu and can also be used for training local farmers who are transitioning from conventional to organic agriculture.

Apart from this main focus on our graduates, we had the clear objective to provide specialised training to farmer communities around Bishoftu. The partner organisation BPC and the local authorities wanted to organise the groups of farmers. Due to the overall situation in the region, such gatherings of farmers could not be organised in 2023.



The central focus of the current project is the comprehensive ongoing support of the Green Flower Foundation (GFF) to the Bishoftu Polytechnic College (BPC) organic horticulture graduates in their development of small enterprises.

Overall, we are satisfied with the advancement of the project and with the ever-increasing footprint of GFF in Bishoftu and Addis Ababa. The independent organic seed production has proven to be a real response to a larger need and the organisation of a participatory guarantee system (PGS) for certifying organic products is another big contribution to the country-wide groups of organic farmers. Finally, the handbook for organic farming in Ethiopia is invaluable not only for our hub members but also for all organic farmers. It is again a very concrete response to the very down-to-earth problems of all those who want to succeed in organic farming in Ethiopia.



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. In 2022, we supported 28 entrepreneurs (11 men and 17 women) and in October 2023, we are supporting 14 entrepreneurs (6 men and 8 women) because others have decided to leave the programme to pursue job opportunities in various sectors.

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.

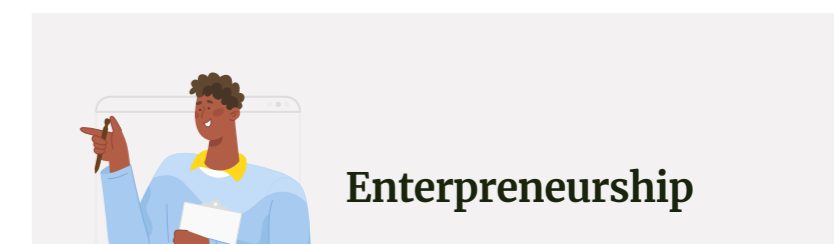
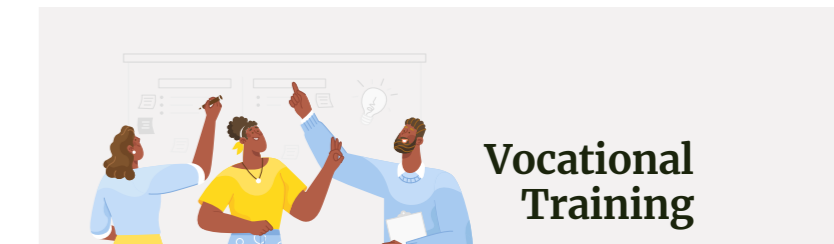
2023

We’re supporting 14 entrepreneurs (6 men and 8 women)

Graduates from the first organic class in Bishoftu are named “hub members” as they receive ongoing support and guidance from a central location in Bishoftu.

GFF continues to support the Bishoftu Polytechnic 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 recognised 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:



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



Activities Carried Out from January until December 2023

The following section will present a detailed report of the different activities which were followed through from January until December 2023. It is based on the full activity plan that was submitted before the start of project Go Organic. For each section, we provide a high-level update to let you know the level of implementation in 2023.

1. BUSINESS LAUNCH

Good progress on supporting the remaining start-ups and individuals, with daily support from the GFF team.

1.1 Work Sessions on Business Plans

In 2022, GFF supported the set-up of 11 start-ups. A business guidebook was developed and shared with each hub member.

In 2023, GFF continued to support the hub members daily and the GFF team in Bishoftu has been following their progress daily and supporting them with their financial planning, budget needs, logistics, production, planification, motivation, crops, harvest and access to markets.

“

The hub centre offers young entrepreneurs training programmes and personalised coaching sessions for developing their chosen professional activities.

”

1.2 Hub Centre/Office

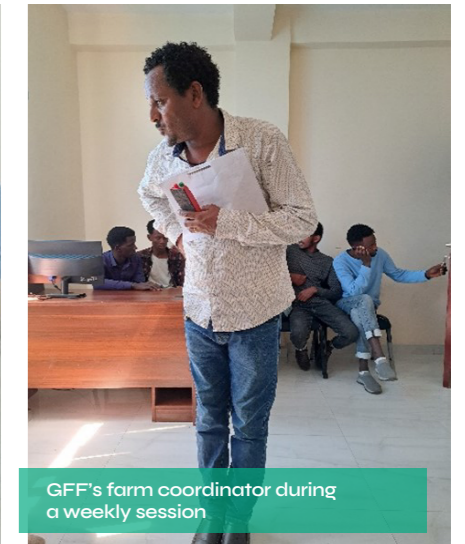
The hub centre was opened in 2022 and in 2023 it has continued to welcome hub members daily, from Monday to Friday during GFF's working hours (8.00 a.m. – 5 p.m.). GFF's Hub members can visit at any time to seek help or advice, whether it be practical advice for their farm and agriculture or business affairs.

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.

In October 2023, we started organising weekly group discussions for hub members to share key messages on entrepreneurship such as: motivation, vision, definition of success, commitment, budget management, time management, agility, market opportunities. The GFF team in Bishoftu prepares them each week with the support of GFF Geneva, with a presentation or a short video to watch and discuss. This time is also an opportunity to talk about best practices, challenges, and identifying solutions as a group. These sessions are helping to build the group further with enhanced team spirit.



Our young entrepreneurs at the hub centre



GFF's farm coordinator during a weekly session

At the end of the group discussion, we move to the weekly planner. The session is led by the farm coordinator who reviews last week's activities on the land and each hub members' group gives updates. Each group then decides on the week's activities (based on last week's achievements, needs and priorities), with the guidance and supervision of the farm coordinator.

The team sessions are helping to build the group further with enhanced team spirit.



Grant for:
11 START-UPS

90%
of the total start-up budget

Financial investment is crucial for start-up success as capital access is vital for launch, resource acquisition, and operations

2. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Growing a business is a challenging task in the environment we are in. We are continuing to support the start-ups and entrepreneurs and covering costs they are not able to cover at this stage. We're supporting them in their activities on a daily basis. Good progress on providing technical support and business management, inhouse.

2.1 Start-up Capital

The hub members are producing their vegetables on a plot of land that is rented by GFF. Agricultural land is scarce in the vicinity of the capital Addis Abeba and start-ups struggle to cover rent costs. The rental of the land did not show in their business plans since the town of Bishoftu had promised to put land at their disposal. So far, this has been a vain promise.

In 2023, GFF covered the costs for renting a generator for one month and we later purchased a generator and water pump. We covered the maintenance costs for the equipment all throughout 2023 and for the water well to be cleaned and dug further to increase the irrigation capacity on the land. We are also renting the land until June 2024.

Generator Rental: 75,000 Birr
Generator & Water Pump Purchase: 156,000 Birr
Maintenance Costs: Throughout 2023
Water Well Maintenance
Land Rent: 100,000 Birr/year (Until June 2024)

2.2 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. 11 start-ups, totalling 29 individuals started their businesses and received a grant. 2023 was a difficult year, where we saw 17 individuals leave the programme. By 31st December 2023, GFF was continuing to support 7 start-ups, totalling 14 young entrepreneurs: 8 women and 6 men.

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.).

2.3 Technical Support in Organic Horticulture

In Ethiopia and elsewhere in the world, the use of chemical fertilisers, herbicides, and insecticides to maximise crop yield resulted in the deterioration of agricultural lands' physical and biological health. There are frequent reports of unsafe pesticide use in many parts of Africa. Ethiopia is the second most populous nation in Africa with around 80% of the population still depending on agriculture which uses pesticides.

Organic agriculture is still in its early stages in Ethiopia¹, so to ensure that students are at the forefront of knowledge in the field, in 2022, they received bi-monthly technical support on how to manage their farms, optimize their production. This was achieved thanks to advice and support given by our expert-consultant in organic agriculture to the young farmers on their lands. They also received training on business management skills (accounting, marketing, reporting, market linkage, etc.).

In 2023, the technical and business support continued with two sessions provided by a local expert-consultant. GFF also organised a visit of the Bishoftu Agricultural Research Centre in January, to meet with an expert. In 2023, our smallholder farmers received further technical support from an expert who provided two sessions on organic agriculture.



Ines Bächinger

In addition, from February until November 2023, they had daily support from our Scientific Coordinator, an agronomist who joined the Geneva team, with regular field trips to Ethiopia.

Ines Bächinger graduated from *Haute Ecole du paysage, d'ingénierie et d'architecture (HEPIA)* in Geneva and holds a bachelor's degree in agricultural engineering. She grew up in Ethiopia, then studied and started her career in Switzerland. During her studies, she specialised in pest management and organic traditional methods and did an internship with *ICIPE* in Kenya. Ines brought a wealth of knowledge to the hub members and through her regular field missions, she provided day-to-day technical support. In 2023 she travelled to Ethiopia for 3 missions of 3-8 weeks each. She worked on a handbook and on how to set up a participatory-guarantee system (PGS)².

² See sections 5.1 and 6.2 further down.

¹ <https://www.pan-uk.org/the-rise-of-organic-agriculture-in-ethiopia/>

The training aimed to equip entrepreneurs with essential skills for business success.



2.4 Provide Training on Business Management Skills

Two business coaches were hired locally to provide 16 days of training in January and February 2023. The activity had started in September 2022 and was carried out over 6 months. The training covered a variety of topics for entrepreneurs, such as accountancy, marketing, market linkages. The consultants coached the hub members and provided advice on how to maintain the business, get enough income to cover all expenses and access markets to generate more income, and therefore invest in their business.

In June 2023, Kidane Adane joined the GFF Ethiopia team as an accountant and has been providing support on business and finance management. He led a group session on budget management in October 2023 and will continue to provide advice and guidance.

3. ENGLISH CLASSES

Good progress on continuing our efforts to give hub members better chances to communicate with international customers based in Addis and improve their skills.

3.1 Continuing to Provide Access to Weekly English Classes

Bishoftu is located 60km away from Addis Abeba, Ethiopia's capital city and largest city with 5.4m inhabitants. Addis Ababa is also home to many embassies and international organisations, including UN agencies, with thousands of expatriates³ and a growing middle-class population that want to consume organic vegetables. Most expatriates or foreigners living in Addis do not speak Amharic, hence being able to communicate in English is also an excellent opportunity to sell organic vegetables to the international community in Addis.

GFF continues to offer weekly English classes to the hub members. The number of students has decreased, so since October 2023 we have gathered all students in one group. Instead of receiving a 1-hour lesson, they are given a 1.5-hour lesson now.

³ There is no definitive answer to how many expats live in Addis Ababa, as different sources may have different definitions and methods of counting expats. According to the Facebook group Expats in Addis Ababa <https://www.facebook.com/groups/Expatsinaddisababa/>, there are 16.8k total members in November 2023. This may not reflect the actual number of expats living in the city, as some members may have left or joined the group since then or may not be living in Addis Ababa at all.

According to InterNations <https://www.internations.org/addis-ababa-expats>, Addis Ababa has a population of around 4 million people made up of over 80 different nationalities. This suggests that there is a significant diversity of cultures and backgrounds in the city, but it does not give a precise number of expats.

To make the programme effective, GFF is covering the transportation costs for all hub members and hired a competent English teacher. Abiyot Bade holds a certificate in pedagogical practice and classroom management, with a specialisation in training TVET (technical and vocational education and training) trainers. He has been teaching for more than 15 years in various colleges.



Weekly English Classes



Good progress on knowledge sharing with partners, on organic farming techniques. Good progress on practical training sessions.

4. ORGANIC FARMING TECHNIQUES

4.1 Organise Training on Organic Horticulture Techniques for the Hub Members

In 2023, we have continued to organise training sessions on organic horticulture techniques. Core content includes soil fertility management, crop planning and management in organic agriculture, organic nursery management, and composting.

Early 2023, hub members visited the Holeta Market centre, Selam Children's Village and Betty shop in Addis. This was an opportunity for them to meet with Holeta farmers.

This visit was inspiring for the hub members who asked questions to the Holeta farmers. We think that this led a willingness to work together and join forces. Later in the year, two groups decided to work together. This is a positive development, because they will need to be a strong group to set up a PGS.



Holeta Farmers' market visit and discussions - January 2023



Visit and discussion at Selam Village - January 2023



Selam Children's Village empowers communities to effectively care for vulnerable youth.

Selam Children's Village was founded in 1985 by Ms Tsehay Roschli. Selam Children's Village is committed to promoting childcare and positive youth development through provision of holistic services and enabling the community to care for the most vulnerable children and youth of Ethiopia.

Our hub members' learning from Selam Children's Village:

We have to commit to maintaining production consistency, even if it means going out of our way to supply to customers.

They (Selam Village) set up a shop to sell their own produce to sell products at a better price.

They (Selam Village) have diversified customer segments and do distribution of products. If we start our own shop, we should call customers and offer deliveries.

Following the January visit with the Selam Village Farm Coordinator and organisation manager, in June 2023, our hub members successfully managed to sell 210 kg of carrots to Selam Village at 35 Birr/kg which was above the local market price. We supported the transactions and delivery costs (using GFF's vehicle) to Addis. While we're aiming for the hub members to develop a sustainable business model, it is part of the transition to support them with the markets.

Betty's Organic is the organic shop in Addis Abeba. Betty sells organic fruit and vegetables and is looking for quality products and consistent supply.

While there is a market for organic produce, the retailers are demanding – they need quality products and consistency in terms of supply. This is something our hub members need to improve if they want to access these markets.

GFF's farm coordinator attended a 2-week tailor-made advanced organic farming course at **Sustainable Agriculture Tanzania (SAT)**, a leading training centre based in Morogoro, Tanzania and specialized in agroecology for small-scale farming and sustainable agriculture.

The content of the course was mostly on sustainable farming approaches, agroecology, and organic farming. The 2-week programme included soil health, soil regeneration, and when to apply biofertilisers and biopesticides, why and how to make them with accessible and low-cost raw materials.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GREEN FLOWER FOUNDATION



Our Farm Coordinator developed his knowledge and in September, he organised a training session to share some of the recipes of biofertilisers and biopesticides he had learnt on his course in Tanzania.

The training session took place on 5th September, for 18 participants: 13 hub members, 2 BPC garden workers and 2 Passion workers⁴.

During this one-day training session, the participants learnt biofertiliser and biopesticide recipes and made the following preparations:

Phosphates Preparation (Biofertiliser)

Bio-Fertiliser Rich in Nitrogen (Biofertiliser)

Super Magro Liquid Preparation (Biofertiliser)

Lime Sulphur Brew (Biopesticide)

Ash Brew Preparation (Biopesticide)

Apich (Biopesticide)

The training was successful and practical. Since September, hub members have been using the biopesticides and biofertilisers prepared that day and they have gained knowledge on recipes they can now make themselves.

These recipes are featured in GFF's handbook⁵.

⁴ See section 8 on seed garden at Passion garden
⁵ Read more on GFF handbook in section 6.2



Mixing Ash Brew



Wood Ash



Super Magro
(biofertiliser)



Training session September 2023

5. PRIVATE STANDARD

Setting a Participatory Guarantee System (PGS) is a long-term process and we have initiated discussions and kick-off with our hub members. It will be necessary for them to have a PGS in place to prove that their produce is organic.

5.1 Develop a Private Standard – Organic Produce

In 2022, it was identified that a **Participatory Guarantee System (PGS)** for labelling organic produce was needed in Ethiopia. "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."⁶

Our Scientific Coordinator organised group discussions with GFF team and hub members to explain the basics of a PGS, provided guidelines and next steps. PGS processes take a long time to get set up and require all stakeholders' commitment and a shared vision. We believe that the weekly group discussions are helping the group of hub members in this PGS project, by providing a space to discuss the need of a PGS and the forthcoming actions to take.

Establishing a PGS in Ethiopia contributes to building trust, social networks, and knowledge exchange in organic farming.

A significant accomplishment is the production of the GFF manual on organic farming by the scientific coordinator.

6. TRAINING & SUPPORT

Training sessions for the local community must be decided with the authorities and we have been chasing them, in vain. However, we managed to follow up with some farmers who received training in 2022. The largest achievement is the GFF manual on organic farming that was produced by GFF's scientific coordinator. We will share more information in the next few months about the dissemination of the manual.

6.1 Arrange Organic Horticulture Training for the Local Community

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 roughly 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.

In 2023, authorities and partner organisation (BPC) were not able to organise training courses for farmers. Authorities select smallholder farmers who are eligible for training sessions. In 2023, our team kept chasing BPC and followed up with farmers who had participated in last year's training.



Jemal Kediri planted 30 papaya trees in his home garden.



Jemal Kediri and Ahmed Said – October 2023

Ahmed Said has planted coffee, pumpkins and avocados on a 2500m² land.

⁶ IOFAM, 2008

To continuously support the local farmers in organic horticulture, GFF, in collaboration with BPC, opened a farmers' help desk at BPC Compound.

6.2 Establish an Organic Horticulture Help Desk for Local Farmers

To continuously support the local farmers in organic horticulture, GFF, in collaboration with BPC, opened a farmers' help desk at BPC Compound. The farmers can ask for free advice from this centre regarding organic horticulture. It is open for the local farmers twice a week. For the most part of 2023, local farmers did not make the most of this opportunity but in the last weeks of 2023, we noticed that local farmers were calling us more regularly to get technical advice (on irrigation, seeds) and we have been providing them with tips.

Badiriya Yassin grows maize, wheat, sugar cane, coffee, bananas, papaya, avocados, sorghum, rice, chickpeas, sunflowers, but also annual vegetables such as lettuce, hot peppers, tomatoes, habasha kale (spinach), pumpkins, cabbages and beans.

Jemal Kedir, Ahmed Said and Badiriya Yassin are from a displaced community from the Somali region and were given land by the Bishoftu authorities. They were selected by the local authorities to attend the 2022 training sessions.



GFF team following up with local farmers who show us their production and what they have implemented since attending the workshop in 2022.

Badiriya Yassin created an abundant garden in less than a year

Read Her Story [Here](#).

A handbook on organic farming was developed by GFF's Scientific Coordinator in 2023. This handbook is available in Amharic, Afaan Oromo and English. It is a 90-page practical handbook that covers the following topics:



This handbook is available in Amharic, Afaan Oromo and English.

Pest and Disease Management (with 8 recipes of Biopesticides)

Fertilisation (Compost, Vermicompost)

Crop Rotation, Intercropping, Green manure and Mulching

There is a genuine need for further training amongst smallholder farmers. There is a keen interest in organic farming techniques. There are benefits for soil health, human health, biodiversity and selling organic vegetables also brings prospects of employment and improved livelihoods.

Chemical fertilisers and chemical pesticides are expensive and hard to find globally, so there is an enabling environment for advocacy on organic farming, especially given the fact that the government is in favour of organic farming⁷.

By 31st December 2023, we were still chasing BPC to send us a proposal for farmers' training, and we are hoping to set up new training classes for local communities in the coming months.

This handbook will be released in 2024.



⁷ <https://theconversation.com/fertilizer-prices-are-soaring-and-thats-an-opportunity-to-promote-more-sustainable-ways-of-growing-crops-183418>

7. NETWORKING AND PROMOTION

Good progress on events organisation, despite the security challenges we are facing in the region.

7.1 Organise Events on Organic Farming for the Local Community

A bazaar is a marketplace consisting of multiple stalls or shops. Bazaar markets are very popular in Ethiopia.

Hub members attended the **International Community School (ICS)** bazaar in January 2023. They sold a variety of vegetables from BPC garden: aubergines, pumpkins, peppermint, celery, hot pepper, lettuce and onions. It was a learning experience for them - the main objective of the bazaar was to have a customer experience at a bazaar in Addis.



22nd September 2023 – World Organic Day

Photos on page 012

The European Organic Day is the ideal opportunity to widely celebrate the organic sector and evaluate Europe's progress towards achieving its goal of 25% organic land by 2030. In 2023, GFF and BPC celebrated World Organic Day to promote organic farming in Ethiopia.

World Organic Day's aim is to recognise the role organic farming plays in providing healthy food and preserving the environment while highlighting the need for visibility for organic farmers and encouraging everyone to support them.

The GFF programme in Ethiopia supports vocational training, organic farming, and entrepreneurship. At GFF, we encourage our young entrepreneurs to set up their businesses in organic farming. We follow all the principles of organic agriculture which is why it was important for us to celebrate Organic Day in Ethiopia on 22nd September, and raise awareness on organic agriculture with partners and local communities.

It was also an opportunity for government agencies (Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency, Ethiopia-Netherlands Seed Partnership) and partners to join us for the day (CARITAS, Stichting Wageningen Research Ethiopia, Pesticide Action Network (PAN) Ethiopia), restaurants and patisseries based in Addis.

The day was filled with fun activities: families and other participants planted aubergine seedlings, celery, green and red lettuce, tasted a delicious meal made by a local chef with the garden's organic vegetables (onions, tomatoes, carrots, cabbage, celery, rosemary, parsley, chill pepper, etc.). Participants took seeds home to plant in their gardens (Chinese leaves, green and red lettuce, aubergine, onions, chili pepper, and tomatoes). The BPC and GFF teams worked hand in hand to make the day a success.



Participants at the Open Day, 2023

The Participants of Open Day 2023
The BPC and GFF teams worked hand in hand to make the day a success.

7.2 Organise Networking Events to Promote Organic Farming

In 2023, GFF, BPC and the hub members have organised two major events to raise awareness:

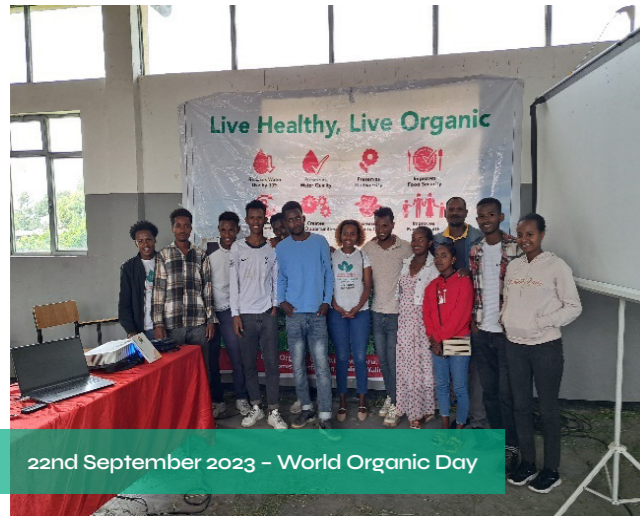
Open day and garden visit for customers and partners in April 2023

Vegetables grown in the Bishoftu Polytechnic College garden are grown organically and most of the production is sold through weekly baskets. Every week, customers enjoy a variety of organic, fresh and local produce. Ethiopia's climate being so generous, enables us to grow a variety of nutritious and healthy herbs and vegetables all year round. A weekly basket is usually composed of nine organic and delicious vegetables including Swiss chard, leek, parsley, lettuce, carrot, cauliflower, Habesha cabbage, beetroot, aubergine, okra, spinach, chili pepper. The orders are managed by the Green Flower Foundation's Farm Coordinator and BPC. Since June 2023, the deliveries have been handled by BPC.

In April 2023, we organised an open day at BPC, to get acquainted with our customers and give them an opportunity see where their weekly vegetables are grown.



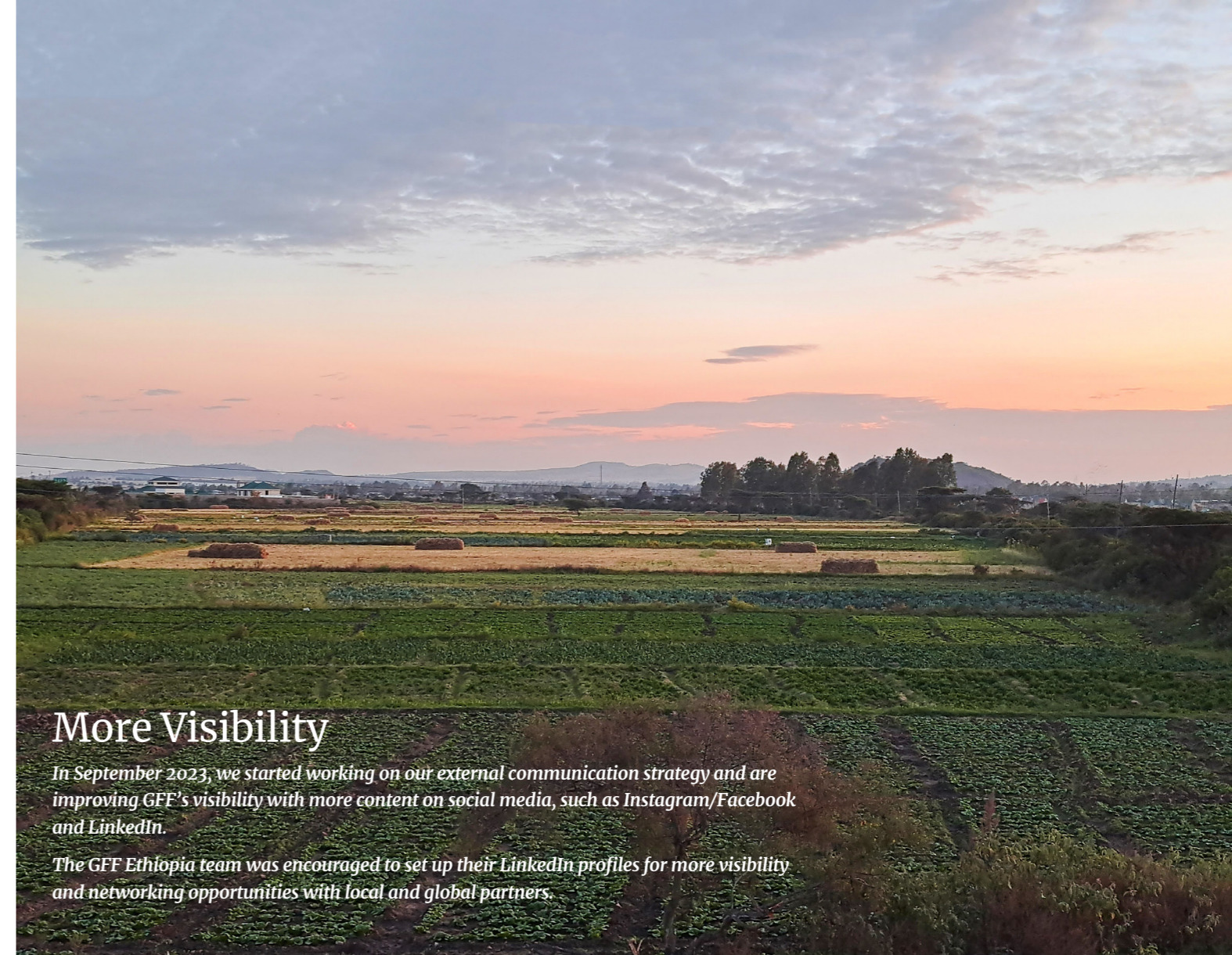
World Organic Day encourages everyone to support organic farming initiatives.



22nd September 2023 – World Organic Day



This event was an opportunity for hub members to share their experience and for GFF to present the manual to all participants, including local partners and authorities. All stakeholders welcomed the manual with great feedback.



More Visibility

In September 2023, we started working on our external communication strategy and are improving GFF's visibility with more content on social media, such as Instagram/Facebook and LinkedIn.

The GFF Ethiopia team was encouraged to set up their LinkedIn profiles for more visibility and networking opportunities with local and global partners.

8. SEED GARDEN

Good progress on the seed garden management and relationship with organisation partner.

8.1 Establishing and Maintaining a Seed Production Garden

Passion Furniture is a Dutch woodwork company based in Denkaka with a strong social corporate responsibility. They have approximately 50 staff members, including several workers with disabilities (mostly deaf and hard of hearing).

Since 2021, they've been lending us a 3,000 m2 plot that we call "Passion Garden". The garden is mostly used to grow vegetables to produce seeds and seedlings and has become an good source of organic seeds in the region.



Seeds, seedlings and compost at Passion Garden



The BPC garden, our hub members and local farmers benefit from the organic seeds and seedlings produced at Passion Garden



By the end of December 2023, we had 69 kg of seeds in stock, across 13 types of plants or vegetables such as beans, cabbage, carrot, aubergine, habesha kale, leek, lettuce, okra, pepper, squash, sunflower and tomato. The BPC garden, our hub members and local farmers benefit from the organic seeds produced in our garden (sunflower, green bean, carrot, lettuce, etc.).

At Passion garden, we also produce and store 4 types biofertilizers and 4 types of biopesticides. The products were made in September during a training session.⁸ At the end of 2023, we renewed our partnership with Passion's general manager, for access to the land, and maintaining the seed garden, as well as producing vegetables for Passion's workforce's daily lunches.



Bekele, one of the two gardeners at Passion Garden (employed by GFF) who look after the garden daily.

9.1 BPC's Garden Management

In 2019, GFF developed a 4,500 m² 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 organising 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 has extended its support to the college by contributing to garden management and the sales organisation. 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.



Gemechu and Waqjera preparing weekly vegetable baskets

These facilities include water pumps with solar panel system, irrigation system, greenhouses, preparation and storage areas, water tanks, expansion of production areas etc.

In 2023, the garden side was expanded from 4,500 m² to 5,300 m². While the upper garden, greenhouse, lath house and neat house remain the same, we've expanded the lower garden slightly, the student practice field has doubled (from 416 m² to 805 m²) and are now cultivating near the vermicompost and also next to the upper garden.

Since June 2023, the delivery of the vegetable baskets has been handled by BPC. We are still managing the orders but BPC are now collecting the payments.



9.2 BPC's Garden Vegetables & Honey Sales Optimisation

Thanks to the sale of the quality organic vegetables produced at BPC, the College is working towards generating a revenue in order to re-invest 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.

Note on new students at BPC: an educational reform has now made it compulsory for students to complete their coursework until grade 12 (instead of grade 10) in order to be eligible for college. For the last couple of years now, the absence of students has been the direct result. Luckily, we are observing a new cohort of students joining BPC since December 2023.

⁸ See section 4 for the list of the 8 recipes.

878 BASKETS
sold in 2023 (+16%)

Total Sales in 2023
417,904 Birr

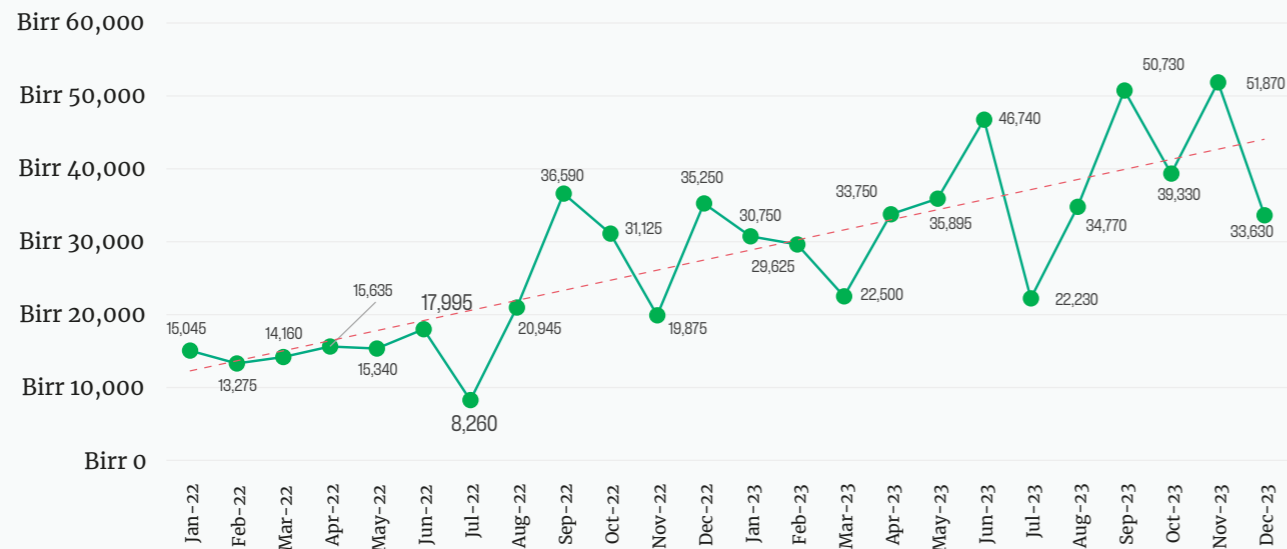
Based on our experience, we have noticed that the demand for organic products is rising in the country, from expatriates (especially embassies and international organisations), residents looking to improve their health, and companies that want to offer quality food to their clients (restaurants, hotels,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

In 2023, a total of 878 baskets were sold to customers in Addis, with an average of 73 baskets per month. Adding the sales of honey and sales of vegetables to BPC staff, the total sales registered in 2023 came to 417,904 Birr.

There is a good progression of BPC sales in the last two years. It is to be noted that the price of the basket has been increased over time: starting at 295 Birr in January 2022, to 375 Birr in September 2022 and up to 570 Birr in May 2023. This price increase did not impact the sales figures: 753 baskets were sold in 2022, and 878 baskets were sold in 2023 (+16%). We are continuing the analysis of the profit margins with the aim to ensure that the model is sustainable and self-sufficient. The sales strategy will likely evolve in 2024 to adapt to the market reality.

BPC Sales of Organic Vegetables Since January 2022



9.3 Managing Beehives at BPC 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 of honey production. In 2022 we were able to harvest 21kg of our honey.

GFF provided five modern beehives to BPC, with the purpose of training beekeepers at BPC. GFF is covering the costs for one BCP staff member to look after the hives. They are well managed. In 2022, we harvested 21 kg of honey and in 2023 the production was higher, with 52 kg of honey in total. There is high demand for organic honey and the honey pots are sold out in no time.

While the market price for honey is around 500-560 Birr/kg, the organic honey produced at BPC is sold at 1,000 Birr/kg and raw honeycomb at 700 Birr/kg.

Hence, with the continuous support of beekeeping experts, the management of a beehive in the BPC compound is going well and generating an income for BPC.



9.4 Beekeeping: Student Training

In 2022, GFF had successfully trained 21 beekeepers who completed the programme and supplied them with beekeeping equipment and two hives including colonies.

In 2023, the GFF team have been assisting 15 beekeepers who were trained at BPC (including 9 who they visited in person), by providing help during the harvest, providing guidance for honey sales, and giving sunflower seeds. It is a slow beginning that requires close follow-up. In 2023, three beekeepers harvested around 61 kg of honey which is a great result.

10. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Ongoing project management activities, dependant on the authorities' availability

10.1 Organise Project Steering Committee Meeting

In 2023, no steering committee meeting was organised with representatives from the Oromia Bureau of enterprise and industry development so far. Normally, we have two meetings a year, to discuss the project status and evolution and to operate in compliance with the government requirements. This is due to a lack of capacity at the Oromia Bureau who have not been making the arrangements.

10.2 Project Evaluation by the Authorities

In 2023, the organisation and external stakeholders conducted two evaluations of the project to measure progress towards project objectives and goals.



The first project evaluation by the government office (representatives of Bishoftu Finance and Economic Office, Job creation office and Agriculture office) was conducted in April 2023. They visited BPC garden, Passion garden and our hub members' plot at Denkaka.

Hub members liaised with the authorities to explain their journey and the development of their organic vegetables farming businesses. One of the main challenges hub members expressed is the lack of access to proper land and water. For the moment, GFF is renting the land, but hub members expect the government to help them access new land. In Ethiopia it is the government who assigns lands.

The feedback from the authorities was as follows:

They observed that organic agriculture is being promoted and it will lead to consumer behavioural change

Beneficiaries are committed to improving their production

The support provided by GFF to beneficiaries is positive and encouraging

GFF's initiative is integrated with partners and there's good collaboration

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.

In October 2023, there was a second visit, with the following remarks from the civil-society organisation monitoring team:

Supporting the student after graduation on Organic Horticulture and Enhancing the technical Capacity of the graduate is one of the promising activities we observed during our visit

Organising the graduates based on their interest (farming and shops) is one of the great contributions of the foundation that we observed during our visit and the main importance of the intervention that will enhance the livelihoods of the graduates.

Provision of the startup capitals that were observed during our visit is one of the positive approaches.

We observed the land rent for these young graduates is one of the good packages for sustaining the new business.

To have a consistency of the production of vegetables, the purchasing of a solar pump and generator is one of the promising achievements we observed during our visit.

Training 21 beekeepers and the provision of modern beehives is one of the best integrated agriculture activities we observed and making the beehives available in BPC compound for further expansion is a very important activity we observed.

Because of the smooth relationship of the Foundation with the different organisations they got 3000m² of land for seed production and for demonstration purposes is one of the good things that we observed during our visit to rural areas.

We observed the Foundation having a good collaboration with BPC and working on Organic Horticulture and creating a source of income for colleagues from the weekly sales of vegetables.

Minor weaknesses were observed:

- Farmers are not wearing the safety materials while working on their farms.
- Farmers are not supporting their vegetables by producing compost.
- We observed that the land size was not enough for the number of graduates.

GFF's Response:

- All hub members were equipped with an extensive list of safety materials including gardening clothes and tools. Some of them do use sensible clothing and tools, but not all of them. Our understanding of the situation is that there is a strong stigma against farmers. We are encouraging them to use the safety materials that were provided to them, and there is a shed on the plot, that can be used as a changing room and for the storage of tools.
- All hub members were trained to make compost at the Passion garden (close to Denkaka) and encouraged to have a compost on their plot too.
- The land used to be double the size and was reduced to suit the needs (the land was too large). We think that the current land size is adequate: 1 ha for 11 workers.

Challenges Encountered in 2023

There are three main internal challenges that are linked to the mentality of the hub members and the very weak economic environment with stretched resources for everybody, particularly regarding cash:

Our smallholder farmers have difficulties managing a cashflow, to link the day-to-day business to their business plan, plan forecasts, etc. They were coached on these topics, but it takes time to put it into place.

They were taught all the organic techniques; they have access to the GFF handbook, but it requires discipline and a lot of manual work. In Ethiopia, farming is not so popular. There is even a certain stigma associated with agriculture as a non-earner occupation full of drudgery.

Marketing and branding. As farmer's children or semi-rural youngsters, the hub members are far away from the potential organic vegetable clients in the cities of Addis Abeba and Bishoftu. They were trained in English, but connecting with the clientele is a real challenge.

External challenges such as a lack of access to land, water management, inflation and increase in prices for key resources such as fuel and transport are the results of the overall political, economic, and social situation in the country and the region.

Solutions and Opportunities

Providing space and group discussions for our hub members to plan their weekly activities with the guidance of GFF's farm coordinator.

GFF's team continuing to show market and employment opportunities, continuing to highlight the broader possibilities of the agriculture sector as a source of thriving occupations.

Conducting different market assessments to identify the potential buyers in both Bishoftu and Addis Ababa, contact and meet the customers.

Conducting different market assessments to identify the potential buyers in both Bishoftu and Addis Ababa, contact and meet the customers.

Continuing to provide training and coaching on site on organic horticulture and planification.

Continuing to liaise with authorities for access to land. Currently, GFF is renting land for the hub members until June 2024.

In order to irrigate their land, 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 pumps with more capacity, wind electricity. These green solutions are costly and we would need more funding for this equipment.

Inflation is at 35% in 2023; depreciation in the exchange rate of the Birr continued in 2023. Addressing the exchange rate problem as soon as possible is a key policy imperative.⁹ Access to finance mechanisms is needed to help small businesses launch or maintain their activities.

Working with the youth is at the centre of GFF's programme and there are opportunities to communicate on economic prospects to improve livelihoods, so long as there is an empowering environment.



Alemayehu and Samuel with GFF in-country manager (Left); Maseret, hand-weeding her cabbage plot (Right)

Conclusions and Recommendations

Young business owners require 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 are motivated, after 5 years of support, and giving 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 expand our farm, increase the sales of our organic vegetables to improve the health of many, teach more people about organic farming, and create job opportunities for others."

However, it is also true that taking on the responsibility of a business is not for everybody. Those graduates who left the project realised that they were too overwhelmed by the day-to-day challenges. Thanks to a solid training in our project 1, many of them got jobs in local or international companies.

Those who have continued with their businesses, are still learning to manage the production and the selling of organic vegetables with limited financial resources and with steady improvements in the various fields.

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 rely on 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 until June 2024, each group and its members must show their motivation, willingness, and interest to continue the programme, by providing regular activities and financial plans. Consistency of production, motivation, hard work, and ownership is fundamental to maximising the chances of success.

Working with youths is hard but rewarding – in 2023 they have shown progress and maturity. Those who are still on the programme after 5 years are determined to manage their organic farming business and improve their livelihoods.

In 2023, the Green Flower Foundation has continued to work jointly with different stakeholders and partners.

Achieving overnight success is 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 are on the road to achieving their goals.

⁹ https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/-files/2023-07/Quarterly%20economic%20profile_FINAL_July%202023.pdf

11. APPENDIX

Financial report:

Budget use, financial utilisation 2023

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