

# Press Release



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## USAID COMMERCIAL FARM SERVICE PROGRAM OPENS BISHOFTU FARM SERVICE CENTER

*The first of six Ethiopian-owned farm enterprises opens in Ethiopia*

***Bishoftu, Oromia Region, Ethiopia, December 17, 2013*** – The U.S. Government, through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Commercial Farm Service Program, held a ribbon cutting ceremony today for Bishoftu Farm Service Center (FSC) — the first of six such centers in Oromia Region. These private, retail supply and farm service businesses will serve as innovative models in Ethiopia and throughout Africa.

In addition to highly trained staff that provide services and training at each location, the FSCs provide a complete range of supplies such as quality seeds, fertilizers, plant protection products, and veterinary products; information; and marketing links for Ethiopian smallholders, allowing them to make the step from subsistence to commercial production.

“Having taken just one look at the supplies and services available at the Bishoftu FSC, it is clear to see how the model will achieve the overall program goal of improving smallholder productivity, food security and income through the development of sustainable, private-sector driven agricultural input supplies and services,” said USAID Ethiopia Mission Director Dennis Weller at the opening ceremony.

Implemented by CNFA, formerly the Citizens Network for Foreign Affairs, the program provides grants and training to rural entrepreneurs, both men and women, to create Ethiopian-owned retail farm supply and service centers. In addition to Bishoftu, FSCs will open in Ambo, Dodola, Fiche, Nekemte and Shashamane in the Oromia Region.

Following a competitive application process, each of the six Ethiopian-owned enterprises received a \$40,000 grant that requires a minimum of 1:1 match on behalf of the entrepreneur to ensure that the FSC owner is invested in the enterprise. Major Alemayehu A/Mariam, the owner and operator of the Bishoftu FSC, highlighted the fact that agriculture is one of the most important sectors in the country. He stated “Our professionals at the Bishoftu Farm Service Center look after the farmers and understand the heartbeat of each customer.”

The Commercial Farm Service Program is a two-year pilot activity of USAID supported by President Obama's Feed the Future Initiative. Through Feed the Future, USAID is helping vulnerable households participate in economic activities and generate demand for products. These activities bring jobs and income opportunities for rural households.

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