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“Filling gaps and removing traps
for sustainable resource management”

Complementing Sustainable Resource Management with Land Use Intensification to Overcome Poverty in Ethiopia

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Abstract

The research project “Ways out of extreme poverty, vulnerability and food insecurity” conducted by the Institute for Development and Peace of Duisburg University with funds from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Development and Cooperation (BMZ) aims to develop recommendations for development cooperation regarding how to reach extremely poor, vulnerable and food insecure people and to effectively improve their lives. The research approach is based on identifying good practice projects and assessing their outreach approaches, project activities, lessons learnt and above all their impact with regard to the reduction of food insecurity, vulnerability and poverty.

One of these good practice projects is situated in Ethiopia. Around Debre Tabor in the highlands of Northern Ethiopia, people have been food insecure and extremely poor, eking their living from 0.5 ha of land per family. They grew cereals and pulses and left the land bare for the rest of the year. The implementation of the LANN+ (Linking Agriculture and Natural Resource Management for Nutrition Security) approach of Welthungerhilfe enabled them to harvest three times a year on their same 0.5 ha with a diversification of crops including fruit and vegetable and a significant increase of productivity. They apply small scale irrigation as well as improved agronomic practices such as the efficient use of rain water and sustainable natural resource management. Nowadays, they not only manage to feed their families, but they are also able to send their children to school, improve their housing, participate in savings and credit groups and start petty trading and other income generating activities.

The research team found the Debre Tabor project to be one of the good practice examples to sustainably overcome hunger, malnutrition and poverty. Research results from Debre Tabor and other projects point to the conclusion that sustainable land use change and natural resource management on smallholder farms provide a safe and lasting way out of poverty and food insecurity.

Keywords: Land use intensification, natural resource management, northern Ethiopia