



Tropentag, September 20-22, 2023, hybrid conference
“Competing pathways for equitable food systems transformation:
Trade-offs and synergies”

The role of false banana (*Ensete ventricosum*) for sustainable agriculture in Ethiopia

MELESSE ZELEKE AGEGNEHU

Debre Markos University, Dept. of Agricultural Economics, Ethiopia

Abstract

Agriculture is the mainstay of the Ethiopian economy. According to the Ethiopian Development Report (2022), it accounts for 75 % of the workforce, 40 % of the country's GDP, and 80 % of foreign exchange. Smallholder farming which is mainly characterised by rain-fed, low-input, and low-output farming systems is the major producer of food in Ethiopia. Thus, food insecurity and poverty have largely resulted from inefficient smallholders' agricultural productivity due to the depletion of forests, depletion of soil quality, reduction of soil microorganisms, over-grazing, desertification (extensive drying of the land), etc. in the country. Therefore, agriculture has to be sustainable in the sense that food production should be environmentally friendly. Thus, promoting sustainable farming can mean equipping farmers with Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), such as the adoption of Agroforestry systems, planting food forests, planting covered crops, reducing or eliminating tillage, applying integrated pest management, avoiding soil erosion, managing the whole systems and landscapes, etc. In this regard, agro-forestry practices by false banana trees (*Ensete*), as one of the staple perennial crops, contribute a lot to soil fertility and agricultural productivity, and nutrition which in turn improve the food security in the countryside. The False banana is a native plant that is mostly grown in the less arid highlands of the southwestern region of Ethiopia. Nowadays, there is also potential for expanding the consumption of the crop in the northwestern side of the country. Even more, the production and consumption of false bananas play a prominent role in improving life on land (biodiversity), tackling the effects of climate change on agricultural production, and achieving zero hunger in the Ethiopian context. Therefore, this paper discusses the contributions, opportunities, and challenges of false banana production for smallholders in performing sustainable farming. It aims to provide information on both the benefits of false bananas for livelihood improvement, and its current situations for further adoption & dissemination of seedlings and planting trees in the whole areas of the country.

Keywords: Agro-forestry systems, enset, sustainable farming, zero-hunger