The challenge

Investments in child health in Ethiopia have contributed to a significant decline in the number of deaths of infants and young children over the past 20 years, but challenges still exist. Ethiopia ranks fifth globally in terms of stunting, while anaemia affects nearly 37% of children under five. In addition, livelihoods and diets in Ethiopia’s southern highlands are heavily dependent on cereal and root crops, which contain minimal protein and deplete soil nutrients. To address these challenges, the project aimed to identify approaches to increase farmer adoption of nutritious pulse varieties and encourage families to integrate pulses into their daily diets.

Innovations

The research led to the development of:

- A training approach to scale up the production of pulse crops that build soil health
- Nutrition education and radio broadcasts to inform farmers of the benefits of pulses
- A small business (micro-franchising) model to market and popularize pulse products

Key results

Increased farmer productivity and incomes:

- Chickpea yields increased from 2 to 2.5 tons/hectare and common bean yields from 1.2 to 1.5 tons/hectare
- Cereal and pulse crops were grown together to improve soil health and yields

Women were empowered through:

- Training in agronomic practices and the establishment of cooperatives to sell nutritious pulses and seeds
- Micro-franchises that employed and trained women in the production and marketing of pulse products
- Pulse-nutrition education, which benefited more than 23,000 women-headed farm households

Pulses were popularized by:

- A local processing company that developed blended cereal-pulse food products to be sold by the micro-franchises
- 3,810 pulse processing guides that were disseminated to households
- Policy promotion of a double cropping model, whereby farmers grow cereals and pulses on the same land

At a glance

| Radio broadcasts about pulse nutrition reached more than 246,500 households |
| 35,000 consumers introduced to pulse-rich food products by women’s micro-franchises |
| 52 villages benefitted from pulse cooking demonstrations |

Partners

- Canada: University of Saskatchewan
- Ethiopia: Hawassa University