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To Strive for Peace and Prosperity through
Sustainable Agricultural Development

Dear SATG Members:

Welcome to the new SATG
Quarterly Newsletter!!

A new initiative from the SATG
Office, Nairobi, the Quarterly
Newsletter is a way to reach out
to members, keeping you in the
loop about our current and
future activities.

We hope you find these
newsletters informative and
interesting.

About SATG:

SATG is a registered non-profit
association of Somali professionals
and friends of the country dedicat-
ed to assisting in the reconstruction
of Somalia and its agricultural herit-
age. SATG was established to pro-
vide sustainable home-grown solu-
tions to alleviate the rampant food
shortages caused by conflict and
the lack of agriculture and food
policies.

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Drought and Displacement-What is the Solution?

The international community and Somali nationals throughout the world have finally responded to the drought condition which has taken thousands of lives in Somalia. The heroic visit of the Turkish Prime Minister to Mogadishu marked a new era for millions of Somalis, particularly women and children, whose misery, has been ignored for so many years. As a result of the prime Minister's visit, many other foreign delegations from the Arab, Asia and European countries flocked into Mogadishu, promising an end to the human suffering and famine. Millions of dollars were raised, and food distribution centers were established in Mogadishu and in border cities where thousands of starving families marched. Sadly, thousands of Somali lives have perished in this migration.

As in many African countries, natural disasters such as drought, civil unrest and flooding create IDP camps; these camps, while serving an immediate need, create a new set of problems such as poor hygiene, malnutrition and poor health care. Local and international NGOs, distribute food, vouchers for food and, cash to the refugees; and while these are well-intentioned and life-saving interventions, the lack of a sustainable solution creates a vicious cycle of long- term dependency.

To overcome the impact of recurrent drought and to prevent future catastrophes, the international community, currently engaged in the agriculture sector development, needs to become more actively involved in forecasting agricultural production in Somalia and develop, in consultation with the government, the capacity not only to anticipate drought, but also to be prepared with a range of measures to mitigate the adverse impacts associated with future droughts. One of these measures would be the implementation of disaster preparedness plans such as national policies and programs for enhancing food production and distribution, and improving food security. Somalia is blessed with rich natural resources (fertile soils and favorable agriculture environments, livestock and fisheries) that are readily available and suitable for economic development. These resources must be tapped and developed properly in order to put an end to the recurrent food shortages.

The predictability of drought should be a wake-up call for interventions that encourage resilience rather than dependence on emergency assistance and food aid. SATG looks forward to working with partners to implement interventions that will introduce drought resistance crops, improve water conservation, develop infrastructure, enhance grain storage facilities, catalyze fodder production, and regulate livestock herd numbers and quality.



The donor press conference that was held in Nairobi on September 1st indicated a commitment to the development of long-term, sustainable solutions. We welcome this. But the plan is extremely ambitious and will likely take years to implement. In the meantime there are many small-scale, low-cost interventions that can be introduced immediately in order to jump start economic development. Some of these include seed system development with strong quality control measures. ♦

Towards Seed Sector Development—Follow Up

Developing a seed system is critical to the creation of agricultural value chains. Without a seed system, farmers in Somalia will continue to suffer from poor quality seed produced either locally or imported from neighboring countries without prior testing for adaptation to the local conditions. Every country in the world has its own regulatory system for seed importing, technology testing and rigorous quality control measures; but not Somalia. This regulatory environment needs to be developed in order to build a sustainable foundation for food production and to protect the interests of both farmers and consumers.

In a previous article posted in April of 2011 we discussed the move towards seed sector development. To jump start this initiative, the Somali Agriculture Technical Group (SATG) handed over 5kg of Filsan foundation seed to

Ahmed Dahir of Agrofafa, an agro-dealer from Awdal region in Somaliland. Since April, Agrofafa has managed to produce 1000kg of Filsan seed which is intended to be used as commercial seed. This quantity will allow planting of 100 ha during the next growing season (based on a seeding rate of 10 kg/ha). SATG, in consultation with the Somaliland Ministry of Agriculture, intends to monitor the purity and quality of Filsan seed produced prior to its release to the farming community.

Why Filsan seed? Filsan has a long history of research and extension work in Somalia. Varietal adaptation studies conducted over several years suggested that Filsan had larger seeds, and produced more yield per hectare than other varieties. Filsan consistently matured at least 10 days earlier than the

local variety, thus making it tolerant to drought and less risky to produce in short rainy seasons. Experimental results obtained from trials conducted in the late 1980s showed that the yield of Filsan, when intercropped with sorghum, was 58% higher than the local mungbean variety. Similarly, in a pure stand, Filsan produced yields significantly superior to the local variety.

Apart from Filsan seed, which is considered as an end product and readily available for commercial production, SATG plans to work closely with international and regional research institutions as well as seed companies to identify potential seed varieties. It also plans to work with local partners to test and disseminate newly identified sustainable technologies that address the needs of farmers and consumers. ♦



Women farmers in Afgoi district, Lower Shebelle, showing interest to produce seed of Filsan mungbean.

Barni, Challenging the Harsh Climate of Mudug

Mudug is situated in Puntland in the Northeastern portion of Somalia. This region is arid to semi-arid, with a warm climate and average daily temperatures ranging from 27 to 37 °C. The soil in the region is described as calcareous and stony. Rainfall is sparse and variable, with no single area receiving more than 100-250mm of rain annually. Water is, therefore, a major limiting factor in agricultural development. These climatic conditions favor pastoralism as the most effective use of land in most parts of the region.

The farming system in Mudug could be classified as a) irrigated farming and b) dry land farming. Most vegetable and fruit crops are grown under irrigation using shallow wells and springs. Watermelon and cowpeas are major crops in the dry land where recession farming is commonly practiced. Sorghum is also an important crop in the dry land farming. Since the early 1990's, the demographic of Mudug region has changed dramatically due to the civil unrest.

Many residents in the region have migrated from Southern Somalia and brought along some farming skills and tools to start small scale traditional farming. These farmers are now challenging the harsh and adverse climate of Mudug. Barni Jama, is one of them. She is a very ambitious business woman who started her business in commodity trading but then saw the possibility of farming and seed trading in the region. She overcame the climate challenge by utilizing her knowledge and skills in traditional farming. In her small farm, she grows fruit crops such lemon, grapefruit, papaya and mango, as well as vegetables, cereals and legume crops. Like most farmers in Mudug, Barni could do a much better farming if she is properly trained on crop production practices, proper use of inputs, pest control measures and post harvest technologies.

Most of the dry land farmers in the region are located on water streams that flood the farm lands and later used for

recession farming. As the seedlings emerge and crops continue to grow, farmers depend on the rain water for the completion of the crop life cycle. Horn Relief, with technical support from SATG, is conducting demonstration plots on vegetable crops and training the farmers on farming opportunities. These are conducted in various agro ecological zones in Mudug region.

There are no agro-dealer shops selling vegetable seeds, agricultural inputs or any other seeds in Galkaio where Barni has her farm. Most fruit and vegetable growers make their seed orders either from Mogadishu, Bosasso or Ethiopia. Some farmers get free seed varieties from NGOs, but these have not been tested for suitability. The region's agricultural development is almost non-existent, but motivated farmers like Barni, who are actively seeking agricultural knowledge, tools and training, are changing the future of farming in Mudug. ♦



Tomato production in the Mudug region. Bosaso is a big market for vegetable crops.