

## The role of institutions in delivering the dual agenda of conservation and food security: the case of Ethiopia

Gemedo Dalle (PhD)

Ethiopia is a country of great geographical and climatic diversity, which has given rise to many and varied ecological systems. The Country is center of origin and diversity for many biological resources including agricultural biodiversity (agrobiodiversity). Agricultural biodiversity is the outcome of the interactions among genetic resources, the environment and the management systems and practices used by farmers. Farmers' varieties conserved in national gene bank and community seed banks play a pivotal role in increasing agricultural production and productivity in Ethiopia. For example, more than 50 released high yielding varieties by national research institutions were obtained from farmers' varieties conserved at national gene bank. Furthermore, genetic diversity of agricultural biodiversity provides species with the ability to adapt to changing environment and evolve, by increasing their tolerance to frost, high temperature, drought and water-logging, as well as their resistance to particular diseases, pests and parasites. Ensuring food security through increasing productivity and conservation of biodiversity in general and agrobiodiversity in particular have never been an easy task in the country. However, the Ethiopian government has put in place institutions to address the production and conservation agendas. The Federal Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute (EBI) is nationally mandated for the implementation of the three objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (ITPGRFA) as well as the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable benefit Sharing Arising from their Utilization. These international and corresponding domestic legislations are implemented in a mutual supportive manner. After ratifying the CBD and ITPGRFA in 1994 and 2003, respectively, Ethiopia has issued Access to Genetic Resources and Community Knowledge and Community Rights Proclamation (No.482/2006) and Regulation (No.169/2009). For effective implementation of these legislations and also to ensure food security, we have established many community seed banks that promote on farm conservation of farmers' varieties. In the process, we learnt that ensuring food security and biodiversity conservation are not contradictory to each other rather supportive but implementation arrangements and harmonization of existing legislations are critical.