

Youth artisans play key role in fabrication of improved grain storage metals silos in Ethiopia

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Five years ago, four young artisans from the Ethiopian South Achefer district, Durbete established a youth group with the support of an FAO Ethiopia-led project that aims to build the capacity of farmers and extension workers to reduce post-harvest food losses. The four young men came from rural communities and, at the time, were unemployed, despite having completed vocational training in metalwork engineering.

The members of the artisan group were selected by the Amhara regional state Bureau of Agriculture along a set of criteria, which included showing an interest and the willingness to serve the community, experience in tin-smithing and a willingness to establish their own workshop.

The group was trained by the Melkasa Research Institute with the financial support of the project. The training focused on how to fabricate and manage grain storage containers (metal silos). The project later provided them tools and inputs to produce their own metal silos. In addition, the local government supported the artisans with a workshop site, and the local district office of agriculture supported them with providing quality assurance before distributing/selling of the metal silos to smallholder farmers.

“During the first round, we made 67 metal silos, each of which had a capacity of six quintals (600 kg). The project purchased and distributed them to farmers, and during the second round we received a loan of 60 000 ETB (approximately USD 2’200), which we used to buy materials to make 138 metal silos. These were then distributed to farmers through the project”, the young men explained.

The demand for the metal silos has been growing gradually, as farmers learn about the benefits of these silos. The artisans also re-designed the storage containers to increase their capacity to eight and ten quintals, i.e. respectively 800kg and 1 ton, to match specific farmer needs. In total, the group has produced and sold 46 new metals silos, ordered by the local farmers directly.

Reducing Food Losses through Improved Post-Harvest Management in Ethiopia

A project implemented by FAO Ethiopia, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), and financed by the Swiss Development and Cooperation (SDC). The project aims to support the Government of Ethiopia in strengthening and promoting improved postharvest management and household storage technologies in order to reduce postharvest losses of major grains.



Youth artisans in Dehub Achefer Woreda, Amhara region, Ethiopia © Tamiru Legesse

Knowledge diffusion has also been a part of their activities, as the four artisans have shared what they learned from their training and the benefits of metal silos during farmer meetings and trade shows. These events have also helped them to promote their products. For instance, they participated in a “Feed the Future” agriculture fair show, where they met 40 new farmers interested in ordering a silo.

Since their debuts, their business has grown and diversified: “We have purchased more tools to expand our products to meet other local needs, including flour bags and other metal works. Our capital is growing gradually to nearly 400 000 ETB (USD 14’545)”. However, increasing prices of sheet metal makes low-cost metal silos a challenge. Facilitated agricultural loan schemes could increase the access to this technology to farmers.

Overall, this experience has been a **success story** for these young metalworkers:

“By doing our job we are doubly satisfied. This project gave us employment opportunities. We are happy that we work in our own community. We invest our time and skills into our business, which we dream of transforming into a manufacturing industry. On the other hand, we learned new skills that are part of the solution to a local problem. We are happy to contribute towards the benefit of our own community. We are encouraged by the feedback we received. Many farmers tell us that metal silos have prevented grain loss and reduced the burden on women.”



A youth group makes an improved grain storage for local community in Achefer Woreda, Amhara region, Ethiopia. © Aresawum