

The Vetiver Man of Tulube



September 2009

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Mr. Gezahegn Gudeta Shana is a 42 years old farmer in Tulube Kebele/Village of Mettu Wereda/District, Illuababor Zone of Oromia Regional State. He married W/ro Bizunesh Bekele and they have 5 sons. Their youngest son is a 10th grade student.



Gezahegn used to help his father, Gudeta, in farming when he was young and up to completing his 9th grade education. He began full time farming in 1985 right after his father's death.

According to Gezahegn he was first trained in the use of Vetiver Grass (*Chrysopogon Zizanioides*) for SWC in 2005 by Mr. Tilahun Semu, field Project Coordinator of Ethio-Wetlands & NRA based in Mettu Wereda.

Right after his exposure to the vetiver system with the help of Development Agents (Das) assigned in his village, he prepared 3,570 meters of Fanya juu terrace in his farmland and planted two pickups height vehicle load of vetiver tillers. Right now (up to Sept. 2009) his 7 hectares of farmland are covered with 4,370 meters of green and beautiful vetiver hedgerows. The 800 meters of vetiver tillers planted this year (2009) are directly planted on farmland without making Fanya juu terraces hence saving labor and time.

Asked as to what benefits he got from planting vetiver, Gezahegn replied that moisture and soil are well conserved due to vetiver hedgerows and got more than 50% yield increment of maize. Coupled with good cultural practices such

as row planting and weeding and proper application of fertilizers (DAP & UREA) Gezahegn have got a yield of 8.7 to 10 tons/ha of maize which is 4.5times above average of 2 tons/ha in Mettu Wereda. He further reiterated that apart from SWC he uses vetiver leaves for forage, thatching of cattle sheds and grain stores, and as ornamentals.

On the other hand Gezahegn has started generating income from sales of vetiver clumps for planting material for the 1st time. He earned Birr 5,000 (USD 400) this year by splitting 2,500 meters of vetiver hedgerows into 5,000 clumps. He confidently stated that he has more than enough vetiver planting materials to sell and generate more income in the years to come.



Due to the quality of his farm attributed to vetiver hedgerows he is multiplying improved composite maize variety on 3.5 ha of his farm on contract bases for Illuababor Agriculture and Rural Development Office (ARDO).



Farmer Gezahegn Gudeta has played a role model in scaling out the practice of using vetiver grass in his village in particular and Mettu Wereda and other

parts of Ethiopia in general through training other farmers and sharing his experiences.

On top of his farming activities, supported by his wife & children, Gezahegn is currently serving his community in the capacity of Tulube Watershed Management Committee member and Chairperson of Tulube Farmers Cooperative, and Sor-Gaba Farmers Cooperative Union. The union is the apex of 56 cooperatives in 12 Weredas of Illuababor Administrative Zone.

Farmer Gezahegn was asked as to what his future ambition is. He said that he wants to have TV and DVD sets, to get national and international information. However, he could not afford to bring electric power line to his residence. Therefore, he appealed to get support for household solar power.



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