



# SUCCESS STORY - 04

## Ato Dessalew: a Progressive and Early Adopter Farmer

**USAID/AMAREW watershed management intervention brought empowerment of watershed communities towards sustainable management of land & water resources**



Photo: AMAREW Project

*Ato Dessalew, is an innovative farmer, who has protected his farm land with bench terraces, rehabilitated a 6m deep and 4m wide gully adjacent to his farm and constructed a dome-shaped water harvesting structure and used the collected water to grow diverse crops including fruits like banana, papaya, mango, and several other vegetables, which beyond arresting soil erosion has improved his household income.*

Ato Dessalew is a 35 years old farmer at the Lenche Dima watershed. He is married and has two children. He is one of the early adopters of new technologies that the AMAREW project promotes. His land holding size is about half a hectare converted to a well managed bench terraces with elephant and Vetiver grasses, Sesbania, Pigeon pea planted on bunds for forage production and bund stabilization. He has rehabilitated a gully adjacent to his farm by planting eucalyptus trees. Every year he sells eucalyptus poles from the rehabilitated gully and earns 500 Birr (60 US \$).

Dessalew was the first farmer in the community to show interest in the construction of dome-shaped water-harvesting structure. He selected the site for the tank to be at the upper bench of his plot so that he could water his plants using gravity flow. Since the construction of the tank, he has planted more than 20 improved banana seedlings, over 50 fruit trees of mango, avocado, orange, and papaya, as well as vegetables (garlic, peppers, sweet potato, and pumpkin). He has planted adequate forage grass and trees in addition to his eucalyptus wood lot on the rehabilitated gully. His wife is also engaged in growing vegetables such as pepper, onion, and cabbage through supplementary irrigation. Additionally she raises improved chickens. She has been trained in improved stove production and home management.

Ato Dessalew said, “When I began constructing the water tank, I started it half-heartedly. The project took my colleagues and me to visit a tank already in use. During that visit, for the first time in my life, I saw sweet potato, carrot, and beetroot grown in an area smaller than mine. I volunteered right there to complete the well construction and it didn’t take me a week to complete the digging. Now I have every thing in my own compound. My wife is engaged in vegetable production and has created cash income from the sale of these products. We have now started eating vegetables thanks to the training that my wife got through the Project’s support. My cattle are no more taken long distance in search of water after the construction of the tank. I have noted that my neighbors are showing increasing interest on what I do. One of my neighbors has already constructed a water tank similar to mine. This is how farmers learn. Ato Dessalew said, “A farmer wants to see not to hear”.