

Evaluation summary

Summary of the final evaluation of the "Resilience of coffee smallholder farmers in Ethiopia through agroforestry in Ethiopia", implemented by PUR between 2019 and 2024.

Country: **Ethiopia**

Theme: Agroforestry / Resilience

Evaluator: **SalvaTerra**
Evaluation date: **July 2024**

FFEM support key data

Project name: Resilience of smallholder coffee farmers through agroforestry in Ethiopia

Project number: CET1091

Amount of FFEM funding: €499,824

Grant date: 2019

Duration: 5 years

Context

The Sidama region, located in the highlands of southern Ethiopia, is renowned for its coffee production, which is the main livelihood of smallholder farmers. Traditionally grown in agroforestry systems, coffee now faces major challenges, including reduced tree cover due to agricultural expansion and unregulated timber exploitation. Climate change, characterised by significant variations in temperature and rainfall, is affecting production by weakening trees and encouraging pests and diseases. Farmers also face additional difficulties such as land fragmentation, declining soil fertility and tensions over water resources. Diversifying incomes, renewing coffee plantations and replanting shade trees are key strategies to build community resilience.

Participants and operating procedures

PUR is a certified B Corp with the missions to develop Nature-Based Solutions Projects within Agricultural Landscapes. PUR has been working in the Sidama region since 2015.

The project is 30% funded by the FFEM via the « Facilité d'innovation pour le secteur privé » (FISP-CLIMAT).



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Objectives

The Project aims to i) Regenerate the degraded ecosystems of the Sidama region and preserve its natural resources, ii) Improve the living conditions of producers and local communities by improving their resilience to the impacts of climate change, iii) Strengthen producer organizations and empower them in the development of responsible and sustainable agricultural practices.

Specific objectives through FFEM funding:

- Support the development of activities complementary to agroforestry through the development of a new income diversification activity in all the Sidama project cooperatives: beekeeping.
- Ensuring the long-term sustainability of the project's benefits and preparing an exit strategy

Performance assessment

Relevance

The project aims to build the resilience of coffee farmers and restore degraded land in the Sidama region through long-term private sector financing, integrating proven practices such as agroforestry and innovative activities such as beekeeping and environmental education. It addresses technical, social and organisational dimensions, while incorporating a forward-looking long-term strategy to ensure sustainable impact. However, it could have benefited from specific capacity building activities for cooperatives.

Coherence

The project supports Ethiopia's national climate and economic goals by promoting carbon sequestration, sustainable land management and growth in the coffee sector, although government actors remain unfamiliar with its activities. Local authorities value its impact, particularly on beekeeping, and have taken steps to complement it with new initiatives and capacity-building efforts. Greater collaboration with international agencies working in the same region could improve resource efficiency and knowledge sharing.

Effectiveness

70 beekeepers have been trained and equipped, increasing honey production. Women's participation is still limited and the establishment of communal apiaries is incomplete due to the lack of forage resources on communal land. Community engagement through Forum Theatre reached over 41,000 people, while school workshops and field visits raised environmental awareness among students, with growing interest reflected in increased demand for demonstration plots to support hands-on learning. Progress includes the establishment of eight community nurseries and workshops on cooperative autonomy and income diversification, although long term strategies and sustainable models need further development.

Efficiency

A strong local presence and reliance on motivated, well-integrated staff ensured effective project implementation and trust building, although high turnover in the supervision team created challenges in monitoring and reporting. The project adapted its interventions to emerging needs and mobilised high quality expertise, but the management of subcontractors increased the administrative burden. While PUR's monitoring practices were robust, driven by private sector reporting and carbon certification targets, gaps in access to detailed indicators, interim evaluations, etc. limited a comprehensive assessment of progress.

Impact

Beekeeping initiatives increased local ownership and became a first source of income for some farmers, although challenges remain in terms of land availability and refining the business model. Forum theatre and school activities effectively engaged communities and youth in environmental protection. Tree nurseries improved biodiversity and farmers' self-sufficiency, while contributing to the professionalisation of the sector. Efforts to build autonomy and cooperative capacity are promising, but require clearer objectives and stronger post-project strategies to ensure lasting impact.

Viability/sustainability

The project's flexibility, strong field presence and skilled staff have been key to its long-term success, allowing it to adapt effectively. However, limited coordination with regional and national partners has hindered replication. Stronger institutional partnerships are needed for scaling up and sustainability.

Added value of FFEM support

FFEM's support has significantly extended the project's reach and promoted collective action for environmental conservation. The funding has enabled income diversification, allowing farmers to progress from aid dependency to self-sufficiency. FFEM's flexibility in funding and co-designing activities with local communities has been a major advantage.

Recommendations & lessons learned

Based on the results of the assessment, it is recommended to:

Develop larger-scale partnerships: Collaborate with regional and national state institutions to increase government visibility and support, facilitating the broader adoption of good practices and influencing local policies. Foster collaboration with international entities to share experiences, especially in livelihood initiatives, leveraging expertise to optimize resources and enhance collective impact.

Keep promoting women's empowerment across activities: Increase women's roles in cooperatives and leadership by addressing cultural barriers and implementing targeted empowerment initiatives.

Strengthen cooperative capacity and further refine exit strategies: Enhance cooperatives' skills in governance, financial management, and market strategies by applying lessons from other PUR projects and sectors. Further refine the exit strategies with the cooperatives and to move towards clear objectives, in terms of time and level of achievement. This involves refining the understanding of local and regional markets to develop more precise and effective business strategies, particularly for honey. Focus on helping cooperatives better assimilate business models and adapt them through participatory approaches.

Scale-up environmental education: Focus on sustainable models like school demonstration plots and teacher training while integrating activities into broader funding programs such as tree planting, GAP, etc. Mobilise public funds more widely, particularly in projects where certain activities are difficult to finance by PUR clients, but meet a real need on the ground.

On FFEM's part, adapt financing mechanisms for the private sector: Mixed financing is the best response to the challenges of agricultural development, and that it is particularly relevant and effective in supporting the agro-ecological transition of food systems. Simplifying procedures and strengthen private sector understanding of contractual obligations, while enabling flexibility and accountability through revised verification methods could facilitate the establishment of future partnerships. Conversely, the private sector must take account of the transparency and accountability requirements underpinning public funding.