

PREFACE

This supplementary issue of the Ethiopian Journal of Biological Sciences is dedicated to the International Workshop on “enset (*Ensete ventricosum*) for Sustainable Development: Current research trends, gaps and future direction for a coordinated multidisciplinary approach in Ethiopia” that was held between Oct 17 and 18, 2016 at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Introduction - Enset (*Ensete ventricosum*) is a multipurpose crop providing a range of services such as food, feed, medicine, ritual, fiber and other ecological services such as soil protection and water infiltration. The different uses are attributed to the existence of different enset varieties developed by farmers. Although enset is distributed in the wild throughout much of central, eastern and southern Africa, it has only been domesticated and cultivated in Ethiopia with its highly developed farming system. It is also known that currently of the total number of the Ethiopian population estimated to be about 100 million, about one-fifth of which about 20 million depend on this crop mainly in the Southern Region and adjoining areas in Oromia and Gambella Regions. Despite the important attributes of the crop such as the harvesting throughout the year, storage over a long period, high yield per unit area and the enset system having a high human carrying capacity compared to cereal growing regions, the enset agriculture was deprived of the research attention it deserved compared to cereal agriculture.

Cognizant of workshops held in the past, the aim of the workshop was to bring together enset researchers from both the natural and social sciences in order to capture the wealth of vital information from various research areas carried out in the past four to five decades, identify the research gaps in their areas of expertise and suggest the way forward.

During the workshop, there were 47 participants from the Ministry of Agriculture (at the federal and regional levels), Ministry of Science and Technology, stakeholders representing policy makers; Universities (Addis Ababa, Arba Minch, Haramaya, Hawassa, Wolayita, Wolkite in Ethiopia, the University of Wageningen, the Netherlands and Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden), the Ethiopian Biodiversity Institute, Southern Agriculture Research Institute); and other invited guests.

Twenty two papers were presented and of which 12 are published in this supplementary issue. These papers presented wealth of information available from research carried out in the last 40 years and also presented challenges

and gaps. Over all it was acknowledged that the research that has been going on mainly in natural science disciplines have been carried out largely in isolation.

Science-Policy Interface - One of the major problems in Ethiopia and elsewhere in developing countries is the lack of communication between researchers and policy makers and hence the direct impact of research results on policy is rare and far in between. Thus, there is a need to work a mechanism to have a workable science-policy interface. Research results on enset have not made a major impact on policy so as to make enset research high on the research agenda both at the national and regional levels.

At the end of the workshop participants agreed on the need:

to have a multidisciplinary approach in order to develop a sustainable future for enset system and the livelihood of communities depending on it; towards developing a science-policy interface where research results influence policy through effective communication; for policy makers to use research results to make informed decisions in promoting enset as one of the important indigenous crops and to take steps to recognize/identify a Centre of Excellence on Enset in Eastern Africa in general and in Ethiopia in particular in a similar way as there is Centre of Excellence on Yam Research in West Africa; to follow the implementation of the various points indicated in the Addis Ababa declaration on enset that is included at the end of this supplementary volume.

Sebsebe Demissew, National Herbarium, Department of Plant Biology and Biodiversity Management, College of Natural Sciences, P.O. Box 3434, Addis Ababa Ethiopia: e-mail: sebseb.demissew@gmail.com

Further information is available from: <http://enset-project.org/>