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USDA Assists in the Development of Ethiopia's Soy-Food Industry

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Oilseeds and Products

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Report Highlights:

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently hosted five Ethiopian food companies on a two-day mission to Kampala to learn from a leading Ugandan food processor about producing and marketing soybean-based food products, like soy milk and soy yogurt. USDA is assisting the local food industry to incorporate more soy products into the local diet, which will provide Ethiopian consumers with an alternative protein source. This is a CSSF-supported activity.

Building Demand for Soy-Foods One Step at a Time:

Ethiopia is home to one of the world's largest livestock herds, but this abundance ironically does not translate into inexpensive prices for meat, poultry, eggs and milk. In fact, many Ethiopians cannot consistently eat these protein-rich foods because they simply lie outside their economic grasp. In addition, because of religious reasons, a little more than 40 percent of the country's 100 million people forgo eating livestock products more than 250 days out of the year. All this adds up to a protein-deficient diet for many Ethiopians, which is one of the factors behind the nation's high rates of malnutrition, especially among women and children.

Incorporating soybean-based foods into consumers' diets is considered to be one way to increase protein consumption and improve nutrition. Recognizing both the dietary and economic benefits that could come from soy foods and beverages, several Ethiopian companies have started using soy ingredients in making infant cereal. Parents have expressed satisfaction with the various cereal product lines as they offer them a safe and convenient way to provide their young children with a more nutritious and balanced diet.

In order to increase demand and broaden the penetration of soy foods in the local diet, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is working with the local industry to introduce other soy-based products into the Ethiopian marketplace. As one example, USDA recently hosted a delegation made up of several Ethiopian food companies on a two-day trip to Kampala where they toured Sesaco Limited, a Ugandan food processor that makes soymilk, yogurt, coffee substitute and other soy-containing products.

While touring the facility, the Ethiopian delegation learned about Sesaco's business management practices, production and packaging processes, product development, and sampled various products. They were impressed with Sesaco's operation and came away with a few ideas to apply in their respective businesses back in Ethiopia. Before leaving, the group visited Sesaco's company store where they purchased bags of soy snack foods and soy spread to use as an example in developing their own products.

Afterward, the group visited a street kitchen where they participated in a Sesaco-organized street cooking demonstration that was intended to familiarize Ugandan consumers on how to use texturized soy protein, a meat substitute, in traditional dishes. They joined the Ugandan participants in sampling the prepared food. All were impressed by the food's flavor and were unable to distinguish the texturized soy protein from real meat.

With the growing consumer demand for protein and the need for better nutrition, the Ethiopian food industry is expected to use some of their experiences gleaned from their trip to Uganda and begin experimenting to see what soy foods would be suitable for the Ethiopian market. In the meantime, given Ethiopia's traditional coffee culture, one of the soy products that appears to be the most immediately

promising is soy milk because it can be used instead of cow's milk to make various products, including the Ethiopian consumer-favorite macchiato.



Ethiopian delegation with owner of Sesaco



Factory Tour Photos

