

***Farmer Guta Gudisa: supported by numerous public and private partners***  
*An Ethiopian farmer from the Jeldu Woreda (district) of the Oromia region*  
*Contributed by Dr. Berga Lemaga, CIP and*  
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**Public and Private Partners:** Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) provided seed, training & advertising; International Potato Center (CIP) provided training, technologies & genetic resources to EIAR. Bureau of Agriculture provided seed qualification certification. NGOs including World Vision purchased his seed potatoes; Dutch company purchased his seed.

### **1. Collaboration and institutional support for a new potato entrepreneur**

Farmer Guta Gudisa is a 9<sup>th</sup> grade dropout that decided to become a potato farmer. He got seed potato of improved varieties, training on production and postharvest management and potato production business plan from Holetta Agricultural Research Center of the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) and CIP. He planted the small amount of improved seed he got from EIAR on a 20m x 20m plot. He was impressed with the results and borrowed money from individuals in his area at a high unofficial interest rate to rent land to expand potato production. Now he grows up to 22 ha of potato per season (usually there are two seasons), mostly for seed production but also produces ware potatoes as well. In addition to potato production, he is engaged in other businesses including, dairy production from exotic cows he bought from EIAR, eucalyptus trees, transport industry giving transport services using the three trucks he has, grain mills, etc. all initially financed by proceeds from potato.

Guta provides employment for the communities there. He has 18 permanent and 60 casual laborers during peak seasons. Moreover, he is planning to construct a school and a hotel, both of which will serve the community a great deal.

### **2. Quality & healthy planting material**

Guta produces up to 22 ha of seed potato following the quality declared seed system. This was developed by CIP and EIAR and is recognized as a progressive method of producing superior quality seed potatoes. His potato fields are supervised two times during growth and one time in diffused light store by trained inspectors from regulatory body of the Bureau of agriculture and natural resources. Training is given to these inspectors by EIAR and CIP to give them specific knowledge on inspection of seed potato fields. If Guta does not get a clearance indicating that the crop meets the QDS standards, he cannot sell his harvest for seed. He is one of the major sources of quality seed for farmers around his area, but also from different parts of the country, some coming from as far as over 700 km.



*Guta Gudisa shows green sprouted seed potatoes stored in one of his Diffuse Light Storages.*

### **3. Farm management & crop production techniques**

Guta practices crop rotation by renting land from others. He uses the recommended spacing and applies recommended fertilizer rates. His crops are regularly monitored by him and others who have sufficient knowledge of potato production. Because of his good farm management skills and cropping techniques, he gets yields up to 40 t/ha in 120 days. During the main rain season, late blight becomes his major problem, although the two varieties (Gudene and Belete) resist the fungus to some extent. He uses a systemic fungicide Ridomil gold to control late blight (in the opinion of experts, he sprays more than needed and a continuous use of systemic fungicide may lead to metalaxyl resistance). He is willing to take a refresher course to reduce the frequency of spraying and alternate chemicals. He is open to all this and highly appreciates trainings given by the government and CIP.

### **4. Sustainable production and storage of potatoes**

Guta produces two potato crops a year. The 2 seasons are: the short rains (February to May) and long rains (June to September) under rain-fed conditions. This permits him to have fresh potatoes for most of the year. He has several Diffused Light Stores (DLS) in which his seed potatoes are stored until sold or planted by himself. With his excellent yields and good quality, his income is good. He sells seed potatoes at about US\$ 30/100 kg and ware potato at about US\$17/100 kg. Moreover, his training on GAP and seed management enables him to get high yields making his potato production sustainable. Guta says that his life is intertwined with that of potato and says even if the price of 100 kg potato drops to less than US\$ 1, he wouldn't quit potato production.



*Guta Gudisa in a excellent field of potatoes.*

## **5. Creating added value (packaging, excellent appropriate storage, transportation)**

Guta does not sell seed potato at harvest but adds value through storing tubers in DLS until they produce multiple, short, green and sturdy sprouts that do not break off during transportation and planting. Buyers know that seed potatoes with multiple sprouts produce more yield and do not hesitate to pay more. He has three trucks that have a carrying capacity of 35 tons permitting him to deliver the seed and ware potato he sells, attracting more clients.

## **6. Marketing**

Since the district Jeldu, where Guta lives has other seed producers, it is known to many as a seed potato source. Public organizations, NGOS (national and international), private sector and individual farmers from different parts of the country come to purchase seed from him. Initially buyers are recommended by the research center to go to Jeldu, as seed producers there follow the QDS requirements to produce quality seed. Moreover, Holleta once advertised the seed potato of Guta and another farmer, Tesfaye, on the Solagrow website and on most-read newspaper called Ethiopian Reporter. After initial connection, the buyers started giving his address to others and Guta himself collected addresses of potential buyers and he calls them up to tell them that he has seed potatoes to sell. This way he sold hundreds of tons of seed potatoes to NGOs, including World Vision for their projects. Last year, he sold about 36 tons of seed potato of the Gudene variety to Senselet (meaning Chain in Amharic, major Ethiopian Language) a Dutch-owned processing Firm. Guta takes his ware potato to the major horticultural products selling open market in Addis Ababa on his own trucks. He transacts in three main ways: through bank cash transfers, checks and cash.

Guta also serves his community by providing milling serves for cereals, avoiding long distance travels to get the services and availing dairy products for sale. His envisaged school and hotel project will create a lot of employment for the community, particularly the youth.