In Ethiopia, 4.5 million smallholder farmers grow barley, with significant yields in the world.

One senior official stated that the alignment workshops and training in clusters has been critical in enabling officials to respond through a value chain alliance (an agreement across the players indicating roles and responsibilities) to influence systems changes - create market linkages, set targets for which produce is required, contracts set in place which give certainty as to who needs the malt barley and which quantities - so farmers can plan for this, co-operatives and key government agencies can provide the required support, banks are willing to finance this, and manufacturers can plan for the malt barley.

Synergos, together with other players, facilitated a cluster workshop (one of 14) with key role players to play in the different parts of the malt barley value chain in Oromia - researchers, technical experts, traders, farmers, finance people, manufacturers and others.

One of the key supply problems was an ineffective seed supply system, which resulted in farmers re-using seed and mixing seed from different sources. Technical and research assistance was mobilised, and seed producer co-operatives were established.

Through changes in the system, farmers are accessing more finance, are getting better support from co-operatives, are being exposed to and implementing innovative approaches to fertilising and planting and are getting access to greater quantities of higher quality seed.

As Synergos, we facilitated processes in these clusters to develop the members’ willingness, understanding and skills to collaborate and build inclusive partnerships (OUTCOME 2).

Some of the members had attended the alignment workshops and previously run and had developed the competence to play a bridging leadership role (OUTCOME 1). They really supported the process.

The cluster workshop identified bottlenecks, established solutions and focused on a coordinated response through a value chain alliance (an agreement across the players indicating roles and responsibilities) to create market linkages, set targets for which produce is required, contracts set in place which give certainty as to who needs the malt barley and which quantities - so farmers can plan for this, co-operatives and key government agencies can provide the required support, banks are willing to finance this, and manufacturers can plan for the malt barley.

There are currently five breweries in the country and local production of barley meets only around 40 per cent of their demand. With more breweries in the pipeline, and as incomes improve among Ethiopia’s 80-million-strong population, contract farming could become a major industry in the future, officials say. “In the coming few years existing breweries will need about 80,000 to 100,000 tonnes of malt annually, whereas, the local supply is by far less than half of this demand,” says Dr Mebratu Meles, Ethiopia’s Industry minister. "The breweries go into contract with individuals through farmers’ co-operatives and unions. Those contracted to Mela Brewery receive training and credit to access improved quality barley seed varieties."

Malting barley is a key ingredient in beer production – both consumption, and particularly consumption of bottled beer (which uses barley rather than sorghum) is growing dramatically.

Established private malt barley brewers are increasing consumption, and particularly consumption of bottled beer (which uses barley rather than sorghum) is growing dramatically.

IN December 2014, Mela Also Breweries announced, in line with the Ethiopian government’s stance in favour of import substitution, that it will source 100% of its malt barley needs in Ethiopia locally in time for its 50th Anniversary, by the end of 2017.

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One senior official stated that the alignment workshops and training in clusters has been critical in enabling officials to learn how to “deal with people, manage people and be more efficient”… the training “improved our work – the way people deal with the other’s roles we changed our approaches to fertilising and training in clusters has been critical in enabling officials to respond through a value chain alliance (an agreement across the players indicating roles and responsibilities) to influence systems changes - create market linkages, set targets for which produce is required, contracts set in place which give certainty as to who needs the malt barley and which quantities - so farmers can plan for this, co-operatives and key government agencies can provide the required support, banks are willing to finance this, and manufacturers can plan for the malt barley.

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Like many farmers in Ethiopia, Gadisa Gobena grew mostly food crops on his farm in Ambo, Oromia Region, in the centre of the country.

Gadisa Gobena now sells his high quality malt barley seeds to other farmers, who have been contracted, also through the value chain alliance, to grow and supply malt barley for the breweries.

Today Gobena produces more than 7,000 tonnes of improved seeds of different crops that he sells to other farmers in the region...*

Gadisa Gobena attended the cluster workshops supported by Synergos and the Ministry. He heard the demand for malting barley by the breweries and they discussed the problems around the supply. They collectively established the value chain alliance and agreed on an action plan.

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