



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/ethiopian-entrepreneurs-make-most-business-opportunities>

# Ethiopian Entrepreneurs Make the Most of Business Opportunities



Agribusiness Marketing Dev Project

Tsehay (right) and her sisters in front of her new storefront in Adama, Ethiopia.

Women in Ethiopia have a good nose for business opportunities, leading some to start their own ventures. Too often, however, these budding entrepreneurs lack access to business networks, financial services and training in business skills in a country where men dominate agribusiness. These limitations make it harder for women to develop and fully realize their entrepreneurial goals.

Business owner Tsehay Fantu is a prime example. In 2005, she decided to start a business out of her home in Adama, a town southwest of Addis Abba. With the help of two sisters, she began selling processed “ready-to-cook” chickens to neighbors and local businesses. She proudly named her business “Tsehay’s Chickens.” Yet her start-up business was slow to grow—she sold about 100 chickens a month, yielding about \$300 in monthly revenue.

Then, in 2014, Fantu became one of 94 Ethiopian women entrepreneurs to participate in the Women in Agribusiness Leadership Network (WALN), a Feed the Future cooperative that gives women the resources to plan, manage and grow their businesses. After enrolling in a 10-month program in finance, planning and marketing, Fantu gained the additional skills to grow her business.

She added cooked chicken to her line of “ready-to-cook” processed chicken, increasing the value of her product. Compared to a processed chicken at \$6.50, a roasted chicken is valued at \$20. Cooked in a ready-to-eat stew, the chicken brings a healthy \$25. She expanded her customer base, more than doubling her clients in hotels and other institutions. She now sells 900 chickens a month, a threefold increase, and reports more than \$800 in revenue in recent months. With the improved cash flow, Fantu is now able to rent a storefront in downtown Adama and buy a new freezer.

Borrowing to invest in business is a common practice, but one that many women fear and forgo due to lack of access to financial services for women-led start-up businesses. After gaining better information on financing, Fantu, along with her

sisters, took out a \$900 loan from a microfinance lender to launch a new product line of Ethiopian spices and dry goods. They have already paid off half of the loan.

“WALN gave me the confidence to get a loan. Ethiopian women are usually too frightened to take loans from official sources, too afraid they won’t be able to pay it back,” she said.

Inspiring as Fantu’s story is, it’s not hers alone. The cooperative is designed to multiply the number of women who own successful businesses and to build a self-sustaining leadership group among Ethiopian women entrepreneurs. Each member is tasked to mentor up to four women in the technical and leadership skills they have gained in the program.

The mentoring networks also help women entrepreneurs think beyond the local markets for their products. Mehbuba Seid, a coffee farm owner in southern Ethiopia, gained information and business contacts that prompted her to debut a sample of her coffee at the annual conference of the Specialty Coffee Association of America.

Dehab Mesfin, a mentor and owner of Diamond Coffee Enterprise, joined other cooperative members to establish the Ethiopian Women in Coffee organization.

“A lot of women think there is a finite market out there, but Ethiopia and Africa are enormous. There is enough room for everybody to find their place. I always tell the women I mentor that anybody can copy your product but nobody can copy you,” she said.