Opening speech for N2 Africa- Ethiopia panning workshop (15-16 April 2014)

Dear Work Shop Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is great pleasure for me to address this gathering, which is set to deal on one of the most important issues for Agricultural development agendas of Ethiopia.

This workshop is planned to develop the work plan for N2africa for the Ethiopian project. In this case the N2Africa master plans are documents intended to foster a common approach across the five Core Counties. The plans are designed to achieve the N2Aferica vision of success and objectives set out in the Research framework of the approved project proposal. This indicates, all master plans need to ensure timely delivery of the output and outcome.

This master plan directly address: different objectives. So, during planning the activities which are carried out under different objectivist should be planned with great care in order to meet the desired objectives. Moreover, when developing a single integrated agronomy research plan its aim is to ensure consistency in research designs and data collection to allow for Meta analysis across N2African countries.

As it was stated in the proposal detailed research plans will be needed for each country and in some cases for each country plans must match the specific agro-ecologies, farming system, institutional policy and economic environment.

Thus, the challenge we address is to ensure sufficient consistency to allow cross comparison, yet leaving sufficient opportunity for local adaptation and creativity.

N2Africa has repeatedly documented a large variation in yields of all the major grain legumes when tested across number of farms. Yield in control plots often vary from >0.5 t/ha to > 2t/ha and strongest responses are often found at control yield around 1t/ha. This leads to the main aim of the agronomy research namely to provide the necessary *best- fit* technologies to close the yield gaps on farmers fields to achieve the goal of the project.

Dear Work Shop Participants

As you may come across during your planning activities. The Agronomy master plan consists of four (4) interlinked clusters cutting across the (R& D) Research and development and D&D (Delivery and Dissemination) components of N2Africa. The Diagnosis activities clusters aims to understanding of the biophysical or *abiotic* (soil fertility, weather) and *biotic* (pests and diseases) constraints to enhanced legume productivity.

The research managed agronomy activity cluster aims to identify understand and solve specific constraints for which there is not enough existing information to propose *best- bet* interventions to have a high chance of alleviating these constraints.

The demonstration activities cluster co- evaluates a portfolio of *best- bet* options together with farming communities to tackle constraints to legume intensification (which includes improved varieties, nutrient management, or agronomic practices) within best cropping systems (including improved intercropping arrangement, legume cereal rotation or relay cropping systems).

The adaptation activity cluster evaluates how individual farming households adopt selected *best-bet* options and how farmer's management practices and environmental factors affects their performance. This step also provides the framework for translating for *best-fit* options, with the latter referring to specific biophysical and economic conditions and farming resources available to individual households. Each activity cluster constrains a number of specific tasks that related directly to specific objective.

During the planning activities, the planner should understand the relationship of each master plan, for example. The agronomy master plan interacted with:

1. The rhizobiology master plan through integration of most effective rhizobium strains and their delivery mechanisms
2. The communication master plan through the development of communication and awareness creation tools and approaches around the best N2Africa products.
3. The partnership platform master plan through the integration of N2Africa with platform activities.

The N2Africa phase I was the first major program to prove the efficacy of nitrogen fixation to enhance productivity at the smallholder level in Africa. During the four year project, N2Africa introduced smallholder farmers to biological nitrogen fixation by grain legumes, to the utilization of appropriate rhizobial inoculants, and to improved crop management practices to improve soil health and yield of both legumes and staple crops such as maize.

A potential N2Africa phase II was developed. In addition to a continued focus on closing yield gaps through improved legume productivity, it would address food security, family nutrition, soil health, gender empowerment and improved farmer income, all important initiatives or sub initiatives under the foundations strategic objectives. Not only would the second phase of the project introduce improved legume varieties to smallholders, it would also build capacities in national legume and rhizobial inoculants research, as well as provide training in nutrition and gender sensitization and empowerment.

Dear participant

N2Africa new vision of success is to build sustainable, long term partnerships to enable African smallholder farmers to benefit from symbiotic N-fixation by grain legumes through effective production technologies including inoculants and fertilizers. The legacy will be strong national expertise in grain legume production and N- fixation research and development. The capacity built will sustain the pipeline and delivery of continuous improvement in legume production technologies tailored to local settings. The project activities will focusi n Ethiopia on *common bean, soybean, chickpea and faba bean.*

The main aim of this project, within five years, building on local expertise, legume production will be enhanced in the major legume growing areas in each of Partner County, Providing opportunities for the poor and addressing gender disparities.

New value chains will be established and the food and nutritional security of the poor will be enhanced. In the course of the project activities the project will built private sector partnerships with seed and fertilizer companies and developing potential inoculants facilities, the project also work to improve input markets to ensure that sufficient inputs of good quality are available to smallholders on timely basis.

Finally, I would like to give thanks to The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for funding the project and Waginnengen University team for selecting Ethiopia and ILRI for hosting the project and the Federal and Regional Research institutes for implementing the activities. I would like to thank Dr Endalkachew and his team for their energetic and un reserved effort to materialized the project according to the action plan.

With this, I hereby open this N2 Africa Ethiopia planning workshop and I wish you all successful deliberations for the coming two days.

I thank you for your attention.