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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Food for the Hungry and Ethiopian Farmers Striving to Stop Degradation of Critical Farmland Soil through Tree Planting**

**PHOENIX (June 9, 2015)** – Since 2012, [Food for the Hungry](#), in cooperation with local communities has planted 98.1 million tree seedlings in nine Ethiopian districts. The resulting regeneration of ground water sources, improved soil fertility, gully formation and improved productivity of existing streams is saving lives.

This year alone, seedlings were planted on 73 square miles of land (approximately the size of Cincinnati, OH). These plantings have had a direct impact on people like Adane, a 38-year-old father of two who lives in Chochorba village in Sekota, one of several highly drought-prone districts of the Amhara region in Ethiopia. In 2010, Adane faced a dying farmland due to a shortage of rainfall, a near-annual occurrence that prevents the area from producing enough crops to feed its residents.

“When it does rain in this hill-covered region, the water rushes over the hardened ground, often stripping away what productive soil remains and preventing water from soaking in,” said Craig Jagers, Food for the Hungry Ethiopia Country Director. “It’s a serious problem for an area almost completely dependent on rain-fed, local agriculture.”

In order to maximize productivity of the farmland and better sustain the environment, last year Food for the Hungry trained nearly 3,500 community members how to care for their farmland and how to diversity crops. This included extensive tree planting.

Seedlings are grown in community-managed nurseries that were started by Food for the Hungry and are operated primarily by single female heads of households and other vulnerable individuals. These community members learn how to raise the trees so that they will survive without human care once they reach maturity and how to nurture the new seedlings until they are ready to transplant.

“Tree planting is just one tool in the kit that our farmers use to protect the soil and reduce water run-off,” explains Jagers. “We help the community create a sustainable plan for management of their natural resources using a variety of methods that assists in increasing water retention for both drinking and improved agricultural productivity.”

Through a program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), eligible beneficiaries like Adane work on rugged mountains doing different physical activities. In exchange for labor such as hillside terracing and planting trees to save the remaining soil from further erosion, participants receive food aid or cash to fill the food gap for their family, which could last six months or more.

Adane says, “Our efforts bore fruit, and long-dried water springs [have] regenerated in the Chorchoba catchment. As the water started to flow in the valley, we requested Food for the Hungry and the Organization for Rehabilitation and Development of Amhara to divert the stream to our farmland. Along the valley there are more than 70 youth and adult farmers who produce their own crops using this irrigation.”

About 83 percent of respondents in a community household survey reported seeing improvement in their environment and are hopeful of reaping improved crop yields.

“I now produce enough food for my family and can even sell to the market. I became food self-sufficient and graduated from the safety net program. I need no more external food aid. Beginning in February this year, many families in our village are suffering from food shortage and seeking food aid, but I have enough produce at my farm to feed my family and sell to the market.”

#### **About Food for the Hungry**

Founded in 1971, [Food for the Hungry](http://www.foodforthehungry.org) provides emergency relief and long-term development programs with operations in more than 20 countries to help the world's most vulnerable people. Learn more by visiting [fh.org](http://fh.org). Social connections include [facebook.com/foodforthehungry](https://www.facebook.com/foodforthehungry) and [twitter.com/food4thehungry](https://twitter.com/food4thehungry).

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