

## Vita and the potato project in Ethiopia Fact Sheet

- 1) Vita has been working in Ethiopia for 10 years, and in Africa for 28 years.
- 2) Our founding patron is Blessed Mother Teresa, soon to be Saint Teresa, and our founders are Fr Norman Fitzgerald and Fr Kevin Doheny (Kilkenny & Offaly)
- 3) We were originally called Refugee Trust International but changed our name in the early 2000's to reflect our change of focus.
- 4) We have moved from emergency aid to sustainable livelihoods
- 5) We employ approx. 8 people in Eritrea, where we are the only NGO.
- 6) We employ approx. 70 people in Ethiopia as outreach workers, project managers, agronomists and nutritionists
- 7) Building sustainable livelihoods is critical to securing the futures of the next generation
- 8) Vita's model of collaboration has resulted in dynamic partnerships with other agencies and NGOs, such as Teagasc, Irish Aid, the EU, Gates Foundation, Wageningen University and Gorta SHA.
- 9) Vita recognises that climate change is a driver of poverty and all of our projects have a climate mitigation element.
- 10) We develop programmes that are replicable and scalable, such as the Irish Potato Coalition
- 11) The Irish Potato Coalition was pioneered by Vita in Ethiopia in 2011, and focuses on bringing globally recognised expertise, research and technology to the potato farmers of East Africa.
- 12) The coalition is now in seven countries. Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Mozambique and Tanzania.
- 13) This can only be achieved because of Vita's unique model of collaboration
- 14) Vita works through a community – led model at all times
- 15) Forming co-ops is critical to delivering best practice within these rural communities
- 16) The Irish Potato Federation, a representative group of Irish commercial potato growers, are huge supporters of the project.
- 17) 12,000 farmers are participating in the potato project in the Gamo Gofa Zone in Ethiopia, while hundreds more are piloting it in the Amhara region of Ethiopia.
- 18) The success of the potato project has been life transforming for 60,000 people in Gamo Gofa.
- 19) The average farm size is 0.2 Ha to sustain a family average of approx. five.
- 20) Female headed households in this region are about 30%
- 21) There is enormous pressure on men to seek work elsewhere to sustain their families
- 22) The potato programme delivers on every aspect of the production and value chain, from seed selection and hierarchy to soil sanitation, fertilisation, pest control, and storage.
- 23) Vita is now working with the Irish agri – food sector to develop the value chain- sorting, processing, packaging and distribution and is negotiating to involve Irish state actors
- 24) This multi pronged approach will ensure that farmers maximise investment in their farms.
- 25) Year on year, yields are up between 300 and 400%
- 26) The increased yield eliminates the hunger season (June –Sept)
- 27) Farmers now have a stock of potatoes for selling, storing for their own tables, and holding over as next season's seed.
- 28) This part of Ethiopia can deliver up to three harvests a year for some crops.
- 29) The potato is rotated with a variety of legumes and other crops for nutritional variety