

Desa'a Forest Ethiopia

Mid-Year Update 2023



Project status

Year 7
out of 14

18 557 ha under
restoration so far

13.5 M
trees growing



At the time of writing, the planting season had already begun thanks to the unusually early rains this year. We shared some inspiring videos earlier in the summer – check them out [here](#) if you haven't already. 4493 ha of land has been brought under restoration management this year.

In March, several members of WeForest's HQ were able to visit our projects in Ethiopia for the first time since the conflict began in 2020. They were overwhelmed by the welcome given to them by the communities, who expressed their gratitude not only for WeForest's efforts to provide seeds and other essentials to ensure the harvest, but also because the organization was one of the only NGOs that stayed in the region during the war. Check out Head of Impact Partnerships Dave Bircher's blog post on the work being done to harness water in Desa'a [here](#).

Read on for more news from the first half of 2023.

The nurseries are raising around 1.4 million seedlings for 2023's planting season, which will be planted out across the core and buffer zones. While they're being tended in the nursery, it's important that the seedlings don't take root there. To avoid this, their roots are regularly trimmed like this (below).



Post-planting management is an ongoing exercise in all our planted areas. Between January and March, 130 community members watered 131 736 seedlings and mulched 127 855. Between January and June about 68 917 trees were pruned, with 248 community members participating in this important maintenance activity. As a result of the pruning, around 52 395 kg of partially dried wood was distributed to 255 households, 75 of them women-headed.

Women-headed families living close to the forest are eligible to be trained in sheep-rearing, and 90 women received 271 sheep on this distribution day in Kalamín village. Each woman receives 3 ewes, which undergo a health check and vaccinations before distribution, and getting ones that are pregnant or have recently given birth is an extra bonus! To make distribution fairer, a lottery system is used to ensure that the allocation of sheep is random and that every woman has a chance of getting the pregnant or nursing ones. In the poultry programme, 92 women trained in chicken rearing have received 10 egg-laying hens each.



A second queen-rearing hub has been established in Haleyom village to meet the growing demand for bee colonies. The new, well-sheltered site is warmer than the first in Kalamín, which will make it ideal for creating new colonies by the method known as ‘grafting’, which is more elaborate and delicate than simply ‘splitting’ the colonies. In grafting, the best bee colonies are pre-selected for their health and productivity, and a grafting needle is used to carefully pick up the larvae and move them to a different honeycomb where they will be raised as queen bees. The new colony needs to be at a regular temperature, avoiding frost, and after at least 2 months it is ready to be moved to its permanent hive, which needs to be done at night or dawn.

Both the queen-rearing hubs are fenced to avoid predators, and bee flora seedlings are planted all around to make sure there’s plenty of fodder for the colonies.

Here's Country Director Aklilu receiving a certificate and a jar of honey at a community meeting in Hawile. The villagers built a tent for the gathering, spreading eucalyptus leaves to bring good energy to their visitors from the Ethiopia team and WeForest HQ.

During the meeting, the community leaders expressed their fears about being in the front line of climate change, and reminded us of the devastating and deadly droughts that blighted the country in the 80s. They also said they value the mission and outcomes of the WeForest Desa'a restoration project and are already able to appreciate the positive impacts on households of the livelihood schemes such as poultry and sheep rearing.



How do we know our restored forests are growing and making an impact?

Every hectare under restoration is mapped with GPS points to generate polygons (areas on a map) that are assigned to sponsors. Permanent monitoring plots are established in our sites and our forestry and science teams conduct surveys to monitor progress of biomass growth, tree density, survival rate and species diversity, among other indicators. Where social impacts are also critical, we measure socio-economic indicators such as the number of individuals or families directly benefiting, people trained, and income generated from forest-friendly livelihood activities.

Please visit our [Why and How](#) webpage for more information.



You'll receive an annual update in March. Meanwhile, stay up-to-date with our interactive [Desa'a map](#), and check out the [photos](#) on Flickr.

[Here](#) you'll find all information about how to communicate about this project and your partnership with WeForest.