

# IPM CRSP Trip Report

**Country Visited:** Ethiopia

**Dates of Travel:** August 29 to September 7, 2012

**Traveler's Name and Affiliation:** Wondi Mersie, Parthenium Project Coordinator

**Purpose of Trip:** To attend and make presentations at a parthenium workshop in Ethiopia.

**Sites Visited:** Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

## Description of Activities/Observations:

### Friday 31 August, 2012

Dr. Mersie met with Dr. Samuel Assefa from Oromiya Bureau of Agriculture. He has been assigned by the Bureau to participate in the parthenium management activities. The discussion focused on how to secure support from Oromiya EPA. It was pointed out by Dr. Samuel that contact has been made with heads of both bureaus, objectives of the workshop explained to them and that they have agreed to attend the meeting themselves

### Monday September 3, 2012.

A workshop was conducted at Jupiter hotel with the main objective of developing an implementation strategy for the management of parthenium. The specific objectives were

1. Develop action plan for the rearing, release and monitoring of the biological agent, *Zygogramma bicolorata* for the control of parthenium
2. Develop action plan to disseminate research-based information on management of parthenium.
3. Define the role of partners in the rearing, release and monitoring of the biological agent, *Zygogramma bicolorata* for the control of parthenium.
4. Develop implementation plan to use composting as a management tool for the management of parthenium.

There were 34 participants drawn from Ethiopian institute of agricultural research (EIAR), Oromiya and Tigray Regional States Bureaus of Agriculture & Environmental Protection, Institute of Biodiversity and Conservation (IBC) and Haramaya University (HU). The two regional environmental protection bureaus were represented by heads of the bureaus. The meeting was opened by the deputy director of EIAR

Eight papers were presented, including two from the two regional states focusing on the current distribution of parthenium and what is being done to reduce its impact at their respective regions. Two papers focused on parthenium composting, a practice found to contribute greatly to the integrated management of parthenium in India and is planned to be practiced in Ethiopia under this project

An extended discussion took place after a presentation on *Zygogramma* host range test. In the presentation, it was clearly indicated that an internationally accepted procedure has

been followed with emphasis on how the test plants were identified and how & why it has been concluded that the bioagent is safe to release. The question of carrying out more tests, raised by IBC representative, was properly answered by EIAR scientists. It was explained that adequate host-range testing was done and there is no more plans to conduct additional investigations. Furthermore, the host range of *Zygogramma* was tested on hundreds of plant species in Australia, India and South Africa. The investigations in all three countries confirmed that *Zygogramma* only feeds on parthenium. *Zygogramma* has been used against parthenium in Australia and India without any negative impact on non-target plant species.

Several participants expressed concern about the length of time it is taking to get the permit to release *Zygogramma*. A committee composed of Dr. Eyasu Abraha, Ato Kiros G/Silasse, Dr. Taye Tessema, Dr. Fasil Reda, Dr. Samuel Asefa, Dr. Kassaun Zewide and Dr. Wondi Mersie was asked to go to Ethiopian EPA to urge for a speedy response for the pending application. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that a committee composed of Federal and Regional EPA officials, IBC, farmers and other stakeholders be established to take part in the monitoring of *Zygogramma* after its release.

The meeting ended after passing a resolution.

#### **September 4, 2012**

The committee first met with Mr. Dereje of EPA, the person who has been handling the release issue, who informed the committee that the release permit can be granted only after the demands by the two stakeholders (Oromiya EPA and IBC) is met and this is communicated to EPA. The demand of Oromiya EPA has now been met as a result of a letter written by EIAR on September 7, 2012 with ref. no 93/8/2291/2004. The issue of conducting more host range test, raised by IBC, has been discussed at the workshop and EIAR scientists have provided scientific explanation to IBC representative as to why the host range test already carried out is enough to declare that the bioagent is safe to release. The committee met with IBC scientists at IBC HQ and further discussed the same issue and IBC have finally agreed to write a letter of agreement for the release to EPA but this has not yet been fulfilled because the director of the institute, who shall sign the letter, is out of office. We have now learnt that EPA is demanding that a letter, accompanied by the final version of EA, be written by the federal MoA. Higher level officials of federal MoA are planning to contact EPA and possibly find a solution to this long standing issue