IPM CRSP Trip Reports

Country Visited: Ethiopia

Dates of Travel: December 12, 2013 to December 30, 2013

Travelers Names and Affiliations: Wondi Mersie, Parthenium Project Coordinator

Purpose of Trip: To implement the Parthenium Project in Ethiopia

Sites Visited: Addis Ababa, Ambo, Wollinchiti, Haramaya University, Ethiopia

Description of Activities/Observations:

Saturday December 14, 2013

Dr. Wondi Mersie met with Dr. Kassahun Zewide (Coordinator of Parthenium Project at Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR), Mr. Million Abebe, VSU’s Parthenium Project Coordinator in Ethiopia and Dr. Eshetu Bekele, Parthenium Project Contractor. The four discussed the current state of the project, current implementation issues, actions that need to be taken in the short and long term period.

Sunday December 15, 2013

Dr. Mersie met with Mr. Million to further discuss the schedule for the next week and the needs at Wollenchiti rearing site. They also discussed personnel needed for the project.

Monday December 16, 2013

Dr. Mersie spent most of the day contacting and talking to project partners in and outside Addis Ababa to confirming and setting up meeting schedules.

Tuesday December 17, 2013

Dr. John Bowman, Senior Agriculture Advisor at USAID Bureau for Food Security (BFS) in Washington DC, Dr. Wondi Mersie, Dr. Kassahun Zewdie, Dr. Eshetu Bekele and Ms. Sintu Alemayehu, traveled from Addis Ababa to Ambo to visit the quarantine facility. Administrators of the Center briefed Dr. Bowman about the on the on-going work at Ambo. Dr. Bowman explained the purpose of his trip and the future of the Parthenium Project. Later, Dr. Bowman met the staff who work in the facility and received report about the on-going maintenance of parthenium bioagents. Ms. Sintu also explained the procedure followed in establishing the safety of Zygogramma and Listronotus to non-target species under quarantine conditions. Dr. Mersie delivered supplies brought from U.S. for the facility primarily protective clothing. A discussion was held on the challenges of maintaining the Zygogramma and Listronotus cultures under quarantine conditions. Dr. Bowman asked several questions about the status of the project and got responses from the staff. The team returned to Addis from Ambo in the afternoon.

Wednesday December 18, 2013
On Wednesday, Dr. John Bowman, Dr. Wondi Mersie, Dr. Kassahun Zewdie, Dr. Samuel Assefa from Oromiya Agriculture Bureau and Dr. Eshetu Bekele traveled from Addis Ababa to Wollenchiti to visit the Zygogramma rearing site. At Wollenchiti, they were joined by Dr. Lisanework Nigatu and Dr. Tamado Tana from Haramaya University. Mr. Million Abebe, Mr. Derje Gebre Michael of the Parthenium Project and Ms. Genet Seifu who is assigned by the local Agriculture Bureau to work on the project were also present at the meeting at rearing site. Everyone sat outside under a tree and each person briefed Dr. Bowman about their role in the Parthenium Project. Dr. Bowman in his part explained the purpose of his trip and reiterated his support to the Parthenium Project. He also indicated that the status of the project after September 30, 2014 is uncertain at this time. He saw the on-going work in the rearing cages and received briefings on the effort to increase the Zygogramma culture for release in the field next summer.

After lunch, Dr. Bowman and the team visited several tomato fields in Wollenchiti that are infested with parthenium and the insect pest, tuta. We saw fields heavily infested with parthenium that is still green. One of the tomato fields is abandoned because of the severe parthenium infestation.

The team returned from Wollenchiti to Addis Ababa late in the afternoon.

Thursday December 19, 2013

Dr. Mersie and Dr. Kassahun Zewdie visited several hotels that can host the July 2014 Parthenium Workshop. Discussions were held with hotel managers to find the best package for the workshop. Nexus Hotel in Addis Ababa was tentatively identified a potential place to hold the Workshop.

Friday December 20, 2013

Dr. John Bowman, Dr. Wondi Mersie, and Dr. Kassahun Zewdie visited with officials at Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) and at Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD).

At EIAR, they held discussion with Dr. Adugna Wakjira, Deputy Director General. Dr. Adugna described the research effort undertaken by EIAR to find practices the help manage parthenium. He reiterated the commitment of EIAR to continue with the research in biological control of parthenium. He also indicated that EIAR will play a major role in the scaling-up of the release in the field. He thanked USAID for its support in the establishment of the quarantine facility and the rearing site at Wollenchiti.

Later in the afternoon, Dr. John Bowman, Dr. Wondi Mersie, and Dr. Kassahun Zewdie met with Mr. Fikre Markos, Deputy Director, Animal & Plant Health Regulatory Directorate at Federal Ministry of Agriculture. Mr. Fikre explained the role of MOARD in the evaluation of the host-range results of Zygogramma and Listronotus. He also described the adverse impact of invasive species like parthenium to crop yield, biodiversity and the environment in Ethiopia.

Saturday December 21, 2013

Dr. Mersie traveled by air to Harar to visit with partners at Haramaya University.
Sunday December 22, 2013

Dr. Mersie met with Dr. Lisaneework Nigatu, a faculty at Haramaya University. He is the collaborator on the Parthenium Project from Haramaya University. The two visited potential rearing and release sites for Zygogramma around Harar. Dr. Mersie and Dr. Lisaneework Nigatu also visited fields that are infested with parthenium and discussed plans for the coming year.

Monday December 23, 2013

Dr. Mersie returned to Addis Ababa.

Tuesday December 26, 2013

Dr. Wondi Mersie, Dr. Kassahun Zewdie, Dr. Eshetu Bekele and Mr. Million Abebe met in Jupiter Hotel and discussed the progress of the project. The main focus of the meeting was about report deadlines, timely submission of financial reports, plan for impact assessment and timely communication of project issues.

Wednesday December 26, 2013

Dr. Mersie made a second trip to Wollenchiti to confer with Parthenium Project staff stationed there. He also visited hotels that could host the 2014 Parthenium Workshop. Kereyu Hotel was selected for the Workshop after visiting several hotels and discussions with the respective managers.

Dr. Mersie later met with Parthenium Project staff at the rearing site to discuss specific tasks that need to be accomplished in the next months. These tasks include holding several discussions with area farmers and extension agents that will facilitate the release. Plan to collect baseline data at the release sites was also discussed.

Dr. Mersie returned from Wollenchiti in the afternoon with Parthenium Project staff.

Thursday December 26, 2013

Dr. Mersie met with several people at EIAR Head Quarters to discuss the 2014 Parthenium Workshop. The individuals from EIAR include, Dr. Taye Tessema, Mr. Rezene Fissahye, Ms. Sintu Alemayehu and Dr. Kassahun Zewide. Individuals from the Parthenium Project include, Dr. Eshetu Bekele, Mr. Million Abebe, and Mr. Derje G/Michaal. The Oromiya Agricultural Bureau was represented by Dr. Samuel Assefa and Ms. Gnet Siefu.

The discussion about the workshop focused on the content, people that need to be invited, and the venue. It was agreed to use the Workshop to promote the Parthenium Project and educate the general public about the importance of biological control in the management of invasive species like parthenium. Potential sites around Wollenchiti workshop participants can visit were also discussed. The group later had lunch together.

Friday December 27, 2013
Dr. Mersie met Dr. Semachew Kassahun, Feed-The-Future Coordinator at the USAID Mission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia and briefed him on the progress of the Parthenium Project. Dr. Mersie explained to him the adverse impact of parthenium on food crops, livestock, biodiversity, human and livestock health. Dr. Mersie provided Dr. Semachew documents that describe the accomplishments and the current status of the project. He knew about the effect of parthenium and agrees with the need to take immediate action to manage the weed throughout Ethiopia. He is very supportive of the parthenium project and believes it needs additional resources to fully implement its objective. He promised to support the project in any way he can. But the on-going Feed-The-Future program in Ethiopia is focused on improving value chain and marketing of targeted commodities. So, he indicated that he will not be able to provide financial support to the parthenium project at the present.

**Sunday December 30, 2013**

Dr. Mersie returned to U.S.