



Annual Report 2020

Yoba for Life under SNV/BRIDGE

INTRODUCTION

Following the positive recommendations of a scoping mission of the Yoba for Life foundation in Ethiopia in December 2019, a partnership agreement with SNV/BRIDGE project was signed in February 2020, and activities started in March 2020. The planned operations for the first year followed the good practices implemented in Uganda and Tanzania and started with two staff members (production coordinators) who trained existing producers of raw fermented milk in and around Addis Ababa on the production of Yoba probiotic yoghurt. Probiotics help in (lactose) digestion, boost the immune system, thereby reducing flue and skin rashes, especially in children as shown by recent studies on the health benefits of probiotic yoba yoghurt for Ugandan school children. Soon the concept started to gain momentum in Ethiopia, especially when producers realized that Yoba yoghurt had a shelf life of 30 days, opposed to 3 days for their traditional products. The demand for training on Yoba yoghurt production and the Yoba culture started to grow, in a radius of 100 km around Addis, and also in Hawassa and Bahir Dar as well as surrounding areas. Therefore, in December the Yoba team expanded the team to four production coordinators and one country representative. Before the fasting period in December 2020, the Yoba yoghurt production in Ethiopia peaked to 19.000 l/week as produced by 28 producers.

PRODUCTION

Shortly after the first trainings in March, a number of producers (with production volumes ranging from 200 – 3500 l/week) started to adopt the use of Yoba culture. In the first months, the picture was dynamic: some producers dropped out, as they found the extra work associated with pasteurization and incubation not worth the hassle, while at the same time many new producers came on board. Before the fasting period in December, the Yoba yoghurt production in Ethiopia peaked to 19.000 l/week as

produced by 28 producers, see figure 1. The growth of production volumes and the average volume per producers is relatively fast compared to past experiences of the Yoba for Life Foundation in other East-African countries (for example in Tanzania after 4 years, 81 producers produce 16.500 l/week).

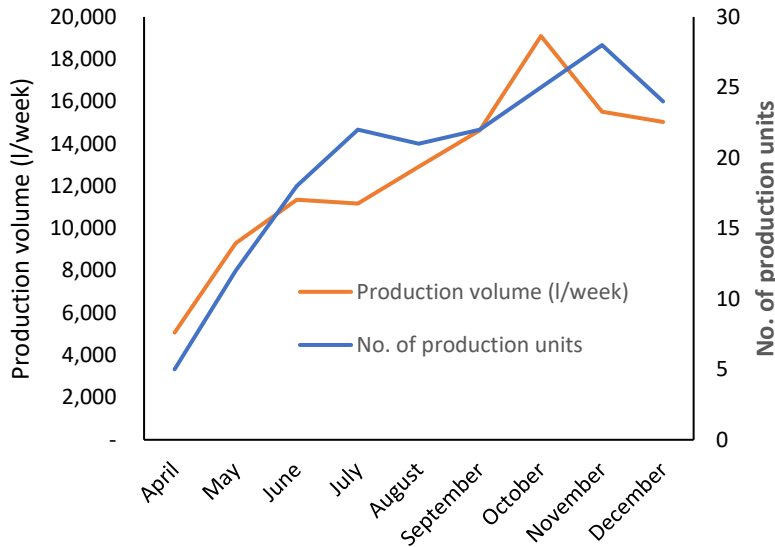


Figure 1 Development of the production volumes (orange line) and number of production units (blue line) during 2020.

It was found that some producers use backslopping: they re-use ready made yoghurt for inoculation of the next batch. When this process is repeated many times, the Yoba yoghurt loses its probiotic properties, as well as its quality (unwanted bacteria are propagated, the yoghurt gets a thinner structure). It was therefore decided that one large producer (3500 l/week) who extensively applied this process, could no longer be viewed as a Yoba yoghurt producer, explaining the drop in reported production volumes between October and November (figure 1).

The greatest motivator for producers to switch to Yoba production is the prolonged shelf life, compared to the 3-day shelf life of the raw fermented milk which they used to make. This greatly reduces their product losses. Because of the fact that Yoba yoghurt is viewed as a completely new product, and that there are still many consumers who are attached to the traditional raw fermented milk, most producers offer both products (Yoba yoghurt and raw fermented milk) concurrently.

Apart from the reduction of product losses, most producers at the moment do not generate additional profits per liter from the Yoba yoghurt compared to the traditional yoghurt (both sold around 50 Birr per liter in Addis town, while fresh milk is sold around 30 Birr per liter), although profits are generated through increased production volumes. Although the cost of production for Yoba are slightly higher compared to the traditional product, most producers do not yet apply premium selling prices. Producers who use the Yoba culture usually have a vision for the future: they personally like the product a lot, and believe customers will switch and learn to appreciate it more than the raw fermented milk, and eventually pay a premium price for the product. But most of all, they have the ambition to take this yoghurt to shops, supermarkets and schools, and thus greatly expand their markets. Raw fermented milk can only be sold from their own café-like outlets. This also means that for the first time, the

producers are in need of properly labelled, disposable packaging, and Yoba has been facilitating linkages to service providers of the same.

A planned marketing campaign with posters and banners featuring an athlete taking Yoba yoghurt, placed around the Yoba yoghurt outlets, could not take place in 2020 due to staffing under-capacity and is postponed to 2021. During the campaign the health benefits of Yoba yoghurt will also be more explicitly pronounced, while avoiding claims of healing diseases, in accordance with the guidelines of EFDA.

LAB TESTING AND CERTIFICATION

Although its widespread practice to consume raw milk products in Ethiopia, there are concerns about the safety of this practice, and also the government has started to discourage the consumption of raw milk. Studies indicate that 3% of all cows in Ethiopia carry brucellosis, and that 17% of pastoral people and 3% of urban people are carrier of brucellosis¹. The pasteurization step involved in Yoba yoghurt production addresses these safety challenges.

Towards the end of 2020, Yoba yoghurt samples from 10 producers were taken to an accredited lab for testing of microbiological parameters. All samples passed the tests. This ensures that the project creates access for consumers to a trustworthy, safe, healthy and quality snack. Moreover, with a positive lab certificate, producers have gained confidence to approach supermarkets, shops and restaurants to retail their products, and they are getting a positive response.

The next step will be certification by the relevant government bodies. Certification can be done at local, regional or national level. The different levels of certification have different requirements, but also different rights as to where the product is allowed to be sold (likewise at either local, regional or national level).

EXPANSION OF ACTIVITIES

Due to the popularity of the concept among yoghurt producers and its alignment with the targets of the SNV/BRIDGE project (bridging the gap between the formal and informal market; popularizing dairy consumption with a safe, healthy and nutritious product), SNV/BRIDGE and the Yoba for Life Foundation decided to expand the area of operation under the partnership agreement. As of December 2020, two new production coordinators in Hawassa and Bahir Dar, respectively, started with their new roles. They will work with (urban) entrepreneurs following the same model as used in Addis Ababa, as well as with BRIDGE-supported dairy cooperatives.

One of the production coordinators who had worked in Addis has left the organization in September, and will be replaced in January 2021 by a new production coordinator. In order to further professionalize the coordination of all expanding activities, a Yoba country representative will take up his new role in January 2021 and oversee the work of the four production coordinators. An organigram of the Yoba Ethiopia team can be found in figure 2.

¹ Tadesse G. Brucellosis seropositivity in animals and humans in Ethiopia: A meta-analysis. PLoS neglected tropical diseases. 2016 Oct 28;10(10):e0005006.

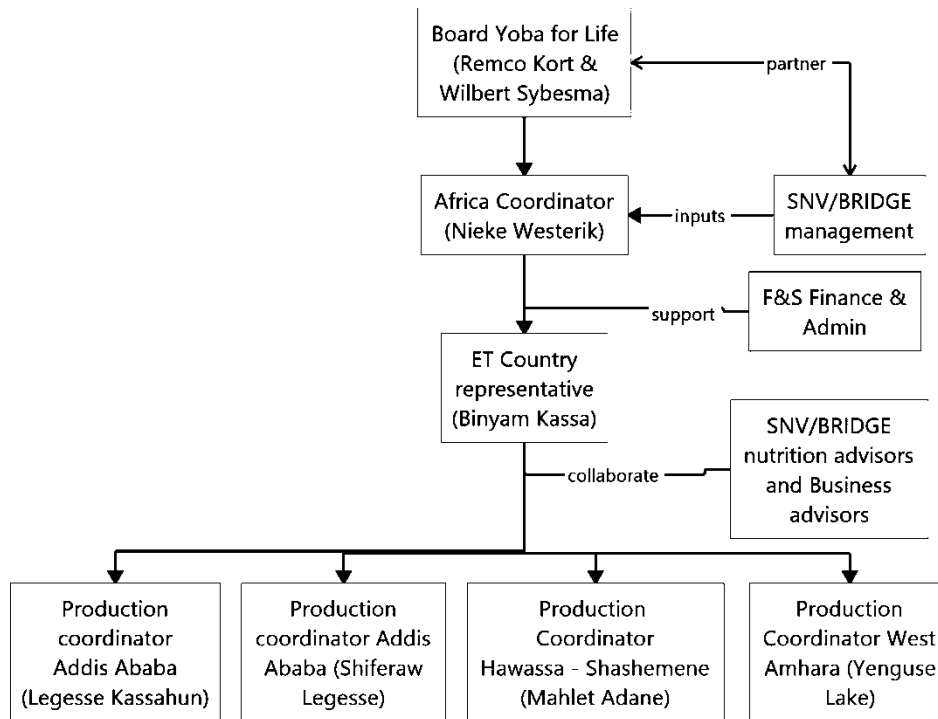


Figure 2 Organigram of the Yoba for Life team in Ethiopia

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ANNEX: SUMMARIZED FINANCIAL REPORT

Item	Amount (ETB)
Funds received from SNV	999,685
Professional fees staff	(510,000)
Field Expenditure staff	(207,082)
Laboratory testing	(57,982)
Administrative fees Fair & Sustainable	(237,317)
Balance	(12,696)

*This overview excludes money transacted to the Netherlands for the purpose of this project, and the use of this money for payments made to Netherlands-based staff members etc. The transactions on the Dutch account are included in the financial annual report of Netherlands based foundation.