



# Fire management in Ethiopia: past, present, and future

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Apart from natural fire cycles in the lowlands and midlands, the past two decades have seen severe wildfires in ecosystems with little or no fire history. Frequency and intensity appear to be increasing with climate change and drought. The emphasis has been on emergency responses, but this must be coupled with more sustainable land use policies, land use plans and practices, and effective sectoral coordination. However, there is no national strategy, and local actors and community members lack capacity to participate. A new, integrated fire management system needs to incorporate real-time early warning and reporting mechanisms, with suitable financing and adequate equipment.

## Aims – an integrated fire management system

For effective forest fire prevention, detection, management and control, this program will develop a strategy that guides the establishment of an integrated, evidence-based national system anchored in multilevel and multistakeholder governance. This will include mechanisms for coordination across sectors and levels of government, with the active participation of resource users, smallholder farmers, pastoralists and the private sector. The Ethiopian Forest Development and the Environmental Protection Agency have formally endorsed the approach and will ensure operationalization.

## Participatory approaches – to addressing knowledge, capacity and institutional gaps

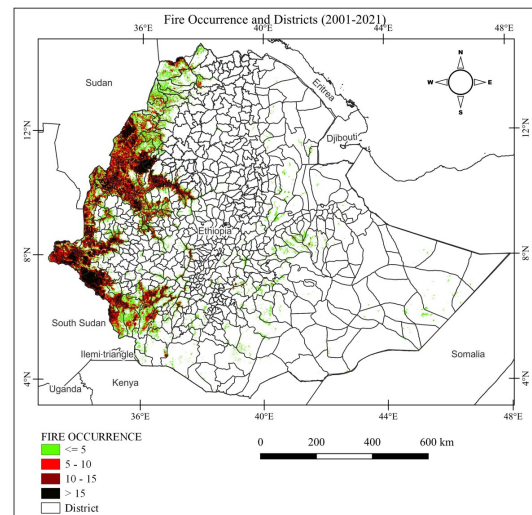
Comprehensive stakeholder mapping identified relevant actors across sectors and levels. This was followed by consultation with all groups through key informant interviews and group discussions on wildfire impacts, responses, and prevention and management challenges, and a consultative workshop with federal, regional and civil society actors, stakeholder organizations, research institutions, academia and NGOs. Experts from PENHA, CIFOR-ICRAF, governmental agencies and Wondo Genet College of Forestry and Natural Resources, the country's principal centre for forestry related analysis, are collaborating to undertake the following.

- Assess past fire trends to identify hot spots and patterns of fire incidence.
- Collate and analyse MODIS data on fire patterns, frequency and intensity.
- Review strengths and limitations of current fire prediction, reporting and suppression.
- Assess institutional mandates, functions and coordination.
- Draw lessons from experiences of countries with a good track records of managing wildfire.



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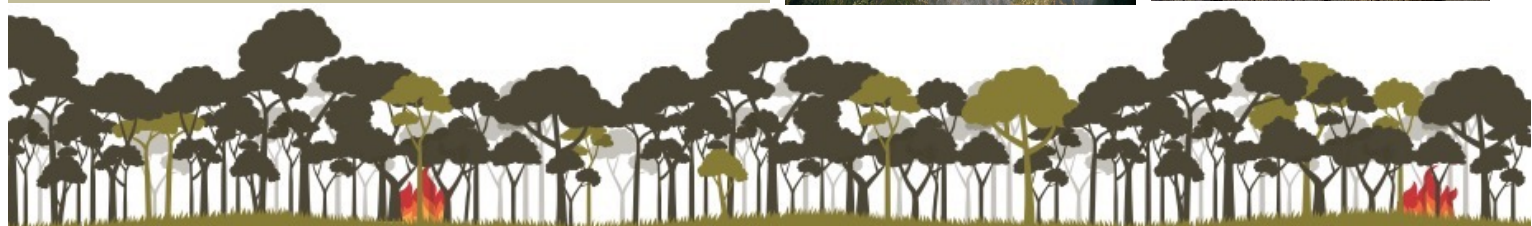
Livingstone J, Kassa H, Yimam K, Hagazi N, Shibeshi A and Zewdie S. 2022. Fire management in Ethiopia: past, present and future. *Tropical Forest Issues* 61.



## Next steps – translating strategy into action

A thorough review of wildfire management in Ethiopia, and a final report, will be submitted shortly to Ethiopian Forest Development and the Environmental Protection Agency, including policy recommendations, a capacity building plan, and a draft institutional framework. Following review and revision, an integrated national fire management system will be presented to government.

The system will then be operationalized, involving awareness raising and promoting a shared understanding of core principles at all levels and among all stakeholders, establishing multistakeholder platforms, developing local level action plans, outlining fire-smart practices in each distinct ecological context, and creating financing mechanisms to support interventions. The contribution of effective wildfire management in terms of emissions will also be assessed and integrated into the country's NDC.



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This reports activities of the Fire-smart landscape governance programme, managed in Ethiopia by the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA) in collaboration with CIFOR-ICRAF. It is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of the Netherlands, as part of the Working Landscapes programme coordinated by Tropenbos International.