

# Pack 112, Item

Type: Drama

Date

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**Farming wisdom: Enhancing lives with conservation agriculture**

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**Notes to broadcaster**

One-third of agricultural land in Ethiopia is severely or very severely degraded. First adopted at scale in North America, over the last fifty years, conservation agriculture (CA) has spread rapidly across the globe and has been widely proven as a solution for reviving degraded soils and other related challenges.

Minimum or reduced tillage is a central part of conservation agriculture practice, reducing soil erosion and generally increasing soil health. Yet in Ethiopia, many development projects recommend frequent soil tillage for pest management and other purposes.

This drama is about farmers who live in a fictional rural area of Ethiopia known as Degoch wereda, in Selamu and Genetu kebeles. Degoch wereda is known for its sunny weather and sandy soil.

The farmers of Degoch wereda use farming methods that lead to soil erosion from water and wind. They plough their land repeatedly, and their productivity is low.

Some of the farmers in Selamu and Genetu are interested in conservation agriculture practices, and using minimum tillage practices as promoted by CA experts. Some others are uncertain and have difficulties using minimum tillage.

Ababu works in Degoch wereda as a CA expert and plans to take some farmers in Genetu to Selamu in order to share the best practices of a farmer named Nigus Abebe.

The story begins with an announcement for farmers to get ready to travel to nearby Selamu kebele.

You could use this drama as inspiration to produce a similar program on using conservation agriculture practices such as minimal or reduced tillage and permanent soil cover with mulch to address soil degradation, soil erosion, and poor yields, as well as crop rotation, crop association, and intercropping to increase the fertility of the soil. Or you might choose to present the drama as part of your regular farmer program, using voice actors to represent the speakers. The drama includes twelve scenes. If you want to reproduce it on your program, one option is to one or two scenes per day on consecutive days. The scenes vary in length from 3-4 minutes to 7-8 minutes.

You could follow the drama by interviewing farmers and other experts about the benefits and challenges of conservation agriculture. Make sure to ask farmers about what practices they’ve tried, what has worked, and what challenges they’ve faced. Invite listeners to call-in or text-in with questions and comments.

Topics for discussion might include:

**CHARACTERS:**

Do you think that Bayu made the right choice by switching to conservation agriculture? Or will it hurt his breeding business?

What choices do farmers have in this area if they need more mulch to cover their soil?

What are the challenges of adopting CA practices such as minimum or reduced tillage in this area, and how can farmers address these challenges?

**Bayu Abate:** age 50, husband of Weynitu, respected and well-off farmer. Doesn’t get good crop yields, but makes a good living by keeping and selling livestock.

**Weynitu Teshale:** age 36, wife of Bayu, and mother of four children. She wants Temesgen to have his own land and always asks her husband to give it to him.

**Temesgen Baye:** age 20, son of Bayu and Weynitu. Finished 12th grade, but has no land and no job, so helps his father and mother take care of livestock. Feleku’s classmate in high school and loves Feleku.

**Demeku Dejene:** age 40, resident of Genetu kebele and wife of Zeleke Abate. Jealous of Etenesh’s farming success and friendship with experts, and wants to have a better income like Etenesh.

**Ababu Hailu:** age 32, expert in CA. Good communication skills.

**Etenesh Ejigu:** age 30, widow and Demeku’s neighbour, has two children. Has one ox and is a model farmer and householder.

**Nigus Abebe:** age 49, resident of Selamu kebele and hardworking model farmer. Husband of Meselu, participates in CA and has oxen.

**Meselu Adane:** age 38, Nigus Abebe’s wife, has four children. Believes in new ways of farming.

**Feleku:** Daughter of Nigus and Meselu, college student. Helps her father and mother with CA. Temesgen’s classmate in high school and loves Temesgen.

## Scene 1.

## location: Genetu

**CHARACTERS: BAYU, WEYNITU, TEMESGEN, DEMEKU, YOUNG BOY**

## SFX: Countryside music plays in background. SOUND OF Cattle and sheep.

## Young boy: (calling from a distance) Temesgen, Temesgen … Can you hear me?

## Temesgen: Yes, I can hear you.

## Young boy: Ato Nigus’ farm in the Degoch area of Selamu village—the one that has minimum tillage, mulching, and row planting—is open for visiting today … they are asking all the farmers in the village to go there.

## Temesgen: (loudly) Good, my mother. I will go.

## Bayu: (calling from a distance) Temesgen ...

## Temesgen: Yes!

## Bayu: Did you give the cattle some hay?

## Temesgen: Yes, I just gave it to them, but I’m leaving now.

## Bayu: (loudly) Where to?

## Temesgen: Selamu village.

## Bayu: (surpriseD and annoyed) You won’t feel good until you see that girl, right? Going to the village is just an excuse to see her.

## Temesgen: What excuse? I’m going to learn something.

## Weynitu: I’m going too. The kids will serve you lunch.

## Bayu: (angry) And where are *you* going?

## Weynitu: Didn’t you hear the call?

## Bayu: (angry) Since when does the husband comes home and the wife go out?

## Temesgen: We are not going for fun—you should be coming with us.

## Bayu: Never mind about me—I’m saying that you two can’t go.

## Weynitu: Hear me out. You used to be a good listener. Didn’t you hear about Ato Nigus’ family from Selamu village? People say his farm has better yields because he used conservation farming practices.

## Bayu: (UNIMPRESSED) I’ve heard.

## Temesgen: That’s good you’ve heard!

## Bayu: Look, all I’ve heard is that they used the hay for the cattle to cover the soil and got better yields. Ato Nigus told me all about it.

## Temesgen: That’s good, but seeing is believing.

## Bayu: (angry) Boy, you don’t understand. I have cattle and sheep. I breed them, and when they are ready, I take them to the market and get good money. If I use my cattle’s food to cover the land, it means I am going out of the breeding business.

## Temesgen: Father, if it’s like Feleku told me …

## Bayu: (interrupts son angrily) Boy, leave me alone. Don’t try to teach me about farming.

## Weynitu: Ato Nigus’ wife Meselu told me that, after covering their land with mulch, they did minimum tillage and sowed maize and intercropped pigeon peas together, then used more land in the second year and planted cabbage. That is why I want to see.

## Temesgen: (angry) I used to be in the same grade as Feleku, but now she is a year ahead of me because she has been able to continue her education with the money she earns from selling cabbage. Give me my share of the land and I will practice conservation agriculture too. Since I don’t have an ox, I’ll just use hand tools to work the soil, and it will be even easier.

## Weynitu: Let’s lower our voices ... the neighbours will hear.

## Bayu: (Angry) You are asking me to starve my cattle while I use the grass and crop residues to mulch the farmland.

## Temesgen: But we can buy hay for the cattle.

## Bayu: (ANGRY) You cannot say anything worse. I cannot sell the cattle to buy hay….

## Temesgen: I didn’t say that you should sell the cattle. You can get better crops by mulching the farmland now, and when you get better yields, we can spare money from the profit to buy more hay for the cattle.

## Bayu: Son, these days when the selling price of one ox is 12,000 to 14,000, I can’t agree. I have believed in one thing since I was a child: If I try something and it doesn’t work, I try something else. So when farming didn’t give me satisfaction, I got into breeding. And I’m getting good results.

## Temesgen: Just give me my share of the land. I will go to college with the profit I earn from conservation agriculture.

## Bayu: If you want to go to college, you can. It’s not that I can’t pay for college—it’s just that I want you to get into the breeding business.

## Weynitu: (Happy) Son, I’m glad that he is allowing you to go to college and learn … (ULULATES).

## Demeku: What is new with you, neighbours?

## Temesgen: Oh, Demeku … (SARCASTIC, ASIDE) She never misses a thing, right?

## Demeku: (clearing her throat) What do you mean, Temesgen? I heard Weynitu ululating in happiness, so I am happy too.

## Temesgen: I’m going to college—you know Feleku is one year ahead of me.

## Weynitu: When you were in the second grade, you skipped a grade because you were clever. So you can do the same in college and be equal with her.

## Bayu: (laughing) Grade skipping isn’t possible in college, Weynitu.

## Temesgen: (laughing) Your wishes are wonderful, mother, but it isn’t possible to skip a grade in college.

## SFX: SOUND OF PHONE RINGING

## Demeku: Temesgen, is that your phone?

## Weynitu: Leave it, Demeku. He will get it.

## Bayu: (PAUSE) He’s going outside with his phone so we can’t listen.

## Temesgen: (FROM A DISTANCE) Hello ... Hello, Feleku, I’m coming to your village today.

## Demeku: Somebody called, huh?

## Weynitu: (angry) Demeku, you are being rude.

## Bayu: It’s a man’s choice, let him go.

## Weynitu: Leave him alone. Was it the girl that called? I am not going anymore, let me prepare the coffee.

**TransItion Music**

**Scene 2**

**location: Genetu**

**Characters: Ababu, etenesh, demeku**

## SFX: SOUND OF Children playing in background

## Ababu: Kids, is Etenesh home?

## Etenesh: I’m here, Ababu. How are you? Come in, please.

## Ababu: Aren’t you ready yet? Come on, let’s go to Selamu village.

## Etenesh: I’m ready. We’ll go, but come in and have something to eat first. Please come in.

## Ababu: No, it’s okay. It’s almost time ... let’s go, come on out.

## Etenesh: Ok, if you won’t come in … let’s go.

## Ababu: Your scarf is sliding down this side; wait, let me fix it for you.

## Demeku: (FROM a distance) Oh look, Weynitu. It’s Ababu, the expert, fixing her scarf. Oh women—she was even asking him to come inside her house! How bold!

## Weynitu: Oh Demeku! So what if she lets him in? Her children are there.

## Demeku: Weynitu, you are so innocent. I know there is something going on. (SIGHS DRAMATICALLY) I’m going home now.

## Ababu: I think you will like the experience in Selamu village.

## Etenesh: You know what, Ababu? We don’t get good results even when we use oxen to soften the soil five or six times a year. I am not convinced that we can get a better yield simply by using a plow to make a deep, narrow furrow. I am uncertain, but I want to go and see the results from minimum tillage.

## Ababu: You are right, Etenesh. Seeing is believing.

## Etenesh: (laughs) You will try to convince me!

## Ababu: Why are you lagging behind?

## Etenesh: I’m almost running!

## Ababu: (laughs) Am I walking too fast? I just want to get there quickly. Go down this steep place slowly. Wait, let me help you.

## Demeku: Even if Weynitu doesn’t agree, I understand what’s happening. What is Etenesh doing holding the man that way? They look like a married couple leaning on each other like that ... I should go inside ... they are near.

## Ababu: (Calling) W/ro. Demeku!

## Demeku: (STARTLED) Oh! It’s you. How are you?

## Ababu & Etenesh: (Together) How are you doing, Demeku?

## Ababu: Demeku, come to Selamu village. Didn’t I tell you we were going to learn some skills at Ato Nigus’ farm?

## Demeku: But my husband isn’t here. He went to a city far away to visit some relatives.

## Ababu: Ato. Zeleke isn’t here?

## Demeku: No.

## Ababu: So what will you do in the house by yourself? Let’s go. You’ll come back home with a set of skills that will change your life.

## Demeku: Okay, I’ll be right there. You guys go ahead.

## Ababu: What do you mean? We are going together—come on!

## Etenesh: Yes, Demeku, you better go with some company. Come!

## Demeku: I don’t want to interrupt your conversation (LAUGHS).

## Ababu: It is nothing private, let’s go.

## Demeku: If you say so. I do want to get the experience. I envy Ato Nigus’ wife. I heard her say she got good yields from cabbage, pigeon peas, and maize.

## Ababu: You will see with your own eyes. Let’s just go.

## Etenesh: We have to go quickly. Others have already left.

## Demeku: (Calls a neighboUr from a distance) Adanu! Adanu! When the kids come home, tell them the key is in the usual place.

## Transition Music

**SCENE 3.**

**LOCATION: Selamu**

**CHARACTERS: Ngus Abebe, Meselu Adane, Feleku, Temesgen, Demeku, Etenesh, Ababu**

## SFX: People chatting in Selamu village

## Ababu: Excuse me ... your attention please! We are gathered here at Degoch area, in Selamu village, on Ato Nigus Abebe’s farmland. But before you see the farmland, let me give you a brief explanation.

## Conservation farming means growing crops while maintaining the fertility and productivity of the soil.

## It also means that by using minimum tillage, we can minimize the tiring job of ploughing the soil five to six times a year. Along with minimum tillage, there are two other main principles in conservation agriculture: keeping the soil covered at all times and using crop rotation and intercropping.

## When we practice conservation agriculture, we leave the residues of the maize or other crops and also grass mulch on the unplowed land so they cover the soil. This helps the soil stay moist by reducing the amount of moisture that evaporates in the heat of the sun. Second, it helps protect the soil from wind and water erosion. Third, land covered with this mulch increases in fertility as the mulch decomposes. In this way, our soil stays moist and fertile the whole year. We are able to grow pigeon peas, cabbage, enset (*Editor’s note: false banana tree*), soybeans and other crops throughout the year.

## Also, mulching with crop residues and grass is more productive than other practices. Having said this, let’s move on to Mr. Nigus’ explanation.

## Nigus: (Clears throat) Friends, I thank God for blessing my good work so that I could reach this stage.

## group of people: Amen! Amen!

## Nigus: Well, in the first year after I took the training, so two years ago, I planned to mulch a 25 x 25 metre piece of land, so 1/16th of a hectare. Later, I used conservation farming methods and sowed maize and pigeon pea using the Berken plow. (*Editor’s note: Berken plows can be easily fitted onto ox-drawn plows. The tool makes a U-shaped furrow which increases water infiltration, root growth, reduces runoff and soil loss, avoids cross-plowing, and increases maize yields compared to conventional tillage*.]

## Temesgen: I have a question.

## Ababu: Okay, Temesgen.

## Temesgen: How deep do you plough?

## Nigus: According to my training, 20 cms deep on average, but if it is with a compost 15 cms, and with man-made fertilizer, 8 cms. You have to go deeper when sowing enset.

## Etenesh: I have a question too.

## Ababu: Go ahead, Etenesh!

## Etenesh: How much maize did you produce from 1/16th of a hectare two years ago?

## Nigus: I produced three quintals (300 kgs) of maize. You’ll be surprised to hear that, when I used to farm traditionally, I couldn’t produce more than 75 kilos.

## Demeku: I have a question. How about cabbage and pigeon pea?

## Nigus: Let Meselu answer this one. (laughs) She manages these things.

## Meselu: Okay, now that we rotate pigeon peas with other crops, we can take 50 kilos to the market. We harvest cabbage all year round, and we take that to the market every two weeks. We have 100 kilos ready right now. With the money we make from the cabbage, we send our daughter Feleku to college. We buy everything we need in the house with the profits from the pigeon peas. We use the maize for our own consumption.

## Ababu: Ato Nigus, have you expanded the size of the land you use for minimum tillage this year?

## Nigus: Is Mesulu finished?

## Ababu: What?

## Nigus: Did you finish with my wife before you shifted to me?

## SFX: EVERYONE laughS

## Ababu: (laughing) We figured you can speak for one another. How much land did you use conservation farming practices on this year, Ato Nigus?

## Nigus: This year, we mulched and sowed 40 metres by 60 metres. We also started rotating crops. If we sowed maize last year, it’s chickpeas this year. We rotated by sowing lablab and cassava one after the other. As you can see, the cassava is almost ready.

## Ababu: Does anyone else have any questions?

## Temesgen: Did you also grow cabbage this year?

## Nigus: Last year, we sowed cabbage and mixed other crops in between. But this year, we are growing cabbage exclusively on 1/8th of a hectare to pay for Feleku’s education. As Ababu mentioned earlier, mulching the farmland will help it retain moisture all year round. Cabbage is harvested throughout the year, and there’s no such thing as drying out on our land. Isn’t that right, Meselu?

## Meselu: Yes. And thank God, we have stopped depending on men for money. This year, me and Feleku planted the cabbage with a spade. It’s comfortable work for women.

## Etenesh: That is incredible. How much did you produce in the second year, when you covered 40 x 60 metres of land?

## Nigus: About 5 quintals (500 kgs).

## Temesgen: Is that lablab?

## Nigus: No, that was maize. We sowed lablab this year. It isn’t ready yet.

## Etenesh: What do you feed your cattle then?

## Nigus: We grow grass at the edge of the farmland, and they feed on that with supervision. We harvest the maize grains, and the rest of the plant goes to covering the land.

## Demeku: Why don’t you mulch your other lands that you still plough traditionally?

## Nigus: We want to.

## Demeku: Then why not?

## Nigus: The problem is that we don’t have enough mulch.

## Demeku: What do you mean?

## Meselu: We are using residues from pigeon peas, peas, lablab*,* and cassava for mulch and it still isn’t enough. We also go to the forest and use all kinds of leaves except for mango and eucalyptus. Real and fake banana trees are also good for mulch.

## Ababu: So growing plants to be used for mulch helps boost how much farmland we can cover. As you can already tell, it is easier for women to be involved in conservation farming than conventional farming.

## Well, we have had enough for today. We thank Ato. Nigus and W/ro. Meselu.

## SFX: People express thanks in one voice

## Nigus: Friends, go inside and have something to eat. Don’t go home on an empty stomach. (laughs)

## Meselu: We have also prepared coffee, please go inside.

## Ababu: We can’t say no ... let’s go inside.

## Demeku: (whispering) Etenesh, did you see Temesgen? He stayed outside with Ato Nigus’ daughter, Feleku.

## Etenesh: Demeku, keep your voice down. They will hear you. She is his girlfriend, what’s the big deal? And they are just talking. Come inside!

## Demeku: (contemptuously) It’s a taboo. What a time we live in! And it’s not just them, there are many who act like this.

## Etenesh: Who are you talking about?

## Nigus: What is wrong with you two? Come in!

## TRANSITION MUSIC

**SCENE 4.**

**LOCATION: SELAMU**

**CHARACTERS: FELEKU, TEMESGEN**

## Feleku: We are the only ones out here. What are they going to think?

## Temesgen: They are going to think that we are just talking. What’s the problem?

## Feleku: But dad is going to get mad.

## Temesgen: He knows we are in a relationship.

## Feleku: Keep your hands to yourself, they might see us.

## Temesgen: Oh you!

## Feleku: Anyway, aren’t you happy you came today?

## Temesgen: I am really happy, Feleku.

## Feleku: Didn’t your father get angry?

## Temesgen: He allowed me to come.

## Feleku: Good.

## Temesgen: There’s something I have to tell you. Uhhh …

## Feleku: Please tell me!

## Temesgen: Kiss me first!

## Feleku: I hope no one comes. (SOUND OF KISS) Okay, tell me!

## Temesgen: My father has given me permission to go to college.

## SFX: FELEKU laughs in happiness AND KISSES

## HIM

## Temesgen: You were scared to kiss me before.

## Feleku: Stop ... why are you embarrassing me? I’m just happy.

## Temesgen: I’m kidding. I know you are happy for me.

## Feleku: Your father made the right decision.

## Temesgen: He’s always fair. He wanted me to make money by helping him with the breeding business. But when I kept nagging him, he allowed me to learn about conservation farming.

## Feleku: I know Mr. Bayu is a fair person.

## Temesgen: I’ll tell him about the new ways of farming I saw today. I’ll try to explain so he won’t worry about the cattle. He might be convinced when I tell him that we can provide a grass field for the cattle near the farmland and that the cattle will get some feed from the crop residues.

## Feleku: I don’t know ... but you have to start on your own. Let them give you your share of the land.

## Temesgen: No worries! They will give it to me. When you graduate and I’m left with a year to go, we’ll get married and start living together.

## Feleku: (startled) Oh my!

## Temesgen: What happened?

## Feleku: Some people are going home and we are still standing here. Dad is looking at me. I have to go. Bye! I will go home this way.

## TRANSITION MUSIC

**SCENE 5**

**LOCATION: SELAMU**

**CHARACTERS: DEMEKU, ETENESH, ABABU**

## SFX: VOICES

## Ababu: Mr. Nigus and Ms. Meselu, thank you. We are deeply grateful for the hospitality you showed towards the folks from the Genetu area.

## SFX: SOUND OF PEOPLE SHOWING APPRECIATION.

## Ababu: Okay, let’s go back now. Where is Temesgen?

## Demeku: (clears throat) Temesgen was with the girl. Don’t her parents scold her?

## Etenesh: Why would they? Temesgen is a good boy, and what is the problem with talking to each other?

## Ababu: They went to the same elementary and secondary schools. They look good together.

## Etenesh: Marriage is based on love now.

## Ababu: Yes, it’s best when a marriage is based on love.

## Demeku: (laughs) Oh love ... we were not in love when we got married. We are living with the husband our parents brought us. Zeleke and I have seven kids now.

## Ababu: Demeku, the times have changed.

## Demeku: Yes, the times have changed … a lot has changed. (laughs) Call the boy.

## Ababu: Why are you laughing and who should we call?

## Demeku: (laughing) Temesgen, he was with Feleku the whole day, and didn’t come to Nigus’ house. He’s lovestruck!

## Ababu: Temesgen has already left. Let’s go!

## Etenesh: Demeku, are you okay? Why all this laughter?

## Demeku: They say on the radio that laughter is the source of happiness—didn’t you hear?

## Etenesh: On the channel where they teach us about conservation farming on or another?

## Demeku: Conservation farming is a serious business ... no, the entertainment channel.

## Ababu & Etenesh: laugh

## TRANSITION MUSIC

## SCENE 6

## LOCATION: GENETU

**CHARACTERS: BAYU, WEYNITU, TEMESGEN**

## 

## SFX: SOUNDS OF CATTLE

## Bayu: (CALLING) Temesgen, go check on the cows!

## Weynitu: You always call on Temesgen. There are four kids in the house, but it’s always Temesgen.

## Bayu: They have been in school all day.

## Weynitu: Temesgen is also starting school soon. What’s going to happen to you then?

## Bayu: I have you. Obviously, when the kids start coming into their own, it’s me and you that will live together, Weynitu.

## Weynitu: (surprised) Oh, I hope there’s some time before then.

## Temesgen: It’s okay, mom! Even if we move out, we will still come to visit.

## Bayu: Stop talking and let the calves go, and take the sheep out too.

## Temesgen: Okay.

## Weynitu: When this boy marries off, we are in trouble.

## Bayu: That is going to happen when she finishes her education.

## Weynitu: (laughing) People are saying that when he went to Selamu village for the last visit, he was talking non-stop with Feleku.

## Temesgen: Who said that? Is it that nosy Demeku? What shall we do about her?

## Bayu: Come now, son, just do your work.

## Temesgen: Dad!

## Bayu: Yes, son! Weynitu, bring my breakfast, it’s getting late.

## Temesgen: Dad!

## Bayu: I’m listening, son.

## Temesgen: Well, we have been trained on conservation farming three or four times now.

## Bayu: So what?

## Temesgen: Some of us are ready.

## Bayu: Who are some of you?

## Temesgen: Me, Etenesh, Demeku and some people from the upper area.

## Weynitu: Food is ready!

## Bayu: Okay, sit down, son.

## Temesgen: Okay, dad ... Why aren’t you open to it?

## Bayu: Son, I am not going to starve my cattle and toil to get better crop production.

## Temesgen: Okay, give me land and let me plough.

## Bayu: I’ll think about it.

## Temesgen: Dad, Etenesh is covering 25 by 25 metres of land with mulch and she ploughed by herself with a simple digging tool.

## Weynitu: How much land is that?

## Temesgen: One-sixteenth of a hectare. It’s because it’s her first time. She says she will expand.

## Weynitu: Lucky Etenesh. If you would give me some land, I would sow cabbage.

## Temesgen: Mom, if you mulch and grow cabbage, you can sell to the market twice a month because the soil will stay moist.

## Weynitu: And enough for the house too.

## Bayu: Oh, Weynitu! You want land too?

## Weynitu: For cabbage, yes!

## Bayu: Let’s get divorced then.

## Weynitu: (shocked) Why do you say that?

## Bayu: (laughs) … Because you are asking for your share of land ...

## Weynitu: All I said was just a piece of land. Long ago, with all my beauty, you would not have easily talked about divorce.

## Bayu: (laughs) We won’t talk about it now either. I’m just kidding. And your beauty is still there.

## Weynitu: (EMBARRASSED) Leave me alone! Why do you tease when I am so busy?

## Temesgen: (LAUGHS) Did Etenesh’s land stir up a problem?

## Bayu: Since Etenesh’s husband has passed away, she manages her wealth, her land, and children by herself. When she has a problem, she solves it herself. But in this house, I’m here. Don’t worry, Weynitu.

## Weynitu: I didn’t mean anything else when I said give me some land ... I just want to participate like the other women.

## Temesgen: Okay, Dad, give me mine.

## Bayu: I said I will think about it.

## Temesgen: Demeku also covered a sixteenth of a hectare.

## Bayu: Did Zeleke allow it?

## Weynitu: The food is getting cold, you two.

## Bayu: We told you we are coming, Weynitu. Temesgen, answer me!

## Temesgen: Mr. Zeleke isn’t here. Demeku mulched and sowed on her own.

## Weynitu: Come in, the coffee is ready.

## SFX: SOUND OF phone ringING

## Weynitu: (laughs) Son, your phone and the coffee are in sync.

## Bayu: Now you made me laugh, Weynitu. (laughs) Today’s kids—everything is about your phones.

## SFX: SOUND OF phone ringING

## Temesgen: What is wrong with you? You’re embarrassing me!

## Bayu: I’m going in. Talk to her. Why are you blushing? Aren’t you a man? You have got to be bold!

**TRANSITION MUSIC**

**SCENE 7**

**location: GENEtu**

**CHARacters: zeleke abate, demeku, etenesh, baYU, weYnitu, temesgen, ababu**

## 

## SFX: Screaming from Demeku’s house. Dog

## barking.

## Feleku: (CallING from outside) Temesgen! Temesgen!

## Weynitu: Temesgen, someone is calling you.

## Temesgen: And someone is screaming.

## Bayu: From whose house?

## Weynitu: It’s Demeku. Does it mean Mr. Zeleke is back?

## Temesgen: Does he let us know he’s back by hitting her?

## Bayu: Stop talking!

## Etenesh: He’s going to kill her. Let’s get there fast.

## Bayu: Let’s go quick … quick.

## SFX: PEOPLE TALKING

## Etenesh: Kids, get the dogs and come in. (PAUSE) Yes, hold it like that. Mr. Zeleke, what is wrong with you? Please stop!

## sfx: DEMEKU crying

## Bayu: Zeleke ... in a civilized time when we are told to respect women? Why?

## Zeleke abate: (angry) All of you, just stop talking.

## Bayu: Why would we? We came to solve the problem. What happened to you, brother? Hitting women is long forgotten in our area.

## Zeleke abate: Not for me.

## Weynitu: We can see that. But this is wrong. Hitting the mother of your seven kids is not our culture.

## ZELEKE ABATE: Nobody is going to ask what she did wrong?

## Ababu: Good evening, Mr. Zeleke!

## ZELEKE ABATE: I’m fine, Ababu!

## Bayu: No, you are not fine!

## Ababu: I could hear you from a distance. What’s wrong?

## Bayu: Good question. Mr. Zeleke, what happened? Couldn’t it have been fixed through a peaceful discussion?

## ZELEKE ABATE: May what happened to me never happen to you, my neighbours.

## Bayu: Tell us, and we’ll decide.

## ZELEKE ABATE: I was not around for a while because I was visiting relatives.

## Bayu: Yes, we heard you weren’t here.

## ZELEKE ABATE: When I, the head of the family, was not around, she covered the farmland with hay, grass, and dried crop stems that I had kept. She even took seeds and sowed them. She wasted them without talking to me about it. I feel degraded—as if she buried me alive.

## Bayu: Why didn’t you talk to him, Demeku? There are mobile phones everywhere in the village.

## Weynitu: What if mobiles don’t work where he went to?

## Temesgen: (laughs) Mom, if it works here, it works somewhere else.

## Weynitu: (ANGRY) Does she deserve to be hit because she did something good?

## Bayu: Weynitu, cool things down!

## Ababu: Ato. Zeleke, you should be happy conservation farming is being tried on your land. Trust me!

## Etenesh: It’s true. It would be better if you were calm and tried to understand. It’s not too late, we can fix the farmland. It’s just the mulch that was scattered ... the seeds are intact.

## Ababu: The main point is for you two to be at peace. Your children are stressed. We can deal with the farmland after you reach an understanding.

## Demeku: (crying) All my effort is wasted and he beat me. Leave me alone, I’ll go to my family.

## Weynitu: Your family should hear about this. Your neighbours are here. And where can you go with seven kids behind?

## ZELEKE ABATE: If she thinks I’m going to beg her to stay, she can go, but she can’t come back thinking she has a home.

## Weynitu: She will not go, and you have to calm down.

## Etenesh: Demeku, please sit down.

## Demeku: Oh, Etenesh!

## Ababu: Ato. Zeleke, cool down and let’s talk. Let Demeku tell us why she covered the farmland and why it’s important. Then you might understand her. Let her explain a little about how conservation farming works. Listen and you will accept it.

## Etenesh: And let me make coffee. Demeku, where are your coffee materials?

## Demeku: The kids will bring it for you.

## Bayu: Good, let’s talk while we’re drinking coffee.

## Ababu: Demeku, tell us, tell us why you wanted to participate in conservation farming. Explain to Ato Zeleke.

## Demeku: Do I have the permission, I mean to talk?

## Ababu: Yes, explain to Ato Zeleke so he gets it.

## ZELEKE ABATE: Okay go. I asked why you did not talk to me in the first place.

## Demeku: Okay. Is the Degoch area warm or cold in climate?

## ZELEKE ABATE: Can’t be called warm, but it’s sunny.

## Ababu: There is wind too.

## ZELEKE ABATE: Yes, there is.

## Demeku: Flooding also happens.

## Temesgen: This has turned into an interview. (laughs)

## ZELEKE ABATE: Yes, when it rains, the downslope sends us a flood.

## Demeku: Well, conservation farming helps to resolve challenges from the weather and the landscape, and it also saves our energy.

## ZELEKE ABATE: How?

## Demeku: When traditionally plowing with oxen, how many times do you men plough?

## ZELEKE ABATE: Four or five times.

## Demeku: You and your oxen are exhausted.

## ZELEKE ABATE: (IMPATIENT) What does this have to do with anything?

## Demeku: But now, in conservation farming, there is a new piece of plowing equipment—the Berken plow. You know it?

## ZELEKE ABATE: I’ve heard people talk about it.

## Demeku: I saw at Ato Negus’ in Selamu village how he used minimum tillage with the Berken plowing tool. One important thing I learned is that it is possible to sow by making a deep furrow with simple tools like a spade without the need to plough the land. This also helps save our energy as there is no ploughing. The soil too is protected from wind and flood erosion.

## Etenesh: And for someone with no cattle ...

## Demeku: I’m coming to that, Etenesh ... Minimum tillage is especially comfortable for women because they can plow with a spade by following a rope that is laid on the ground to make sure that the rows are straight.

## Temesgen: And what about mulching?

## Demeku: Like I said before, the area is sunny, but the soil that used to quickly dry out now keeps its moisture for several months, which is good for the plants. What’s more, when there is wind or floods, the leaves and crop residues covering the farmland protect the soil. The leaves and grass also act as fertilizers to increase the fertility of the land. Am I right?

## Temesgen: You are right. There will be a better yield of pigeon pea, lablab, cassava, and enset because mulch keeps the moisture in the soil all year-round and feeds the soil when it decomposes. These crops yield produce the whole year.

## Ababu: You are right, Temesgen, and that is what Ms. Demeku did.

## Weynitu: (SILENCE FOR A FEW SECONDS) It’s good to hear each other out on everything.

## Ababu: Now, what do you say, Ato Zeleke?

## ZELEKE ABATE: She still should have talked to me.

## Bayu: Anyway, you are cooled down now, Zeleke, so let’s go.

## Ababu: We shall go.

## SFX: sound of dog barking

**TRANSITION MUSIC**

**SCENE 8**

**LOCATION: Selamu**

**CHARACTERS: NGUS, MESELU, FELEKU**

## SFX: sound of sheep

## Nigus: (calling out) Feleku! Feleku!

## Feleku: Yes, dad!

## Nigus: Take the sheep to graze by the farmland.

## Feleku: We have an exam; I was going to study.

## Nigus: So study while you’re watching the sheep.

## Feleku: How, dad? What if they go into the farmland while I’m studying?

## Meselu: Take the kids and let them help you. You have to study. If I had learnt like you and finished college, I wouldn’t be here in the countryside.

## Nigus: What are you missing now about the city?

## Meselu: Oh stop! Since when do the city and the countryside compare?

## Nigus: I asked what you are missing.

## Meselu: I am thankful that we have enough food and drink. Even though I haven’t been educated, I am sending my children to school. But we haven’t lived the city life.

## Nigus: The city life is different from ours, but ours is better because we don’t have so many expenses. And now, thanks to conservation agriculture, by planting crops one after the other, all kinds of foods are available. We grow cabbage and peas right here at our own home.

## Meselu: Thank God!

## Nigus: Well, we spoke with Ato Bayu. He’s preparing to send the elders to ask us to approve Feleku’s and Temesgen’s marriage.

## Meselu: So soon?

## Nigus: Feleku’s graduation is coming. Ato Bayu wants them to get married as soon as she graduates.

## Meselu: What did you tell him?

## Nigus: I said I would discuss it with my wife.

## sfx: SOUND OF phone ringING

## Meselu: (callS) Feleku! Feleku, your phone is ringing.

## Feleku: (from a distance) I am coming, mom!

## Nigus: Who is it?

## Meselu: I didn’t see. Why are you asking me?

## Feleku: Where is my phone?

## Meselu: Here it is. Who is it now?

## Feleku: (MOVING AWAY) No one!

## Nigus: Nobody? A phone doesn’t just ring.

## Meselu: It’s Temesgen. Who else could it be?

## Nigus: Is that why she ran out with the phone?

## Meselu: Didn’t you just tell her to go out with the sheep?

## Nigus: She doesn’t usually go outside this quickly.

## Meselu: Well, she is gone.

## Nigus: We will talk to her about the marriage request from Bayu’s family tomorrow morning.

## Meselu: They must have already talked about it, but he still has a year to go to finish his classes.

## Nigus: A man has no big problems. He doesn’t get pregnant or give birth, so he can finish while in his new marriage.

## Meselu: Most importantly, she is going to graduate, thank God!

## Nigus: Both youngsters are going to be successful in conservation farming.

## Meselu: Especially my daughter. She has started to produce cabbage with us already.

## Nigus: His father told me he gave his son land and that he is going to sow half the normal size of farmland and use the mulching technique.

## Meselu: Let me start preparing things for the *tela* [*Editor’s note: a traditional beer*].

## Nigus: Yes, that is why I am telling you in advance.

## Meselu: Why doesn’t Ato Bayu get involved in conservation farming and mulching?

## Nigus: He is scared his cattle will starve.

## Meselu: Why aren’t we scared?

## Nigus: He has many more cattle. He has never had a problem accepting new things. But now he is looking at our farm—and at Temesgen’s later. Then we will see what he has to say. (PAUSE) Is this girl still on the phone?

## Meselu: Yes, she is still talking.

## Nigus: Didn’t she say she had to study? ... Meselu!

## Meselu: Yes!

## Nigus: Listen, Temesgen is a good boy. But advise your daughter so she won’t make a mistake before marriage. As I see it, they are getting really close.

## Meselu: (LAUGHS) My daughter is wise! Back then, before we got married, you used to come every now and then. When I took the cattle to the fields, you showed up out of nowhere.

## Nigus: You are funny! I think I came about three times, even after the elders were sent.

## Meselu: Oh, you forget now. Actually, it has been a long time. It has been 20 years since we got married. Now I am the only one who worries about you.

## Nigus: What am I not giving you? I made you the mother of four children. Or is there something missing? Come here, Meselu. You reminded me of the good old days.

## Meselu: Where is this heading to? Let me go ... where have you been all night that you are hugging me now? Let me go ... the kids are coming for breakfast.

## TRANSITION MUSIC

## SCENE 9

## LOCATION: GENETU

## CHARACTERS: WEYNITU, ETENESH, DEMEKU

## Etenesh: That was good coffee. I was really tired today, Weynitu. You saved my life.

## Weynitu: It’s nothing, Etenesh. You tired yourself out by working all day. How long has it been since you started conservation farming?

## Etenesh: Six months now.

## Weynitu: That’s a surprise. How the time flew by!

## Etenesh: And now, I am taking my turn being a model farmer. I am also in the savings and credit association. I got a loan and I am buying a *bajaj* [*Editor’s note: three-wheeled motorbikes for transportation*].

## Weynitu: You must have got a good profit, or you wouldn’t be getting a loan to buy a *bajaj* (laughs).

## Etenesh: In fact, I got good money from selling cabbage, but I borrowed the money because it wasn’t enough.

## Weynitu: You are a heroine!

## Etenesh: There are ten savings associations in our area. They come to me share experiences about the best way to work with the associations.

## Weynitu: How many people in the savings associations?

## Etenesh: A hundred and fifty, and fifty of them are women.

## Weynitu: So they all come on the same day?

## Etenesh: No, today around fifty of them are coming. The rest will come some other time.

## Weynitu: That’s nice. I would like to use minimal tillage and mulch on my farm like you. Bayu says that if the hay is used to cover the land, his cattle will starve. So he won’t do it.

## Etenesh: Temesgen started conservation farming and using mulch, right? That’s good. He is smart. One day, Mr. Bayu will realize that too. Then you will do the mulch farming and Mr. Ababu will do the oxen plowing.

## Weynitu: I will also help Temesgen, but the crops are not yet ready to be harvested.

## Etenesh: But not long before it’s ready.

## Etenesh: Conservation farming is like medicine for our farmland, especially for us women. It allows us to participate in farming by using a spade to dig a narrow, deep furrow in the garden. And because we add all the vegetable waste we find to the farmland, we can better fertilize the plowed land.

## Weynitu: How many quintals did you yield, Etenesh? Please tell me.

## Etenesh: First (LAUGHS), I ploughed one-eighth of a hectare. I rotated different crops one after the other: maize and pigeon peas. I harvested the maize but the peas will take more time. They will last the whole year. We take the peas to market whenever they are ready. I followed by planting cabbage on another plot, and it was ready in a month. I am selling that now.

## Weynitu: So how many quintals was that?

## Etenesh: For the maize that I grew on one-eighth of a hectare, it was three quintals (300 kgs). Now I am plowing a field which is 40 metres by 60 metres.

## Weynitu: It’s unbelievable! When we used to farm traditionally, it was great if we got one quintal out of one-eighth of a hectare. And there was so much work!

## Etenesh: At first, my family was about to eat me up, saying I had trashed the farmland.

## Weynitu: You can’t judge them. For someone who has not seen the results, it is not normal to see farmland full of grass and hay.

## Etenesh: LAUGHS

## Weynitu: How much pigeon peas did you get, Etenu [*Editor’s note: a short name for Etenesh*]?

## Etenesh: Last time, I took about 75 kilos to the market. I am still harvesting because the soil is still moist, and the peas can be harvested all year. Cabbage is also harvested all year.

## Weynitu: So how much land did you plant all together?

## Etenesh: In addition to the cabbage that I sowed before, one-quarter of a hectare. I will expand and use mulch and minimal tillage on the rest. Crop rotation is also beneficial. On the land that I sowed with maize, I will alternate with peas. The profits from crop rotation are good. We grew one crop for two years, and another during the third year.

## Weynitu: It’s an incredibly wise practice!

## Etenesh: And that Demeku has done it again. She sowed cabbage. But I sow more cabbage than she does and the jealousy is going to kill her.

## Weynitu: Hasn’t she used the mulching technique? Why is she jealous?

## Etenesh: The first time, her husband ruined it. Then she planted cabbage, and it’s quickly getting ready now. I don’t know what I have done to her, but when she sees me, she says that the neighbours are so far ahead of her that she can’t catch them. Whenever a guest comes to my house, she tries to see who it is.

## Weynitu: Well, she probably sees you as a little sister. Be patient with her, Etenu. You are a heroine, a decent and courageous woman who learns with her kids. Now, you are speeding up your education, right?

## Etenesh: Thank you! I’ll finish my education one way or another.

## Demeku: (calls) Etenesh! Etenesh!

## Weynitu: Demeku is calling you (LAUGHS).

## Etenesh: What is wrong with her now, what is wrong?

## Demeku: The people from the lower area are coming to you for training.

## Etenesh: Oh, I didn’t even change my clothes. I’m going, Weynitu.

## TRANSITION MUSIC

**SCENE 10**

**LOCATION: GENETU**

**CHARACTERS: BAYU, WEYNITU, TEMESGEN, FELEKU**

## SFX: SOUND OF people making noise getting closer

## SFX: SOUND OF CATTLE. SOUND OF PHONE RINGING.

## Weynitu: Temesgen, your phone is ringing.

## Temesgen: It’s Feleku. She is coming to see the crop I am growing on the land Dad gave me.

## Weynitu: Go get her, son. Let me tidy the house.

## Bayu: (from outside) Where are you going, son?

## Weynitu: He’s bringing a guest over, come in.

## Bayu: Oh, is she here? Tell her to come in. The elders are also back with good news.

## Weynitu: Obviously, they are in love!

## Bayu: The father could still have said no.

## Weynitu: First off, our son is a good kid—and they also want relations with us.

## Bayu: Their daughter is also a good girl. Better start preparations for the wedding.

## Weynitu: *Now* you tell me! I started preparing a while back.

## SFX: SOUND OF Temesgen and Feleku ENTERING

## Weynitu: Oh kids, you are here. Come in! How are you, Feleku? Come in, my daughter!

## Feleku: I am fine, how are you?

## Bayu: I have some errands to run. Make yourselves at home. Weynitu!

## Weynitu: Yes!

## Bayu: Serve them!

## Weynitu: Of course!

## Temesgen: See, Feleku, my mom is like this, her face as bright as the sun.

## Weynitu: (laughing) Liar, her mom is just as bright.

## Temesgen: Yes, but I’m talking about you now.

## Weynitu: I heard your graduation is coming up, Feleku.

## Feleku: Yes, it’s coming up!

## Temesgen: After that, it’s all wedding festivities. My mother is preparing for it.

## Weynitu: That day will be my happiest … Who is at the door, son? Is it the police? Hey, what do you need?

## Temesgen: Wait, let me see. Did you say police? (LAUGHS) You just saw a man wearing a khaki uniform. But he is a merchant. Haven’t you ever seen a police officer, mom?

## Feleku: Who is it?

## Temesgen: He’s a buyer. He came to discuss the price of buying the maize before it has been harvested. Let me go and talk to him. I’ll be back.

**TRANSITION MUSIC**

**SCENE 11**

**LOCATION: GENETU**

**CHARACTERS: ZELEKE, DEMEKU, ABABU**

## SFX: Dog barkING

## ZELEKE ABATE: Demeku, I think someone is here. The dog is barking.

## Demeku: Who is it?

## Ababu: It’s Ababu, Demeku.

## Demeku: Oh Ababu, come in! How are you?

## Ababu: I’m fine, is Mr. Zeleke home?

## ZELEKE ABATE: I’m here, Ababu, come in!

## Ababu: How is the conservation farming going? Any problems?

## ZELEKE ABATE: We have come to an understanding. When Demeku took the training, it was only about maize, but then we talked about it and we sowed cabbage for the time being.

## Ababu: Cabbage matures more quickly when you use mulching techniques since it helps retain the soil moisture, which lasts all year.

## ZELEKE ABATE: It’s amazing knowledge! We are trying it out and seeing the results.

## Demeku: I am such a sinner!

## ZELEKE ABATE: What happened, Demeku?

## Demeku: Ababu, to be honest, back when you went to Etenesh’s often, I thought it was something else.

## ZELEKE ABATE: (ANGRY) What are you saying?

## Demeku: I confess today. I get it now that you have been helping everyone as you helped me.

## ZELEKE ABATE: Don’t jump to conclusions without good information!

## Ababu: It’s okay. (laughs) You didn’t understand back then, so I won’t hold it against you. What is important is that you know the truth now.

## Demeku: I’m doing as well as my neighbours now. I harvested about 70 kilos of cabbage and I will take it to the market. Etenesh has made more profits because she started earlier.

## Ababu: You can get to her level. What’s important is that you have started.

## ZELEKE ABATE: I heard you were giving training in the lower area yesterday.

## Ababu: Yes, when people are told about conservation farming, they are doubtful.

## ZELEKE ABATE: You know why, Ababu ... we used to discuss conservation farming with those people and the question of how it’s possible to get better yields with just one round of plowing.

## The second reason they’re doubtful is that we used to believe that leaving crop residues on farmland was a sign of being a lazy farmer. When we saw mulch and crop residues, we considered it a dirty farm.

## The other thing is that we never thought that soil that has not been softened and ploughed could give a good yield.

## Ababu: How about now, Mr. Zeleke?

## ZELEKE ABATE: Now that we are practicing conservation farming, there is year-round production. The time during the summer that we used to spend sitting in the shade is over.

## Ababu: Yes, and in conservation farming, the work isn’t just for the men, but for the women too.

## Demeku: We have also started listening to the radio. A lot of our questions about conservation farming have been answered.

## Demeku: I am now fully working on farming. Other than doing household chores and caring for the children, I wasn’t really involved before.

## Ababu: Let me ask you one question, Mr. Zeleke.

## ZELEKE ABATE: Okay.

## Ababu: What would you say is the main challenge of implementing conservation farming, including and mulching?

## ZELEKE ABATE: If all our farmland was ploughed and mulched, we would get better results. Now we are using conservation farming on a limited amount of land. So help us get more grass and crop residues that we can use for mulching on all of our land.

## Ababu: Are you saying it’s hard to find enough mulch for all the farmland?

## ZELEKE ABATE: Yes!

## Ababu: It’s a good idea to grow plants that help cover the land. You could grow cassava, lablab, pigeon pea, soyabean, peas, false banana trees, and bananas. Other than that, planting trees such as *bisana (Croton macrostachyus)* can help provide more mulch. That allows farmers to expand farmland that’s ploughed with the Berken plow.

## Demeku: You two keep chatting, let me take the cabbage to the market.

## Ababu: After I convince you, I have to work on convincing the others. I have to go too.

## ZELEKE ABATE: Have a good day, Ababu. Wait, Demeku. Let me help you carry the cabbage.

## Demeku: Fine. It’s just until I buy a *bajaj* like Etenesh!

## TRANSITION MUSIC

## SCENE 12

## LOCATION: GENETU

## CHARACTERS: BAYU, WEYNITU, TEMESGEN, ETENESH, DEMEKU, ABABU

## SFX: SOUND OF MEN LAUGHING

## SFX: SOUND OF CATTLE

## Weynitu: Come here, Temesgen ... what has gotten into you today? I have wedding preparations to work on.

## Temesgen: I will watch the cattle, Mom. You go back to your work.

## Etenesh: Your neighbours are here to help with the wedding. And most of the work is done.

## Bayu: Weynitu!

## Weynitu: Yes!

## Bayu: What did I tell you earlier?

## Weynitu: Please let me do my work.

## Bayu: Okay, leave it!

## Weynitu: Tell me!

## Bayu: Didn’t you just tell me to let you do your work?

## Weynitu: Well, tell me, you said you had good news. (laughs) Tell me!

## Bayu: I am going to try conservation farming, including mulching.

## Weynitu: What? Really? Or are my ears deceiving me?

## Bayu: It’s true. I’ve talked with Ababu and decided to plant cassava and lablab on one-quarter of a hectare and you will grow cabbage and pepper on one-eighth of a hectare. And I will also plant feed for the cattle.

## Weynitu: (happy and excited, ULULATES)

## Etenesh: Weynitu, what happened?

## Weynitu: Etenesh, come hear this! Bayu is going to try conservation farming and I’m going to sow cabbage.

## Etenesh: That is great news! He finally decided. I hoped it would happen.

## Bayu: I thought it through and considered all the work it takes to plough traditionally like our fathers did, especially when the yield isn’t satisfying. So I have decided to put my remaining wealth into conservation farming and live a better life. Come on, speed up the wedding preparations!

## Weynitu: Bayu, you doubled my happiness on the eve of my son’s wedding. (ULULATES)

## Temesgen: Dad, you made us really happy. And now my groomsmen are coming to take the dowry to the bride’s house.

## Etenesh: Weynitu, bring the drums.

## SFX: SOUND OF DRUMS

## Demeku: (from a distance) Etenesh, I’m just getting back from the market. I’m coming too.

## Ababu: Slow down, Demeku. You are going to fall.

## Demeku: Oh please—it’s the eve of Temesgen and Feleku’s wedding!

## sfx: drums and music play loudly

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