By Mekonnen Hailu

Ethiopia has secured 133.7 million USD from the export of horticultural crops in the last seven months, the Ethiopian Horticulture Development Agency (EHDA) said.

Agency Director General Haileselassie Tekie said that the country earned the foreign currency from the export of 1.1 billion flower stems and 72.8 thousand tons of fruits, vegetables and herbs in the last seven months (From July 2011-Jan. 2012). More than 107.5 million US dollars was obtained from the export of flowers to the international market, while the balance was secured from the sale of fruits, vegetables and herbs.

The country expects to secure a total of 300 million US dollars from export of horticulture. meanwhile the seven month performance shows that it is unlikely to meet the target.

The foreign currency the country earned from the sector in the stated period has increased by 22.7 millions US dollars in revenue compared to last year same period. The Netherlands, Germany, England, Belgium, Russia, Japan and Middle East counties are among the major recipients of the products.

The demand for the horticultural products' of Ethiopia is very high and thus the Agency is doing market promotion and diversification activities. Incentives and the necessary support are being provided by the government of Ethiopia, the number of foreign and local investors engaged in the sector is on the increase, the Director General said.

Ethiopia has recently started to export organic banana to Saudi Arabia market, which the project is supported by Common Fund for Commodities (CFC), is an important step to ensure the growth of horticulture industry in the country. More than 105 horticulture producer and exporters companies are operating in the country, of which over 70 per cent of them are foreign and joint venture, it was learnt.