



2011 AWARD Fellow
Joan Modupe Babajide

Position	Senior lecturer
Institution	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta
Country	Nigeria
PhD	Food Science and Technology, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, 2005
Mentor	Elizabeth Balogun, Professor Department of Biochemistry University of Agriculture, Abeokuta

Research area: Processing and quality improvement of traditional dried yam (*gbodo*), yam flour (*elubo*), and other related food products.

Joan Modupe Babajide understands first-hand the challenge of balancing a career and a family. She and her husband were busy raising their first child during her undergraduate studies, yet she still graduated with second-class (upper division) honors. Joan had her next two children during studies for her master's degree. She went on to obtain her PhD in food science and technology in 2005. Now she is helping other Nigerian women by creating a new time- and labor-saving food product.

During the last six years, Babajide has been working on the quality improvement (preservation with *abafe* and *agehu* leaves) of traditional dried yam (*gbodo*), yam flour (*elubo*), and other related food products. Currently, she is developing a pre-gelatinized *elubo*, which can be stirred into boiling water for three to five minutes to get *amala*—a thick paste that Nigerians eat with stew, vegetables, and meat.

Preparing *amala* takes about 30 minutes—time that working Nigerian women, especially those in towns and cities, do not have. Often *amala* becomes lumpy and is burned during stirring. Most Yoruba women choose to serve instant pounded yam flour or *gari* (fermented, dried cassava granules) over *elubo* to their hungry families, even though it has less protein, because it takes less time to prepare than *elubo*. Women will profit from a substantially reduced preparation time if they use Babajide's pre-gelatinized *elubo* product.

"What I am aiming at is *elubo* produced in the most energy-efficient way, which will produce the most preferred dish," says Babajide. Working with a female master's student, she plans to patent and commercialize her method, and then teach rural women how to start their own production, which, she says, will earn her the honored title "*Iya Elelubo*"—a woman who sells *elubo*. She is convinced that appealing packaging will help her to market her *elubo* even to Nigerians abroad.

Babajide believes that being an AWARD Fellow will fast-track her career after she was passed over for a promotion to associate professor last year due to having too few publications in reputed international journals. She expects AWARD's training in science writing and the support from her prolific mentor to soon make that disappointment a distant memory.

"I am looking forward to joining the Institute of Food Technologists as my AWARD-sponsored professional association, since it publishes several high-impact journals in my field," says Babajide. "AWARD will also help me to improve my work-life balance as a wife, a mother, and a researcher."

She is also anticipating a three-month research attachment with the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Japan, which was arranged prior to her winning an AWARD Fellowship. She will work in a well-equipped laboratory on her yam-processing technologies as the Abeokuta contact person for IITA's collaborative research on yams.

Babajide is already known to be one of the best yam technology researchers in Nigeria, and this hands-on scientist is now well on her way to international visibility and recognition.

Babajide is one of a growing number of African women agricultural scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. AWARD is a professional development program that strengthens the research and leadership skills of African women in agricultural science, empowering them to contribute more effectively to poverty alleviation and food security in sub-Saharan Africa. AWARD is generously supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United States Agency for International Development. For more information, visit www.awardfellowships.org
