AWARD
African Women in Agricultural Research and Development

Profile

2010 AWARD Fellow
Emily Masinde

Position:	MSc Agronomy (Crop Protection)student/Egerton University
Institution:	Kenya Agricultural Research Institute/Egerton University
Country:	Kenya
BSc:	Horticulture, Egerton University, 2008
Mentored by:	Dr. Nancy Wangari Mungai Department of Crops, Horticulture and Soils Egerton University

Research area: Molecular characterization of plant resistance genes to various plant insect pests, particularly aphid-resistance genes in bread wheat cultivars.

Emily Masinde is combining an aptitude for crop protection with her ardent advocacy for women farmers. Through her master's research project, this young scientist hopes to help develop aphid-resistant varieties of wheat to improve food security in Kenya.

"During my internship at KARI in Njoro, I worked with a group of scientists assessing the constraints of agricultural production," recalls Emily. "I learned that smallholder farmers, and especially women, have limited access to just about everything—land, capital, credit, agricultural inputs, education, training and extension services, as well as research and appropriate technologies. And I could see that they had major problems dealing with pests and diseases in their wheat crops. I was touched by their plight, and, as a scientist, I wanted to look for solutions to their problems."

Masinde helps to organize role-modeling events and field days where the farmers, predominantly women, test products made from new varieties, including soya bean. "The women are mostly interested in the palatability and yield," explains Masinde. As a member of the Kenya Horticultural Society, she participates in organizing the annual horticultural flower show where youth can learn more about floral arranging for weddings and events—a good source of employment and income.

In the future, Masinde hopes to empower smallholder women farmers using pro-poor technologies, such as mushroom farming. "Mushroom farming would go a long way to solving problems, such as malnutrition and food insecurity, and it would increase farmers' incomes," says Masinde. "Its potential has not been fully exploited largely due to financial constraints."

Masinde inherited her passion for agriculture from her parents; her mother is a horticulturalist and her father is an agricultural economist. Masinde is completing her master's degree in Crop Protection, and one of her goals is to learn how to write competitive funding proposals. "Having adequate funds to do research is one of the biggest challenges, and it's critical to be able to write a winning proposal," she says.

In 2009, Dr. Mabel Mahasi, a senior colleague at KARI who is an AWARD Fellow, chose Masinde as a mentee, passing on knowledge and experience gained in the fellowship. Masinde says she benefited from the training she received on preparing papers to present at scientific conferences and using e-libraries, and this encouraged her to apply for an AWARD Fellowship this year. She is eager to work with Dr. Nancy Wangari Mungai, and expects that their relationship will be rewarding.

"AWARD builds the leadership capacities of women scientists and I believe this fellowship will empower me to serve as a champion of rural women, and to increase their visibility," says Masinde. "I'd like to become a leader in the agricultural sector so I can increase the capital budget to engage in research and development, address the issue of education, and improve extension services to women."

Masinde is one of 180 African woman 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. For more information, please visit www.awardfellowships.org.