



2010 AWARD Fellow
Iyabode Kehinde

Position:	Senior lecturer
Institution:	Department of Biological Sciences College of Natural Sciences University of Agriculture, Abeokuta
Country:	Nigeria
PhD:	Plant Pathology, University of Ibadan, 2008
Mentored by:	Professor Enikuomehin Ololade Adeduro Plant Pathology, Department of Crop Protection College of Plant Science and Production University of Agriculture, Abeokuta

Research area: Developing disease epidemiology and molecular control strategies for the African yam bean.

Iyabode Kehinde understands women farmers because she is one herself. As a university lecturer and a plant pathology researcher, Kehinde spends many hours in the lab and the classroom, but her heart is with her crops.

“I find a way to get to my farm every day, no matter how busy I am,” says Kehinde, enthusiastically describing the 30-acre plot she co-owns with her brother. “Teak plants, palms, maize, cassava, tomatoes, peppers, and plantain—we grow it all!”

African yam beans also figure prominently on Kehinde’s grow list. She is working with a team of geneticists and plant breeders to select the African yam bean most suitable to the region. “I am responsible for identifying the causal pathogen, carrying out the epidemiological study, and screening selected cultivars for disease resistance,” she explains.

She is also studying the effects of chemical fertilizers and looking for botanical alternatives. “I am really interested in helping farmers provide produce that is disease-free, nutritious, affordable, and with fewer or no chemicals by using botanicals and biological control of plant diseases in the field and in storage.”

In addition to conducting research and lecturing, Kehinde also develops extension training courses. A smallholder herself, she approaches farmers as a partner, not a preacher. “Farmers aren’t resistant to new ideas; it’s just that they believe in what they know. So it’s important to come and learn with them and from them—to see what they are already doing well, and work together to improve it.” Kehinde plans to develop easy-to-understand booklets for farmers on crop disease symptoms and control strategies, as well as storage and processing techniques.

“Living is not just about getting knowledge, but about giving back to the community,” she says. This mother of three envisions starting a small organization that would take urban children on three-day farm visits. “I want to get children interested in agriculture. Most kids today don’t know how things grow.”

As an AWARD Fellow, Kehinde would like to enhance her science skills, especially in molecular techniques used to diagnose and identify disease causal agents. She also hopes to learn from fellow women scientists about how to balance work and family life, and she is eager to attend the AWARD Women’s Leadership and Management Course. “I want to develop the leadership skills that people say they recognize in me. I want to show them that yes, I can go places as a woman.”

Kehinde 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
