



**2010 AWARD Fellow**  
**Jennifer Quao**

<b>Position:</b>	MSc student
<b>Institution:</b>	Department of Nutrition and Food Science University of Ghana
<b>Country:</b>	Ghana
<b>BSc:</b>	Nutrition and Food Science, University of Ghana, 2007
<b>Mentored by:</b>	Dr. Emmanuel Ohene Afoakwa, Senior Lecturer Department of Nutrition and Food Science University of Ghana

***Research Area: Employing the influence of pod storage as a means of pulp preconditioning to establish changes in biochemical constituents and flavor profiles during fermentation of Ghanaian cocoa beans.***

Jennifer Quao's research is focused on the postharvest management of cocoa, especially flavor enhancement. She is investigating pod storage as a way to precondition cocoa beans to effect changes in their biochemical composition during fermentation. "Cocoa is Ghana's main export, and is really the backbone of the country's economy," she says. "Understanding these factors will improve the flavor of dried fermented beans produced by smallholder farmers in Ghana."

Quao realized early on that she wanted to pursue a career in science. She is one of three daughters of an accountant, who gave his girls the chance to explore any career option they wanted. Now, she is excited to be a master's student at the University of Ghana. She first planned to become a doctor, gaining admission to university as a biological science student. But she soon realized her interests had changed and decided upon nutrition and food science.

"Ghana records high postharvest losses of foods, especially cereals, roots, and tuber crops, through improper handling, storage, and marketing, resulting in significant financial losses to smallholder farmers, most of whom are women," Quao says. "I believe that transforming these foods into semifinished or finished food products would help to add value to Ghana's local produce, reduce postharvest losses, and increase in their shelf life, making them available all year round, thereby improving the livelihoods of rural folks."

Eventually, Quao hopes to become a researcher, then a university lecturer on a part-time basis. She believes the AWARD Fellowship will enhance her visibility and networking to enable her to make an impact. "As a researcher and scientist you need strong scientific skills. I hope to improve my writing skills so I can submit good proposals, and the leadership training will enhance my career and help me to make a difference in the lives of smallholder farmers."

*Quao 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](http://www.awardfellowships.org)*

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