AWARD
African Women in Agricultural
Research and Development

2008 AWARD Fellow
Mabel Mahasi

Position:	Senior plant breeder, Oilcrop Programme leader National Oilcrops coordinator
Institution:	Kenya Agricultural Research Institute
Country:	Kenya
PhD:	Plant Breeding, Egerton University, Kenya 2008
Mentored by:	Dr. Lusike Wasilwa Assistant Director, Horticultural and Industrial Crops Kenya Agricultural Research Institute

Mabel Mahasi is a soybean specialist whose research focuses on developing varieties that are disease-resistant, tolerant of drought and acidic soils, and that contain high nutritional value. Soybean has been found helpful in the fight against heart disease, cancer and diabetes, as well as preventing body deterioration often associated with HIV and AIDS.

In Kenya, soybeans are promoted as a food security crop, however, according to Mahasi, yields and biomass production have been extremely low. To improve productivity, her research is examining varieties successful in Brazil, the world's leader in soybean breeding. She plans to breed new varieties from Brazilian lines using a method known as gene introgression. These new soybean lines will have attributes for higher yields.

As an AWARD Fellow, Mahasi is working with Brazilian scientists to gain biotechnological plant breeding skills, which use molecular markers to shorten breeding intervals. These skills will enable her to develop new soybean types that fit specific agro-ecologies in Kenya.

Mahasi 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