



2011 AWARD Fellow
Dorothy John Ole-Meiludie

Position	Head, Seed testing
Institution	Tanzania Official Seed Certification Institute (TOSCI)
Country	Tanzania
MSc	Agriculture, Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), 1992
Mentor	Professor Susan Nchimbi Msolla Faculty of Agriculture, SUA

Research area: Collaborating on the “Scaling up farmer-led seed enterprises for sustained productivity and livelihoods in Eastern and Central Africa” project.

Raised on a small coffee and banana plantation in the shadow of Mount Kilimanjaro, Dorothy John Ole-Meiludie and her seven siblings grew up knowing hunger—something she hopes today as a seed researcher to help rural families avoid.

“My mother didn’t have enough to feed us. I want the families I work with to be free from that burden,” says Ole-Meiludie, an agronomist at TOSCI. “I love my work because it gives me the opportunity to serve my community and to help farmers better provide for their children.”

Ole-Meiludie is enrolled in a PhD program at SUA, where she is studying the on-farm diversity of farmer-used crops in Morogoro, one of the most important agricultural regions in Tanzania. She hopes to come up with a database of traditional and improved crop varieties, which will detail how associated farming characteristics affect the adoption of new/improved varieties. Statistics show that less than 10 percent of seeds used by farmers are commercial varieties that have been improved through scientific crop research, and whose multiplication has been monitored and regulated by TOSCI. Only two to three percent of the farming community uses improved seed, indicating that more than 90 percent of all seed used is of unknown identity and unsure quality.

Ole-Meiludie says her overarching goal is focused on seed production. “I want to find out the reasons behind the existing slow rate of adoption of improved varieties,” she says. “I hope to suggest possible solutions to ensure that smallholder farmers, including women—who provide 74 percent of the agricultural labor force in Tanzania—obtain quality seed on time, at affordable prices, and that they use it.” She wants to see to it that farmers also get the knowledge and training they need to be able to conduct sustainable agriculture production.

“Quality seed is expensive, and farmers cannot afford to buy sufficient amounts,” explains Ole-Meiludie, who is a collaborator on the “Scaling up farmer-led seed enterprises for sustained productivity and livelihoods in Eastern and Central Africa” project. “The seed traders are mainly found in towns—far from the farmers,

who have travel long distances to buy seed,” she explains. “Many miss the first rains or the whole season, or they don’t get enough quality seed. As a result, seed production and food production decrease. This project supports the production of indigenous vegetable seeds so that farmers can access seeds that are suitable for their areas at affordable prices—and on time.”

Ole-Meiludie says the skills she expects to gain through AWARD’s leadership development training will directly benefit her work. “I aspire to become an internationally recognized and respected seed technologist so I can contribute to the global efforts to increase cereal production for sustainable food security,” she says. “Good leadership, writing, and presentation skills will enable me to influence decision makers to help our institute finalize the laboratory international standards and procedures in order to be awarded International Seed Testing Association (ISTA) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) accreditation. This will enable seed surpluses from our farmers to be sold outside the country to create foreign exchange.”

Ole-Meiludie 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
