



2011 AWARD Fellow
Wilhemina Quaye

Position	Senior research scientist
Institution	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research Food Research Institute
Country	Ghana
MPhil	Agricultural economics, University of Ghana, 2002
Mentor	Emmanuel Ohene Afoakwa, Associate professor Department of Nutrition and Food Science University of Ghana

Research area: Conducting socio-economic research in food security and climate change issues in Ghana.

Wilhemina Quaye's father believed very strongly in education, so he saw to it that his four daughters all got a good education. Quaye pursued pure science (chemistry, physics, and biology) in secondary school and agricultural economics for her undergraduate and master's degrees.

Her main area of research is food sovereignty. "Produce what you want to produce, have access to what you produce, and conduct environmentally friendly practices, using what you have—these are the tenets of food sovereignty. We believe in global concepts, but we can take advantage of local solutions."

Quaye works on a team with women processors both in rural Ghana and in the city, linking farmers with urban markets. "Food research has developed rice-processing techniques that include parboiling to improve on quality and taste," she says. "We assess the needs, work on the technologies, and train the farmers."

Quaye and her colleagues are also working with cassava, looking at baseline socio-economic issues, and her PhD work is on cowpeas. "Our team—a breeder, a food nutritionist, a food technologist and me, a social scientist—looked at the cowpea network in Ghana from the farm to the markets. The breeder looks at what varieties are acceptable, the nutritionist studies the iron content, the food technologist investigates the functional properties of cowpea grains for processing, and I examine what kind of food the people want. We are self-sufficient in Ghana with cowpeas, but people are going for imported, fast-cooking varieties." She intends to go back to breeders to determine how to make cowpeas more acceptable locally and to introduce more demand-driven varieties.

Quaye is currently in a PhD program in rural sociology, in connection with Wageningen University in the Netherlands. Her goal is to be promoted to principal research scientist within the next two years, and she recognizes that she will need to publish more papers and win a research grant to achieve this. "I realize the enormous opportunities AWARD is placing before me, especially the coaching on scientific writing," she says. "The networking skills that I learn will enable me to get to know more people for mutual support."

Quayesays her main challenge is learning how to manage her time as a mother and a research scientist. She derives great joy from seeing that her life has had an impact on people. "When I am with the farmers and processors, I learn from them and they learn from me. That is very rewarding."

Quaye 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
