



2019 AWARD Fellow
Diana Wanda Odinya

Position	Student, Teaching Assistant
Institution	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT)
Country	Kenya
BSc	Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, JKUAT, 2017
Mentor	Dr. Obebo Forah Mokuu, Economist, Kenyatta University
Research Area	Food, feed, and nutrition security.

Odinya's research work involves examining the food value chain from the producer to the trader to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers while increasing food security and also create policies that address the challenges of livestock farmers.

Diana Wanda Odinya and her siblings—including her identical twin sister—grew up in a small village in southwestern Kenya. Her mother works as a sign language teacher and her father as a county child protection officer, and the family moved quite frequently. Odinya completed a BSc in Agricultural Economics and Rural Development at JKUAT, and has participated in research activities organized by some of the JKUAT lecturers. "This provided me with the opportunity to attend and present at conferences on sustainable development, and together with my supervisors, we published a research paper and we hope to publish more," she says.

Since graduating with her bachelor's degree in 2017, she has since begun a master's in Agricultural and Applied Economics at JKUAT. She recently had an opportunity to engage in a project on urban food systems. "We look at the food value chain from the producer to the trader to the consumer," she remarks. She and her supervisor also did a livestock survey to determine how to enhance and create policies that address the challenges of livestock farmers. She looks forward to working with farmers during her current master's studies, which she expects to complete in 2019. "My goal is to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers while increasing food security," she says. She hopes to move on to a PhD once she completes her current round of study.

During her research attachment at the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE), Odinya assisted in the dissemination of push-pull technology in maize production. "This involves

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intercropping maize with a leguminous crop such as desmodium, and planting Napier grass as a border crop around the perimeter of the field,” she explains. “The main benefit of this technology is that it offers biological—not chemical—control of Striga weed and stem borers, which are major threats to maize production in western Kenya.” In addition, both desmodium and Napier grass control soil erosion and improve soil fertility.

According to Odinya, farmers have preferences in terms of livestock feeds. For energy sources, they rely on maize but as a protein source they rely on plant proteins and fishmeal. “The challenge with these is that they compete with humans for food and production resources like land,” she notes. “So we are looking at alternatives. We are looking at the formulation of insects and cassava to feed livestock.” One thing she is focusing on is people’s perception of insect-fed animals.

Odinya is determined to positively impact her community. “In my career, I want to make a contribution that is visible to society,” she asserts. Her long-term goal is to be a top researcher at an existing research institution, and even considers developing one herself. “I have a passion to do what I can to address some of the challenges that exist,” she asserts, “especially those targeted at nutrition and women’s empowerment.” She hopes to be involved in developing innovations in food crops, specifically indigenous vegetables that will enhance the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

“The AWARD Fellowship creates a forum for me to engage with other fellows and mentors in similar fields that I’m working in, and to acquire interpersonal and research skills,” Odinya says. She also looks forward to enhancing her scientific writing and proposal writing skills. “As an AWARD Fellow and a female researcher, I hope to make a major contribution to research in my institute, of which at the moment is mostly composed of male researchers. It’s important to increase women’s participation in research,” she stresses.

During her research attachment at ICIPE, Odinya found herself as the only female researcher among her male counterparts—and she is one of only a few female lecturers in her department at JKUAT. “For me to become an accomplished researcher, I promise to make the most of my full potential and ability, with the support of my AWARD Mentor and colleagues, to achieve my goals,” she concludes.



Odinya is one of a growing number of women agricultural scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. AWARD works toward inclusive, agriculture-driven prosperity for the African continent by strengthening the production and dissemination of more gender-responsive agricultural research and innovation. We invest in scientists, research institutions, and agribusinesses to deliver sustainable, gender-responsive agricultural research and innovation.

The AWARD Fellowship is a career-development program that invests in top women agricultural scientists to ensure that confident, capable, and influential women are available to lead critical advances and innovations in the agricultural sector.

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