



2019 AWARD Fellow
Fina Aquiline Peter

Position	Research Technician
Institution	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)
Country	Tanzania
BSc	Biotechnology & Laboratory Science, Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA) 2013
Mentor	Dr. Luseko Amos Chilagane, Lecturer, SUA
Research Area	Enhancing Africa's incomes, trade, and health with Aflasafe.

Fina's research is investigating the use of Aflasafe—a promising biological control technology. Her goal is to improve the livelihoods of rural communities by ensuring food safety through the breeding of groundnuts that are resistant against aflatoxin-producing fungi.

Fina Aquiline Peter was raised in a rural part of Tanzania, near Kilimanjaro and close to the Kenyan border. When she was young, she recalls seeing many crops growing naturally. "But now they aren't there—they've been narrowed down," she laments. "The new generation doesn't even know about them, and this is alarming. This is what motivated me to study agriculture."

Her goal is to improve the livelihoods of rural communities by ensuring food safety through the breeding of groundnuts that are resistant against aflatoxin-producing fungi. "Groundnuts have been used by local people in Tanzania for many years to improve their nutritional status," she says, "but the existence of aflatoxin is jeopardizing their use."

As an experienced research technician with more than five years of experience applying standard protocols to aflatoxin research, Peter has contributed to the successful development of Aflasafe TZ, a natural biological control solution to the problem of aflatoxin in Tanzania. "Multiple cases of aflatoxin-related deaths have been recorded in Tanzania," she reveals with chagrin. Aflasafe is more than 85 percent effective against aflatoxin. "It has already been registered by the national authorities and we are now at the commercialization stage," she enthuses.

Peter is engaged primarily in creating awareness among farmers, teaching both farmers and extension workers how to identify the fungus and what to do. She is also working with the Ministry of Agriculture.

Peter's ultimate goal is to be in an agribusiness industry. She is confident that the AWARD Fellowship will help her acquire the skills to reach her goals. "I look forward to learning to write proposals and give presentations."

Indeed, she spends most of her time with the farmers, collecting samples both pre- and postharvest. "I also spend a month with them when they are harvesting and when they are applying the Aflasafe product," she continues.

Peter first found out about the AWARD Fellowship through an Internet search. "I was looking to see what opportunities were out there, and I thought, why not go for it?" And she's happy she did. She is confident that the AWARD Fellowship will help her reach her goals. "I look forward to learning to write proposals and give presentations." She is grateful for a good relationship with her mentor, who is ready to help. "I am learning a lot from him," she says.

Her long-term goal is to be in an agribusiness industry, and she is planning to pursue an MSc in plant breeding, "so that opportunities don't pass me by, including the potential offered by the AWARD Fellowship."

Peter says she has sometimes felt overwhelmed when dealing with farmers who have told her that her job should be done by a man. And from time to time she has not been taken seriously due to the fact that she is relatively young. "Sometimes it's hard to handle it all," she says. "But I am learning to manage the situation."

Peter expects her role as an AWARD Fellow to influence IITA as she learns to enhance her interpersonal skills, including how to manage conflict. "I used to be aggressive," she reveals. "But I have learned to be assertive instead. It's important to deal with problems positively, and learning good communication skills will help both me and my institution."



Peter 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.

For more information, visit www.awardfellowships.org