



2014 AWARD Fellow  
**Zeweter Anley Gelaye**

Position	Program Analyst
Institution	Ethiopian Agricultural Transformation Agency (ATA)
Country	Ethiopia
BSc	Finance and Development Economics, Addis Ababa University, 2010
Mentor	Sara Menker, CEO, Gro Ventures
Research Area	Increased adoption and effectiveness of household irrigation practices by developing sustainable interventions across the horticulture value chain, thereby contributing to agricultural sector transformation.

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Zeweter Anley Gelaye was raised in urban Addis Ababa and says she never envisioned herself being involved in agriculture, especially after obtaining a bachelor’s degree in Finance and Development Economics. However, today she thrives on helping smallholder farmers find solutions to their production challenges.

“My first job upon graduation was at a consulting firm,” she says. “But I became frustrated when I saw that although I was doing huge studies, nothing was being done on the ground.” She later took a job at ATA, where she feels her work can have a greater impact. Early on, she spent time with a farming family in order to understand their needs. “More than 85 percent of Ethiopians are involved in agriculture, but they are the poorest of the poor. I saw firsthand the challenges they face and it really inspired me,” she says. “It motivates me every day—I know who I’m working for now.”

Gelaye has been working as a program analyst at ATA for close to two years. “ATA is unique in that it is composed of an analytical team and a technical team, which work together to develop sustainable interventions to transform agriculture.”

Her current area of research is looking at increasing the adoption of household irrigation practices. “In Ethiopia, there is a long dry season of seven or eight months. There are short rainy seasons, but they are not sufficient for production. Farmers live off what they make in the rainy season, so hence they are food insecure and don’t have fixed incomes.”

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**AWARD is a career-development program that equips top women agricultural scientists across sub-Saharan Africa to accelerate agricultural gains by strengthening their research and leadership skills through tailored fellowships. AWARD is a catalyst for innovations with high potential to contribute to the prosperity and well-being of African smallholder farmers, most of whom are women.**

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Gelaye and her team encourage farmers to transition from rain-fed agriculture so they can plant during the dry season. “Groundwater and river water exist, but are not being tapped due to a lack of resources,” she explains. “We provide farmers with household irrigation technologies, such as pumps and water-lifting devices, as well as inputs like improved seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides, and teach them best practices.” She also ensures that farmers have market access, linking them with local and international buyers.

Once residents have a water supply, they can grow horticultural crops, such as fruits and vegetables, that complement crops grown in the shorter rain-fed season—maize, wheat, and other grains.

Gelaye considers it a real privilege to work with smallholder farmers. “In one project that we conducted in 21 districts, we saw up to a 100 percent increase in farmers’ incomes thanks to our interventions—which was very rewarding,” she says.

Gelaye plans to pursue a master’s degree in development studies with a focus on food security, and is also considering an MBA to study the business aspect of agriculture. “Pursuing further education in this area will equip me to develop innovative ideas to solve the key problems that smallholder farmers, especially women, are facing in Ethiopia,” she asserts.

She feels fortunate to have been accepted into the AWARD Fellowship, and plans to share with other agricultural researchers, while taking full advantage of the benefits of being mentored. “I want to publish my work, and the AWARD training will help me improve my writing skills,” she says. “I also appreciate the chance to attend a scientific conference abroad to learn what is going on in other countries.”

Looking forward, Gelaye wants to design a project focused on increasing farmers’ productivity and market access, to help women increase their food production and incomes. “I see myself doing this within the next 10 years,” she says. “I am lucky to have my degree, and I want to give back to my community.”