



2018 AWARD Fellow
Getenesh Teshome Abebe

Position	Researcher and Head of Dairy Laboratory
Institution	Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR)
Country	Ethiopia
MSc	Animal Production and Health, Addis Ababa University, 2013
Mentor	Dr. Aster Yohannes Chakiso, DVM, MVsc, Livestock Deputy Director, EIAR
Research Area	Dairy product processing technologies, with an emphasis on postharvest loss management and safety of the dairy products.



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Getenesh Teshome Abebe wants to see gender-responsive research that provides effective technologies to Ethiopian farmers so that they can produce quality food products—not only to feed their families, but also to be competitive globally.

Abebe got her BSc in Animal Sciences at Wollo University in 2011, and then moved directly onto complete her master's. Currently engaged in research into food safety and quality, as well as postharvest loss management, she is also providing training for university students and smallholder farmers. "I am a committee member of Ethiopia's standards agency to develop standards on food product safety," she says.

One research project she is involved in entails the detection, quantification, and detoxification of aflatoxins in cow milk processed by smallholder dairy farmers. "The aim of this study is to evaluate the occurrence and level of aflatoxins in the milk, and compare the results with maximum tolerable limits accepted by the European Union," she explains. "In total, 150 milk samples will be collected from selected dairy operations in three Ethiopian towns, to analyze the presence or absence of aflatoxins."

As part of this project, Abebe is testing milk samples for heavy metal contamination. The objective, of course, is to safeguard the consumer. "Such contamination creates serious problems, like chronic kidney infection. Skilled manpower and facilities are required to solve this problem, but unfortunately, there is no advanced technology in Ethiopia to work on this," she laments.

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Abebe 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.

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In the course of her research, Abebe works directly with smallholder farmers, most of whom are women. “I consult with women to teach them how to avoid food spoilage,” she continues. “I show them how to handle and clean meat, and how to protect children from food-borne diseases. I also train them on how to prepare milk and meat to sell at market.”

Abebe has provided various training sessions for small-scale women farmers on adopting dairy technology such as milk churners, teaching them how to handle milk and milk products to minimize postharvest loss and produce quality products.

Abebe believes that creating awareness is the first objective. “Because there is no refrigeration in the rural areas, they add formalin to the milk to keep it fresh,” she says. “I am trying to address this by developing technologies to keep milk fresh. Another option is to diversify to other milk products, such as butter, cheese, or yoghurt.”

Abebe has many ongoing research activities under way, and has already published her findings on several occasions. She hopes that the research she is undertaking will help society, but she knows she needs to build greater capacity to solve these problems. “I intend to pursue a PhD,” she resolves, noting that she would like to study internationally. All of her research activities have a gender component, particularly those implemented by women farmers and cooperatives.

She expects to develop her knowledge, skills, and experience by interacting with AWARD Fellows from other countries and by taking advice from her mentor. “I am confident that my role as an AWARD Fellow will also help me to develop skills in writing scientific papers and proposals, and in clearly communicating my findings,” she says. “I look forward to expanding my networks and enhancing my leadership and mentoring skills.”

As one of only a few female scientists at EIAR, Abebe is motivated to “pay it forward” by setting up training presentations for female colleagues. “I’m sure my institute is going to benefit, and I am committed to continuing to work toward improving livelihoods in society,” she concludes.