AWARD
African Women in Agricultural Research and Development

Profile

2014 AWARD Fellow

Abosede Felicia Iyiola

Position	Teaching Assistant
Institution	University of Ibadan (UI)
Country	Nigeria
MSc	Entomology, UI, Nigeria, 2010
Mentor	Professor Francis Kola Ewete, Crop Protection and Environmental Biology, UI
Research Area	Effective, environmentally friendly management of root crop pests in preserved dried tubers and plantains in order to reduce smallholder losses.

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Abosede Felicia Iyiola's interest in nature was piqued as a young girl when she lived with her grandparents for five years. She later enrolled in university to study for a degree in Agronomy, encouraged to continue with her education by an uncle—a PhD holder and chartered accountant. "He made me believe that I could break the pattern in our family where most of the women did not pursue education, and he offered to pay my tuition fees," she says.

For her BSc project, Iyiola worked on biological control of termites, which cause extensive damage to crops in her home area. "With my supervisor, I co-authored two papers from this project that were published in an international and a local journal," she says. By the end of her MSc, she had decided to concentrate on insects because of the economic losses they cause to farmers.

Iyiola is currently enrolled in a PhD program at UI. She is researching the coffee bean weevil, *Araecerus fasciculatus* (DeGeer), a tropical insect that destroys coffee beans and damages stored food products. In Nigeria, the insect affects plantain, dried tubers, especially cassava, sweet potato, as well as white yam and water yam.

"Weevils cause up to 70 percent losses in the stored chips, depending on the insect species and length of storage," Iyiola explains. Reducing such postharvest losses has the potential to significantly improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, especially for the women who produce and market the dried chips.

To date, there is no effective method of managing this insect pest. Using synthetic pesticides has been criticized for its possible negative effects on human and environmental health. Iyiola is striving to fill this

knowledge and technological gap by studying the insect's biology, looking for an entry point for botanical control to effectively manage the pest without using chemicals.

She eventually wants to establish a non-governmental organization that will educate smallholders on edible insects. To familiarize herself with running such an organization and how smallholder farmers operate, she is currently running a small business in which she trains women on the collection and preservation of such insects.

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Iyiola expects the AWARD Fellowship to help increase her self-confidence and enable her to build a broader network of fellow agricultural scientists. Winning a fellowship spurred her to "work extra hard" at her research. Iyiola hopes to be employed as a lecturer at UI before she completes her doctoral studies, and dreams of becoming a professor of entomology and, in time, the dean of her faculty. "This will be my stepping stone to becoming the university's first female vice chancellor," she says.

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.

AWARD is generously supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the United States Agency for International Development, and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa. For more information, visit www.awardfellowships.org