



2013 AWARD Fellow
Yemisi Jeff-Agboola

Position	Lecturer
Institution	Department of Biological Science Ondo State University of Science and Technology, Nigeria
Country	Nigeria
PhD	Microbiology/Mycotoxicology Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria, 2012
Mentor	Dr. Mojisola O. Edema Associate Professor, Federal University of Technology

Research area: Control of mycotoxigenic molds in poultry feed and the effect of mycotoxins on poultry performance.

Yemisi Jeff-Agboola grew up on a farm in Nigeria where she observed the damage that high humidity causes to maize. However, her family was not aware of the danger of eating aflatoxin-affected food, or of feeding it to their livestock—an issue that persists today in rural Nigerian communities. Farmers cannot afford the chemicals needed to address the problem (apart from the health hazards of such solutions), and this led Jeff-Agboola to research alternatives.

“One of the most glaring problems is that harvested grain is not properly processed. Postharvest handling in Nigeria leaves a lot to be desired in general,” says Jeff-Agboola. “I am working with farmers, particularly women’s groups, on better drying methods for their grain, a rather simple solution to prevent mycotoxin development.”

Jeff-Agboola is also working with school children to raise awareness about postharvest handling. She teaches them how to prevent aflatoxin contamination by not spreading maize cobs or grain on the ground or on the road to dry. Instead, she demonstrates how to make a simple platform to prevent the soil-borne organisms from getting into the maize. Jeff-Agboola also creates awareness about the dangers of mycotoxins and what constitutes good agricultural practices via the local media. In addition, she is looking into plant-derived solutions to prevent aflatoxin and other mycotoxin growth, particularly in maize used as animal feed. A passionate scientist, she also aims to apply modern biotechnology tools for mycotoxin analysis and to formulate appropriate poultry feeds for rural communities, particularly for rural women.

A mother of two teenage daughters, Jeff-Agboola eagerly encourages girls to study science. “You have to start early,” she says. Showing perseverance in whatever she does, Jeff-Agboola has been invited to become a leader in the National Association for Small Scale Industrialists in Nigeria, which organizes individuals to form cooperatives in order to become eligible for loans.

Winning the AWARD Fellowship earned Jeff-Agboola standing ovations in her institute. Over the two-year program, she expects to strengthen her leadership skills and improve her networking and visibility. She

looks forward to connecting with international scientists and hopes to grow from being a local champion in food technology to an internationally recognized scientist in her field. "My motto is 'Do not work in isolation, share ideas and collaborate,'" she says.

Jeff-Agboola is one of a growing number of African women agricultural scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. 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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