



2013 AWARD Fellow  
**Oluwakemi Oduntan Abodede**

<b>Position</b>	Research Officer I
<b>Institution</b>	National Horticultural Research Institute
<b>Country</b>	Nigeria
<b>MSc</b>	Food Technology, University of Ibadan, 2011 Information Science, University of Ibadan, 2006
<b>Mentor</b>	Dr. Fasoyiro Subuola Bosedede, Head of Program, Product Development, Institute of Agricultural Research and Training

*Research area: Processing, preserving, and promotion of vegetables and fruits for improved nutrition and income generation.*

Oluwakemi Oduntan Abodede, the fourth born in a family of six children, says her parents were very supportive of her desire to go to university—and all of her siblings have followed suit, although she is the only one who pursued a science career. Today, this food technologist is determined to make a difference by increasing the consumption of indigenous vegetables by families in southwestern Nigeria, while encouraging the adoption of low-cost tools to ease processing tasks and reduce drudgery, especially for women.

Abodede took her first degree in Food Science and Technology at the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta and is working toward completing a PhD by 2015. “I am convinced that many indigenous vegetables in this region could contribute to addressing malnutrition, poverty, and disease,” she says. “But they are not being adequately used because people do not understand that they are high in fiber, mineral, and vitamin content, and they are not aware of their economic importance. They could become extinct if nothing is done to promote their use, processing and preservation. Promoting the use of these vegetables will help to improve food security in Nigeria.”

While certain leaves such as *Sesamum radiatum* are used in traditional Nigerian meals, Abodede is encouraging their further cultivation as a means of generating income for rural families, as well as improving nutrition. “Many of these vegetables could serve as antioxidants, which are important in the prevention of gastro-intestinal tract diseases,” she notes. Her research interests also involve improving postharvest handling and storage practices, and ensuring improvements in seed processing technology.

After establishing the vegetables’ exact nutritional and antioxidant properties, the next phase of Abodede’s research will entail taking her ideas to rural families and consumers. “I need to know the full benefits before promoting them.”

As an AWARD Fellow, Abodede considers herself “one of the privileged ones,” and appreciates the chance to be exposed to opportunities as a woman scientist. “I’m looking forward to all of the benefits of AWARD, especially working with my mentor, who is someone I have admired for a long time,” she says. “I have already seen how the program will help to build my skills.”

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*Abodede 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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