



**2013 AWARD Fellow  
Mildred Osei-Kwarteng**

<b>Position</b>	Lecturer
<b>Institution</b>	University for Development Studies Faculty of Agriculture, Department of Horticulture
<b>Country</b>	Ghana
<b>MSc</b>	International Horticulture University of Hannover, Germany, 2006
<b>Mentor</b>	Professor Samuel K. Opong, Professor University for Development Studies

*Research area: Promotion of African indigenous leafy vegetables through extension of postharvest technologies.*

Mildred Osei-Kwarteng remembers being encouraged to pursue agricultural economics as a young university student, enticed by the promise of money and consultancies. Taught by her father to strive to be the best at whatever she chose to do, and aware of her people-oriented disposition, she found her niche in horticulture—although perhaps not the most lucrative profession. “Horticulture is a key sector in Ghana that allows me to work directly with smallholder farmers, and I love it,” she says.

As a lecturer in Horticulture at Ghana’s University for Development Studies, Osei-Kwarteng is a vegetable scientist who looks for ways to prolong the shelf life of vegetables such as cabbage, tomatoes, onions, and peppers. She is specifically working on discovering innovative and practical technologies to promote these vegetables through the extension of postharvest handling techniques.

“My current research activities stem from my training in sustainable vegetable production in the Norman E. Borlaug International Agricultural Science and Technology Fellowship Program in 2009 under the auspices of USAID in sub-Saharan Africa,” she says. She spent three months at the University of Kentucky as a part of this fellowship and published her work. “This training covered sustainable vegetable production and entailed a pilot postharvest program, which challenged me to address low organic matter content and the inappropriate use of pesticides on vegetables.”

A member of the Postharvest Foundation in Tanzania, Osei-Kwarteng soon hopes to pursue a PhD, and is also interested in studying existing value chains. “We need to understand the processes and deal with problems along the chain,” she continues. “We want to see what people have done apart from blanching and drying to keep produce fresh longer.”

Osei-Kwarteng says three major indigenous leafy vegetables (ILVs) have caught her attention for more research. “Amaranthus, roselle, and corchorus are well-adapted to the agricultural zones in northern Ghana,” she notes. “I want to conduct more research into their production, marketing, and postharvest

handling practices in order to improve the food security and livelihoods of underprivileged groups in my country—especially smallholder farmers, most of whom are women, and vulnerable youth.”

She plans to visit vegetable production communities in northern Ghana to establish zero energy cooling chambers so farmers can store ILVs after harvesting and help them to improve production and promotion to supermarkets. “I believe that by introducing the nutritional and medicinal value of ILVs to the local people, it will help to achieve the Millennium Development Goals of eradicating hunger, malnutrition, and reducing maternal death,” she says.

Another focus of Osei-Kwarteng’s research involves working on *Pleurotus ostreatus* (oyster mushroom). “We are using hot climate strains of mushrooms, trying them on a local substrate of rice husks, combined with sulfate of ammonia, or with compost. Using local substrate is less expensive and results in higher yields,” she says.

A mother of two children whose work has taken her to China, Germany, Indonesia, the Netherlands, Tanzania, and the U.S.A., Osei-Kwarteng sees AWARD as an excellent opportunity to further increase her professional visibility. “I now have a delineated career path to pursue,” she says. She is eager to learn how to be more gender responsive in her research and to improve her scientific writing skills through AWARD’s training courses, and appreciates the fellowship’s focus on networking, coaching, and leadership capacity building. “I can see myself achieving my career goals easily,” she says.

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*Osei-Kwarteng 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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