



Thomas Idemudia Aneni

2019 One Planet Laureate Candidate

Position

Research Fellow

Institution

Nigerian Institute for Oil-
Palm Research (NIFOR)

Country

Nigeria

Education

PhD, Entomology,
University of Benin, Nigeria

Mentor

Dr. Jude Uche Obibuzor,
Director (Research),
Nigerian Institute for Oil-
Palm Research (NIFOR)

Research Area

Mainstream pollination and
pollinator management

Thomas Idemudia Aneni is an entomologist. His work entails researching, controlling and managing agricultural insect pests. He is currently working as a research scientist at the Nigerian Institute for Oil palm Research in Benin City.

Upon graduating from the University of Ilorin in Nigeria where he studied Zoology, he realized that getting a job was not easy. Undeterred, and driven by his passion for exploring knowledge, he applied to do his master's degree at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria.

This was after completing the mandatory national youth program. Aneni was able to secure a job with the Nigerian Institute for Oil Palm soon after his graduation.

Aneni finds research rewarding because he can see the results of his lab experiments being used in the farms, and changing the lives of farmers. "I have seen farm yields increase based on the recommendations I gave to the farmers," said Aneni. He, however, must keep in constant interaction with the farmers to ensure the guidelines he gives are followed correctly.

His most exciting research project was studying a major pest of the oil palm commonly known as the Leaf Miner. He carried out a comprehensive analysis of the pest using climate characteristics (temperature, rainfall, humidity) and integrated some physical, biological, insecticidal and pheromone control measures.

The analysis of the climatic conditions covered a fifty year period. He confirmed that there was a change in the climate parameters – the temperatures have gone up as the rainfall and relative humidity decreased. He then studied the impact of the changes on these parameters on the pest to establish whether there has been any statistical relationship and the distribution pattern.

He discovered that there was a relationship, with an increase in the number of pests recorded during an increase in temperatures meaning that during the dry season, the pests were abundant. This meant that this was the best time to control.

What was happening in oil palm farms then is that farmers were buying chemical pesticides and spraying all year round thereby impacting negatively on the environment.

The findings of the research, helped farmers to know the best time to spray thus reducing the number of resources used, and get more value for their efforts.

He hopes that the One Planet Fellowship will provide him with the soft skills, and networks he need to further this crucial study.

The learning experience will not only be beneficial to him but also his institution. "I will network with my colleagues to share information and exchange ideas, and develop new projects through these interactions," said Aneni.

Aneni is looking forward to the experience of mentoring a European scientist later in the program because he has never mentored anyone formally before. He believes mentoring another scientist will be an opportunity to build a sustainable collaboration, beyond the fellowship program. "This is an excellent idea. It will be a platform to build bigger things," he said.

The biggest challenge he has faced as a researcher is the lack of prioritization of research and development in his country, as in many other African countries. Researchers lack the kind of equipment and facilities needed to conduct cutting edge research.

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He has therefore been keen to look out for opportunities that come his way because they provide a chance to leverage on other institutions to bridge the gap.

He is driven by the inner satisfaction that he is making a tangible contribution that others can model after. "You can live on through research," he noted. He emphasizes that whatever a researcher does should be relevant to society. He sees himself as a world-class research leader in entomology, and changing lives through research across Africa and globally.

Thomas Idemudia Aneni is one of the growing number of candidates selected to participate in the One Planet Fellowship. The One Planet Fellowship is a career development initiative that is building a robust pipeline of highly connected, inter-generational scientists equipped to use a gender lens to help Africa's smallholder farmers cope with climate change. The One Planet Fellowship is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the BNP Paribas Foundation, the European Union and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC). African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) and Agropolis Fondation are jointly implementing the Fellowship.

Do you have any further questions? Send an email to : oneplanet.award@cgiar.org