AWARD
African Women in Agricultural Research and Development

Profile

Enoobong Udo
2015 AWARD Fellow

Position	Research Fellow
Institution	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)
Country	Nigeria
BSc	Agriculture, University of Uyo, Nigeria, 2010
Mentor	Dr. Amudalat Olaniyan, Senior Lecturer, Agronomy, University of Ibadan
Research Area	Determination of the physiological mechanisms responsible for maize plant tolerance of low-soil nitrogen environments in Nigeria.

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Enoobong Udo considered studying economics at university but after taking a pre-exam she was opted for crop science. Although she was rather skeptical about this line of study at first, she soon found that she was in the right place after attaining the position of top student and winning a faculty award. "I was really enjoying what I was learning," she recounts. "Plus, to think that I could contribute to alleviating hunger made me very excited, so I know I've found the right career path. My aim is to become an influential and successful scientist and lecturer in the field of crop physiology, crop nutrition, and crop improvement."

During her national youth service, Udo worked with an agricultural development program, where her director was a woman who inspired her with her ability to multi-task. "This woman had several farms, and also managed her home," she says. "I hope to be as capable as both this woman and my mother, who worked hard to make sure everything was provided, even after my father died."

Udo started as a young researcher at IITA in 2012. Her current research involves identifying physiological mechanisms affecting yield increments in various populations of maize. "Tropical soils are known for having low levels of nitrogen due to torrential rainfalls," she discloses. "Most areas where maize and cereal crops are grown are low in nitrogen, and scientists are finding that the chemical nitrogen being used is causing damage." Therefore, improving maize tolerance to low soil nitrogen is the best approach to yield increment in maize."

Udo is pleased that her research results have contributed to selecting inputs that are doing well. She is engaged in ongoing collaborative work

as part of a larger IITA project to identify the underlying physiological mechanisms of tolerance to abiotic stress in arable crops.

Udo completed a master's in Crop Physiology at the University of Ibadan in late 2014, and will soon begin doctoral studies. "My goal is to do a PhD in Plant Physiology so I can work on tools to breed tolerance to drought, low soil nitrogen, and striga," she explains. "These are the three major problems that affect maize in Nigeria."

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She sees the AWARD program as providing an excellent opportunity to increase her visibility and she plans to take advantage of the chance to network with like-minded people. "I expect to learn a lot from the science and leadership workshops," she says. "Plus, having the ability to register in a professional scientific body will give me access to journals and the chance to present my research findings on international platform."

Udo expects that the skills she gains as an AWARD Fellow will benefit IITA as well, since she will improve her leadership proficiency and prepare to contribute papers to peer-reviewed journals. "I also hope to use what I learn from AWARD to inspire young master's researchers at my institution."

She is excited to know that the research she is working on will contribute to improving food security in Nigeria. "The ultimate goal is to help solve the problem of hunger in my country, and I am resolved to do whatever I can to help."

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