



Ange Nadine
Umugwaneza
2015 AWARD Fellow

“AWARD has opened my eyes wider—there are some opportunities that came our way that we did not exploit”

Position	Postharvest and Marketing Officer
Institution	Agrocare Cooperative
Country	Rwanda
BSc	Crop Sciences, University of Rwanda, 2012
Mentor	Dr. Evode Mukama, Senior Lecture, Foundations, Management and Curriculum Studies, University of Rwanda
Research Area	Value addition of crops from sowing to market for improvement of business opportunities and community welfare

Ange Nadine Umugwaneza has a keen interest in agribusiness. Upon completing her BSc studies in Crop Production at the University of Rwanda, she teamed up with nine other agriculture graduates to found Agrocare Cooperative. The team of young women decided to create jobs for themselves while sharing their agricultural knowledge with the farming community. In 2012, with initial funding from the faith-based organization St. Vincent De Paul, the group started three greenhouses, growing mushrooms, tomatoes, and peppers in Nyarugenge district. “In 2013, the district offered us two more greenhouses and a year later, after realizing that we were managing them well, they supported us to put up three more greenhouses on the same site,” says Umugwaneza.

The cooperative contributes to capacity building in horticulture by training diverse groups comprising men, women, and youth. Working in partnership with the government in the Nyarugenge district of central Rwanda, Agrocare has trained five farmer cooperatives, which in turn train other groups. “We work together to help other groups improve their agricultural practices by ensuring that they pay it forward,” says Umugwaneza. The group’s mushroom shelter serves as a farmer’s field school as they host study tours for neighboring farmers. “We are a model in growing vegetables in greenhouses,” notes Umugwaneza. “This is modern agriculture, which is improving in Rwanda. Other cooperatives come to see what we are doing and commit to doing the same,” she adds.

Umugwaneza has also worked with the Horticulture Department at the National Agriculture Export Board. She underlines the importance of demonstrating technologies to farmers and has gone beyond the cooperative to share her knowledge in her parents’ home area in the Gisagara district. “Just over a year ago, I planted some grafted bananas at home and they are growing well,” she says with pride. This led her

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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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parents and neighbors to commit to replacing the old varieties with the grafted ones she had planted. “They have seen the difference and the advantage of the modern processes,” explains Umugwaneza.

Umugwaneza derives job satisfaction when she sees farmers achieving progress as a result of the training received from Agrocare. “We trained a cooperative in mushroom production and now they have increased their production,” she enthuses. Agrocare has plans for future expansion. “We have a vision to create a training center with demonstration fields where we can train farmers’ cooperatives,” says Umugwaneza. The group would like to do more along the horticulture value chain. “We would also like to have follow-up activities to link farmers to markets,” she adds.

In the course of her work, Umugwaneza has developed an interest in research. “I realized I wanted to go deep into research and production,” she says. She would like to study Food Science and Technology but regrets that that the course is not offered at the postgraduate level in Rwanda. “If I choose to study in Rwanda, I would have to deviate from my goal,” she says, adding that she is looking at universities in the East African region where she can pursue further studies in this field. In addition, Umugwaneza would like to get some job orientation in agroprocessing. “I want to involve agricultural cooperatives in agroprocessing to add value, generate income, and avoid waste when the market is not good,” she says. She is inspired by her mentor, who has started a training center in food processing, having identified a gap in Rwanda. “We are not involved in processing, yet it is very important.”

Through the AWARD Fellowship, Umugwaneza hopes to boost her confidence and improve her writing skills. “I will start writing a paper on my BSc dissertation to improve my writing skills,” she promises. “AWARD has opened my eyes wider—there are some opportunities that came our way that we did not exploit enough,” says Umugwaneza. “I will sit with cooperative members and strategize on how to improve our activities, especially with regard to networking,” she adds.