



Almaz Meseret Gezahegn

2019 AWARD-EIAR
Fellow

“As an agronomist, almost all my research is conducted on farmers’ fields. I also conduct training activities on management practices of major crops. Through all this, I hope to ensure food and nutrition security of smallholder farmers in Ethiopia.”

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| Position | Agronomy and Crop Physiology Researcher |
| Institution | Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) |
| Country | Ethiopia |
| PhD | Agronomy |
| Mentor | Professor Henry Laswai, Food Security Analyst, Ministry of Agriculture |
| Research Area | Developing integrated and innovative agronomic or crop management practices for sustainable crop production with appropriate cropping systems |

Almaz Meseret Gezahegn received her BSc in Plant Science from Alemaya University in 2005. “After graduation, I was employed by a private flower farm as an agronomy expert and served for two and half years. Later, I joined the School of Graduate Studies of Haramaya University with support from SIDA SARIC Women Scholarship and graduated in 2010 with an MSc in Agronomy.”

Noting that her childhood dream had been to study medicine, Gezahegn revealed that the university she was admitted to did not offer courses in medicine, so she opted to pursue plant science. “However, once I started the course, I found it very interesting. I still remember what my father told me, ‘Even if studying agriculture is not your dream, keep going until the PhD level and you will become a ‘doctor’ in agriculture.’ From then on I made a decision to focus on becoming the best agricultural scientist.”

Upon completion of her studies, Gezahegn began working at the Ministry of Science and Technology as an Agro-processing Technology Expert, and six months later moved to the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) as a researcher. “I was not satisfied with my ‘expert’ job because I never got the opportunity to directly work with the farmers while conducting research.”

In 2012, she won a fellowship, offered by the Organization of Women in Science for the Developing World (OWSD), to undertake a PhD in Agronomy at Universiti Putra in Malaysia. Her research focused on integrated nutrient management of maize soybean cropping systems.



Gezahegn is one of a growing number of women agricultural scientists who have won a customized institutional Fellowship for the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR). The customized institutional Fellowship is an intervention of AWARD's Gender Responsive Agricultural Research and Development (GRARD) initiative that supports institutional capacity for gender-responsive agricultural research.

African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) works toward inclusive, agriculture-driven prosperity for the African continent by strengthening the production and dissemination of more gender responsive agricultural research and innovation. We invest in African scientists, research institutions, and agribusinesses so that they can deliver agricultural innovations that better respond to the needs and priorities of a diversity of women and men across Africa's agricultural value chains.

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Gezahegn continues to work at EIAR as a researcher in agronomy and crop physiology and is involved in a project which develops improved crop management technologies for major crops in different agro-ecologies of Ethiopia. Her research activities include determination of appropriate sowing dates, seed rate/plant population density, rate and time of fertilizer application, especially nitrogen fertilizer for major crops, and cropping systems such as, monocropping, double cropping and intercropping.

"As an agronomist, almost all my research is conducted on farmers' fields. I work with rural communities, so I utilize a lot of participatory approaches. I also conduct training activities on management practices of major crops. Through all this, I hope to ensure food and nutrition security of smallholder farmers in Ethiopia."

Highlighting that her ultimate goal is to contribute to influencing policy, she is confident that the Fellowship will be a great opportunity for her to improve her science, research and leadership skills.

"I will use many of the skills that I acquire as an AWARD Fellow in my institute. I will also share what I learn with my research teams because I believe that team capacity building will have a positive impact on the whole institution," she concludes.