



Belainesh Hailu Ararsa

2019 AWARD-EIAR
Fellow

Position	Researcher
Institution	Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR)
Country	Ethiopia
MSc	Plant Biotechnology, Specialization in Functional Plant Genomics
Mentor	Tadessa Daba Bedada, Research Director, Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) Hq
Research Area	Plant biotechnology



“I hope to promote gender-responsive agricultural research in my workplace and therefore create more opportunities for young female researchers and scientists.”

Belainesh Hailu Ararsa holds an MSc in Plant Biotechnology, specializing in Functional Plant Genomics from Wageningen University, The Netherlands, and a BSc in Horticulture from Jimma University in Ethiopia. A 2019 Research Scholar from UC Davis, California, she is a principal investigator for Tef (*Eragrostis tef*), and is working on a project which aims to carry out the TILLING (Targeting Induced Local Lesions IN Genomes) strategy for tef screening – lodging, salinity, drought, acidity, fungal diseases and insects. Tef is an indigenous and important food and feed crop in Ethiopia. It accounts for about two-thirds of the daily protein intake in the country’s diet.

Citing that she had always wanted to be an agriculturalist, Ararsa noted, “When I was in Grade 7, I studied about how an Ethiopian physician, Dr Aklilu Lemma, discovered that suds from the fruit of a common African plant, the endod, acted as a potent molluscicide and thus could be used to prevent bilharzia. I was very impressed with his work, and realized I wanted to follow in his footsteps. Therefore I chose to pursue agriculture and after graduation, joined an agricultural institute where I am currently working as a researcher.”

Ararsa works with rural communities to identify problems and to demonstrate generated technologies, mostly through training workshops. Through the AWARD Fellowship, she hopes to use the acquired knowledge to update her leadership and scientific skills, to disseminate her research outputs and to publish her findings in reputable journals. She also plans to build her skills in writing grant proposals.



Ararsa 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.

For more information visit,
www.awardfellowships.org

On the challenges that she faces as a professional, Ararsa said, "As a female scientist and a mom I have faced various challenges, especially when conducting field experiments away from home. Women researchers are still not fully accepted by both their male peers and communities, and trying to juggle a full time job that requires frequent travelling with motherhood and family life is not easy, but I have no intention of giving up."

Ararsa intends to train various groups from her institution. "We currently have very few women scientists and unfortunately many people assume that they are not productive. I hope to promote gender-responsive agricultural research in my workplace and therefore create more opportunities for young female researchers and scientists."