



Position

Lecturer

Institution

Laikipia University, Kenya

Country

Kenya

Education

PhD, Agricultural Economics,
Egerton University (Kenya) and
University of Cologne, Germany

Mentor

Dr. John Kingau, Senior Assistant
Registrar-Research, Laikipia
University

Area of research

Agricultural economics.

Jerop Rebecca

2020 One Planet Laureate Candidate

Dr. Rebecca Jerop, an agricultural economist, hails from Nandi County in Kenya's North Rift. She lost her dad while still in primary school, but community support and bursaries helped her go through school. She grew up helping her parents tend the family garden, which created a love of engaging in crop production.

Nandi county is rich in agricultural land and home to extensive tea plantations, so Rebecca's first job after college was as a supervisor at a tea plantation. Her job allowed her to engage in extension activities, including training farmers.

During this time, she realized that the farmer's practices were not adaptive to their environment or profitable since they had neglected their nutritious traditional crops and adopted tea and maize. These crops were destructive to the environment owing to their need for agrochemicals and artificial fertilizers.

Rebecca knew she had the responsibility to address neglected crops if she would make any meaningful contribution to improving her community's lives. Therefore, she opted for a Ph.D. degree focusing on these crops.

Rebecca also chairs the Department of Economics and is a lecturer of agricultural economics at Laikipia University. Her work develops environmental-friendly innovations that foster the productivity of underutilized

cereal crops, specifically finger millet. Since these crops are more nutritious and resilient to poor or unpredictable agroecological conditions than maize, wheat, or rice, improving their productivity and commercialization could foster food security and reinforce climate change mitigation and resilience. By working with farmers to collect information on their practices, she knows that they are also looking forward to the outputs of her work.

She is convinced that, "underutilized crops can be alternatives to food and commercial crops because they better deal with the harsh climate. If we increase their retail value and productivity, we will contribute to food security and poverty eradication."

Rebecca desires to be an outstanding scholar in agricultural innovations and climate change. To address farmers' problems, she needs to generate research results that feed into policy recommendations. She sees a future as an expert in her research area, with regular participation in international fora.

Rebecca believes the opportunities provided by the One Planet Fellowship to connect and share ideas with other scientists in her place of work will expand her knowledge and expose her to developments in her area of research and the challenges faced by farmers across Africa.

“Underutilized crops can be alternatives to food and commercial crops because they better deal with the harsh climate,” says Rebecca. She is developing environmental-friendly innovations that foster the productivity of underutilized cereal crops, specifically finger millet.

Her technical and interpersonal skills will be strengthened, giving her the confidence to share her work and deal with criticism. Her communication and leadership skills will improve her interaction with farmers, students, and colleagues.

Rebecca will use her new skills and knowledge from the Fellowship to mentor new scientists and lecturers, improve publications at her university by training others on technical writing, collaborate with colleagues in grant seeking, and improve outreach programs for farmers in her community.

In her research, Rebecca has dealt with personal and institutional challenges that have required a bit of innovation. She got her first child during her second year in college and her other two while pursuing her studies. Time management skills are required in such circumstances to ensure that neither the family nor the career suffers.

She has had to work long hours, particularly when preparing written documents or working on urgent research. She attributes her academic and career accomplishments to her husband's help, especially ensuring that the family is not neglected.

When working with farmers, Rebecca finds that some might not be forthcoming with information if they are not guaranteed payment, which delays data collection. Obtaining grants for research is challenging and sometimes discouraging. Lack of resources such as internet access during investigation affects timelines and the quality of the study.

Jerop Rebecca 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

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