



Alemeyehu Kassa Nerea

2021 One Planet Laureate Candidate

Position

Plant Breeder

Institution

Gondar Agricultural Research Center (GARC), Ethiopia

Country

Ethiopia

Education

PhD, Ecological/Population Genetics, Universität für Bodenkultur Wien, Austria

Mentor

Prof. Teferi Alem, Vice Dean (College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences), University of Gondar (Teaching and Research), Ethiopia

Research Area

Plant breeding.

Alemeyehu Kassa Nerea, who goes by Alex, is from Gondar in northern Ethiopia. He got his BSc in plant science from Hawassa University and his MSc in plant breeding from Haramaya University.

He then went to Austria for a PhD in ecological/population genetics. He is currently back in Ethiopia, working as a plant breeder at a local research center.

"Most of my experience is around plant breeding," he says. "It has always been my dream job to work in research, and I enjoy working with other researchers."

He recalls seeing a need to improve agriculture in his country and in Africa at large, and this is what motivated him to become a researcher.

"I have always been curious, wanting to know about things," he says.

Currently, Alemeyehu is working on oil crop improvement and is the coordinator of the Crop Research Directorate at Gondar Agricultural Research Center.

"Oil crops are the engine of economic growth in Ethiopia," he explains. "My interest is in developing new varieties/cultivars. I'm looking specifically at sesame, sunflower, and soybean—sesame is an important focus crop, and sunflower and soybean are just coming up."

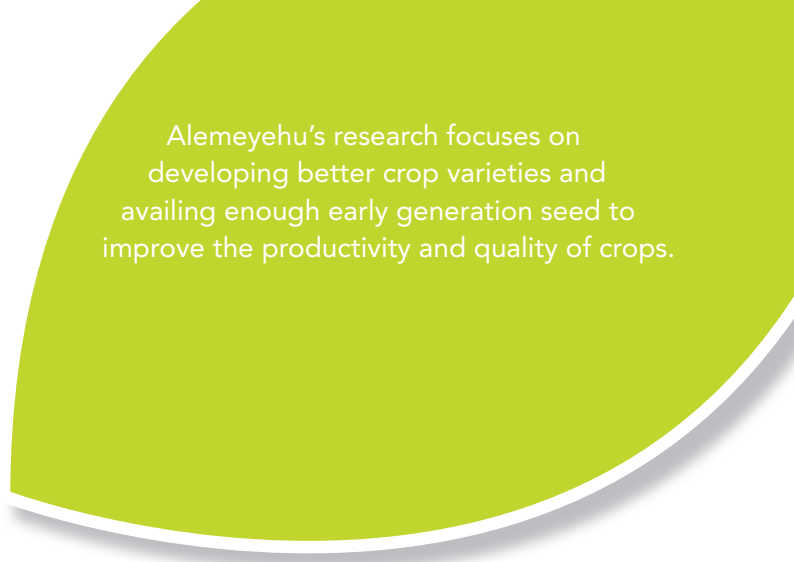
He enjoys his work with local smallholder farmers, especially in variety development.

Alemeyehu applied for the One Planet Fellowship after having received an email about it at his institute. He expects the program to provide good opportunities in terms of gaining various skills.

"I think it will help me to broaden my network as well, as I communicate with younger and senior scientists," he says. "Plus, the advanced science training will allow me to work on myself too—there is much to gain from the program. I will be a stronger scientist so I can contribute more to Ethiopia and other countries."

His hopes include becoming a leader in agricultural research. "I am targeting to become a leader of an international research organization since this would enable me to contribute a lot," he says.

Alemeyehu also appreciates the chance to improve his institute's "wide gap in gender issues," he says. "There are few women in our institute, and I hope to have a chance to fill this gap as I bring women in and empower them." He hopes to have a chance to develop more impactful things to contribute to his institute and also looks forward to sharing with his research staff.

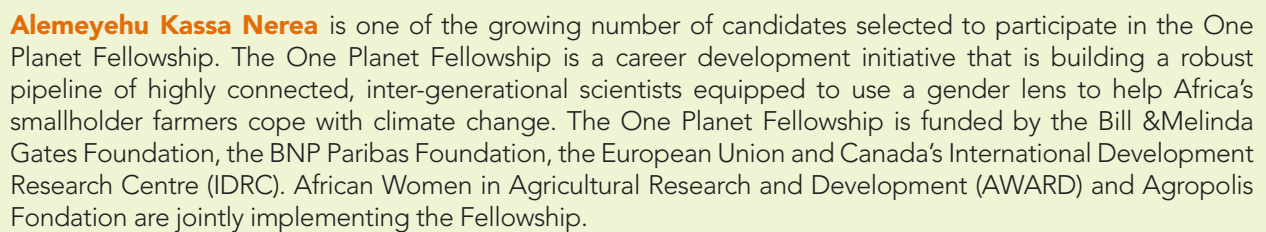


Alemeyehu's research focuses on developing better crop varieties and availing enough early generation seed to improve the productivity and quality of crops.

"I'll be a good leader, and this will contribute to my institute," he says.

Alemeyehu says most of the challenges he has experienced in his career have been related to skills, for example, biotechnology and advanced research technologies.

"It means that I can't run with the other research systems. Also, I have a gap in other areas since I don't have a lot of experience in gender issues, plus I lack networking skills. This has been a limitation along my path.



Alemeyehu Kassa Nerea 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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