

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile

**Position**

Regional Agriculture Engineer

Institution

Ministry of Food and
Agriculture, Ashanti Regional
Coordinating Council

Country

Ghana

Education

PhD, Biological Systems
Engineering, Virginia
Polytechnic and State University
(USA), 2016

Mentor

Ing. Joseph Kwasi Boamah,
former Chief Director, Ministry
of Food and Agriculture –
Ghana

Area of Interest

Enhancing the capabilities
of locally fabricators to
manufacture efficient and
effective agro-processing
machinery, for use especially by
women farmers and processors

Clara Agyeman-Attafuah

2022 AWARD Policy Fellow

"My goal is to improve access to agricultural mechanization, especially for women farmers and processors, to reduce drudgery in agriculture, increase yields, and reduce post-harvest losses."

A specialist in food and post-harvest engineering, Dr. Clara Agyeman-Attafuah's career path was determined when her chosen university – Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) – offered her a place on their Agriculture Engineering program, rather than the Civil Engineering course. "I have honestly not regretted being an Agriculture Engineer," Clara emphasizes. In 2016, she went on to obtain a PhD in Biological Systems Engineering from Virginia Polytechnic and State University.

Since graduating from her BSc in Agricultural Engineering in 2003, Clara's career has grown from strength to strength – and she currently works as the Regional Agriculture Engineer for Ghana's Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) under the Ashanti Regional Coordinating Council. As part of MoFA's food and post-harvest engineering unit, Clara and her colleagues offer technical support to farmers and processors in drying, processing, packaging, and storage of farm produce after harvest.

"We work directly with farmers, processors, and other agricultural value chain actors to aid them in producing more quality food produce and products to get more income," she says. "Some tell us that they want to go into processing but have no clue where or how to start, while some have started their processing business but are not adhering to all the best good manufacturing practices." She is proud of the service the unit provides to farmers and processors, revealing that one beneficiary was adjudged the 'Best agro-processor' at the 2022 National Farmers Day event in Ghana.

Alongside helping farmers and processors, Clara uses her expertise to guide those starting in agriculture. Additionally, she is involved in part-time lecturing in the Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering Department at KNUST – a role she loves because she gets the opportunity to interact with and guide the students theoretically and practically using her field experience.

As well as working towards improving food security for the Ghanaian population, Clara's long-term career ambition is to be at the top of the policymaking category. She was therefore overjoyed to be accepted as a GRASP Fellow – an opportunity that will aid in developing her skills and knowledge in the policy arena. "With my current position, our reports give policymakers information to make national policy decisions about agriculture, which we then implement," Clara explains. "As part of the GRASP program, we've looked at a success roadmap, where you outline your ultimate goal and identify the attitude and career steps you need to take to achieve this," she reveals. "If everything goes as planned, I will go to the top as a policymaker in the near future."

Although she has risen through the ranks to become a leader in her field, Clara notes that gender stereotypes make the workplace more competitive and challenging for women. "You might make a suggestion and they sometimes do not take it because they feel superior," she observes. However, she has developed a tough skin to resist intimidation from her male colleagues.

Clara is focusing on supporting enhanced farm machine production in the country. This, in turn, will provide food processors with greater access to locally-produced machinery – an approach which benefits both them and the environment. "My passion is to help local fabricators produce effective and efficient

farm machinery, which can then also be maintained and repaired locally," she states. "Gaining access to efficient and robust machinery will also help farmers and processors improve productivity. This will reduce importation of agro- machinery and build our foreign currency reserve."

Clara is also excited about being paired with a mentor, as part of the GRASP Fellowship. "The unique thing about this AWARD scheme is that I get a mentor, and I am lucky to have Ing. Joseph Kwasi Boamah. He was the Chief Director of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture Ghana for about 5 years and Director of Agricultural Engineering Service Directorate for about 12 years. He is guiding me in shaping my ideas and ensuring they become a reality. Also, he will guide me in my purpose roadmap of determining, leading, and managing policies related to agricultural development in Ghana, Africa, and the World at large."

Clara Agyeman-Attafuah is among a growing number of women selected for the Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship. GRASP Fellowship is a career development program growing a pool of confident, capable, African women to lead the design and implementation of gender-responsive policies in Africa. The Fellowship is an initiative of African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD), funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).