

Gender Responsive Agriculture Systems Policy (GRASP) Fellowship

Fellow Profile



Position

Lecturer and Researcher

Institution

Haramaya University, Ethiopia

Country

Ethiopia

Education

MSc Land Resources
Management, Haramaya
University, 2015

Mentor

Dr. Zelalem Bekeko Erena
Dean, College of Agriculture and
Environmental Sciences
Haramaya University, Ethiopia

Research Area

Sustainable use of natural resources
with a focus on land use and
management

Yesuf Fatie Hairedin

2023 AWARD Policy Fellow

"The opportunity allows me to harness my skills while inspiring me to take on big projects that can translate into real change for farmers."

Growing up in the rural area of Northern Ethiopia, Yesuf Fatie Hairedin was awestruck by her community's commitment to farming. They worked so hard and invested so much energy and resources into food production, but due to a lack of quality inputs and, as she now knows, poor land use, they reaped poor harvests.

Her passion for making a difference led her to study natural resource management at the Bahir Dar University College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences. Through her course, she gained theoretical and practical knowledge of the specific production problems that had affected her community. She particularly enjoyed modules on agroforestry, land policy, and soil and water conservation practices – a theory that she passed on to her community through volunteer training.

After graduating in 2012, Yesuf worked at the Bahir Dar Land Administration and Environmental Science Department for two years as a land resource expert,

predominantly involved in research. She then decided to continue her education at the university and attained an MSc in land management in 2015.

With her new skills, she applied for a job at the Ministry of Agriculture in Addis Ababa and was thrilled when she was offered the role of agriculture development specialist. This post involved interacting with farmers, agribusiness experts, and government agencies to develop policies to enhance food security and improve farmers' livelihoods. She was also engaged in promoting sustainable agricultural practices, such as crop rotation, integrated pest management, and mulching – again, to boost farmer yields and incomes.

"It felt really fulfilling to address the challenges I had witnessed first-hand throughout my childhood. I could see farmers learning to optimize their farms and improve yields. I also felt excited working with government officials to introduce pro-smallholder farmers' policies, like establishing extension services

that provided high-quality inputs,” she continues. In this position, Yesuf particularly enjoyed working with women farmers in Addis Ababa to equip them with the necessary training and inputs, such as seeds, fertilizers, and farming brochures, to upscale their agribusinesses. “Seeing women empowered to try new farming methods, fight farming challenges like pests and diseases, and earn from their produce was a real highlight,” she beams.

Since 2018, Yesuf has worked as a researcher and lecturer at the College of Agriculture Department of Natural Resource Management, Haramaya University. In academia, she has been involved in training students, policymakers, and agriculture experts on the sustainable use of natural resources while continuing to participate in policy formulation on land management.

But carving out her career has not always been a smooth ride. As a woman in a relatively new area of academia in Ethiopia, she has had to grapple with gender-based discrimination that has limited her career growth, particularly when applying for positions of leadership. “I have also struggled with the work-life balance of being a mother in a demanding career. In a patriarchal society, it is expected that women should stay at home and take care of their families, so there is the sense that people like me are going against society’s norms,” she explains.

To overcome these challenges, Yesuf works with her peers to raise awareness through discussion at public forums on the importance of giving men and women equal opportunities in the workplace. She has also attended courses and trainings to enhance her leadership, communication, and conflict resolution skills.

Yesuf’s ambition to continue building on her personal development led her to the GRASP Fellowship. “When I read about the Fellowship online, I felt that it matched my desires, passion and career needs because it provides a unique platform for young professionals like me,” she enthuses. Yesuf believes that through the mentorship program and interaction with other fellows, she will be able to build her research, policy formulation, and implementation skills and fill the gaps in her career as she looks to lead more projects, especially those involving women farmers.

Yesuf Fatie Haredin 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).