

Winners of 3rd Africa-wide Science Competitions for Women and Young Professionals in Science announced on 20th July at the 6th FARA General Assembly
by
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The decision to host the Africa-wide science competitions targeting African women and young professionals in science was taken by the FARA General Assembly at its 4th meeting in South Africa in 2007. Professor Monty Jones, the former executive director, FARA had readily agreed to partner with CTA, ANAFE, RUFORUM and the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency in hosting these competitions. The Finals of the 2nd round of competitions was held at the 5th FARA GA in Burkina Faso and the decision was taken by the GA to continue to organize the science competitions. In 2012, the partnership was expanded to include the International Foundation for Science (IFS), Sweden.

The Finals of the CTA/FARA/IFS/ANAFE/RUFORUM/NPCA/AGRA 3rd *Africa-wide Women and Young Professionals in Science Competitions: “Feeding 1 billion in Africa in a changing World”* was held in Accra from 15 – 16 July as a side event of the 6th Africa Agriculture Science Week. It attracted about 100 participants each day. The award and prize distribution ceremony for the top 5 finalists in each category was held during the main FARA General Assembly. This clearly demonstrated how much CTA, FARA, IFS and partners value the scientific contributions of Africa’s women scientists and young professionals in addressing the challenges that Africa faces as well as the partners’ shared commitment to supporting and promoting their efforts.

The objectives of the competitions were:

1. To recognize and reward the contributions of African women scientists and young professionals who are involved in:
 - Pioneering and innovative research, technology development and engineering;
 - Communicating their research results and technological developments;
 - Advocating for policy change and influencing policy processes through their research, education and outreach programmes to transform the agricultural and rural sectors - reduce hunger, improve prosperity, sustain the natural resource base and build resilience of African communities.
2. To raise awareness of the need for valuing and sustaining the engagement of women and young professionals in science and facilitating their contribution to Africa’s socio-economic transformation.

The competitions were launched in March 2012 and the journey to reach to the final stage involved an Africa-wide call for abstracts which attracted 316 submissions from 28 countries; selection of 45 semi-finalists; inviting each semi-finalists to develop their abstracts into full papers; training the semi-finalists in scientific writing, communication and policy advocacy followed by revision and submission of their papers; evaluation of final papers by a multi-disciplinary team of experts and

selection of the top 20. Although all 45 semi-finalists are considered winners and received certificates from the directors of CTA and IFS on the 16 July; it is only the top 10 in each category who vied for the top 5 places during the 6th GA side event. The 20 finalists, each made a 15 minute presentation on their research work to a panel of distinguished African judges. The finalists had to convince the judges of the soundness and relevance of their research to Africa and the scientific merit; as well as how they had communicated the outputs of their research to peers, policymakers and end-users and of the demonstrated and potential impact of their research.

The winners of the 3rd *Africa-wide Women and Young Professionals in Science Competitions: "Feeding 1 billion in Africa in a changing World"* are:

Young Professionals in Science

1st Prize – Trophies, laptop and \$3,000 cash, books

2nd Prize – Video camera and \$ 2,000 cash, books

3rd Prize – Digital camera and \$1,500 cash, books

4th & 5th places - \$1,000 each, books

1st – Dr. Jemanesh Kifetew Haile, Ethiopia – QTL mapping of resistance to Ethiopian stem rust races of *Puccinia graminis* f. sp. *Tritici* including UG99 and stem rust resistance genes in durum wheat (*Triticum durum* Desf.)

2nd – Dr. Stella Kabiri, Uganda - Landscape-scale management of Invasive *Cymbopogon afronardus* (Stapf) in the rangelands of Uganda

3rd – Dr. Julius Kofi Hagan, Ghana - Introducing heat-tolerant genes into exotic chicken for improved egg production under hot and humid environments

4th - Komi Edem Koledzi, Togo - Valorisation des déchets solides urbains à Lomé : approche méthodologique pour une production durable du compost (Recovery of urban solid waste in Lomé: methodological approach towards sustainable compost production)

5th - Donald Rugira Kugonza, Uganda - Enhancing pig productivity in Lake Victoria crescent zone: the effect of genotype and post-weaning diet

Women in Science

1st Prize – Trophies, laptop and \$5,000 cash, books

2nd prize – Laptop and \$ 3,000 cash, books

3rd prize – Laptop and \$2,500 cash, books

4th & 5th places - \$1,500 cash each, books

1st Dr. Nafiisa Sobratee, Mauritius - Valorisation of poultry litter to compost: an assessment of the pathogen reduction potential

2nd Dr. Florence Beatrice Lubwama Kiyimba, Uganda - Labour saving tools for women: The forage chopper for smallholder dairy farmers in Uganda

3rd Dr. Ijeoma Chinyere Akaogu, Nigeria - Agronomic performance of extra-early maize hybrids under stress and non-stress environments in Nigeria

4th Dr. Loule Clementine, Dabire Binso, Burkina Faso - Sécurité alimentaire en Afrique : une technique innovante efficace de conservation du niébé (Food security in Africa: an innovative technique for cowpea storage)

5th Dr. Fredah Karambu Rimberia, Kenya - Improvement of papaya productivity for commercial application

All winners received their prizes from Professor Monty Jones.

The organizers/partners thanked the judges:

- Prof. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, Managing Director, CEPHYR, Mauritius (Chief judge)
- Ms Marjorie Niyitegeka Kyomuhendo, PR & Strategic Communication Specialist, Makerere University, Uganda
- Dr Demba Farba Mbaye, Virginia Tech University, USAID/ERA project, Dakar, Senegal
- Prof. Robert Kariuki Obura, Deputy Principal (A&R), Laikipia University College, Kenya
- Prof. Abdoulaye Gouro, Executive Secretary, Conseil National de la recherche Agronomique du Niger Niamey, Niger

The hard work and contribution of the Expert Panel led by Judith Ann Francis, Senior Programme Coordinator, Science & Technology Policy, CTA was also acknowledged. Members of the expert Panel included:

Ifidon Ohiomoba, FARA & Myra Wopereis-Pura, former Director, FARA, Ghana

Dr Nighisty Ghezae, IFS, Sweden

Dr Sebastian Chakeredza, ANAFE, Kenya

Dr Wellington Ekaya, RUFORUM, Uganda

Dr Margaret Kroma, AGRA, Kenya

Chimwemwe Chamdimba, NPCA, South Africa

Professor Mary Oyiela Abukutsa Onyango, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology, Kenya

Dr Aster Gebrekirstos Afwork, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany

Dr Maurice Bolo, The Scinnovent Centre, Kenya

All 45 papers will be published by CTA and the publication will be distributed to all participants in the science competitions, universities and other organizations on the continent and also made available internationally. The organizers noted that the winning scientific contributions all correspond to the priority themes which the FARA General Assembly have endorsed for the next three years.