

COMMUNIQUE – Finals of the CTA/ATPS/AGRA/FARA/NEPAD/RUFORUM 2008 Science Competitions

Five African women scientists and five African young professionals received their prizes for the Africa-wide CTA/ATPS/AGRA/FARA/NEPAD/RUFORUM 2008 Young Professionals and Women in Science Competitions at the 4th AU Conference of African Ministers of Agriculture, Land and Livestock on April 24, 2009 at the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Special awards; for outstanding contribution to science and ground breaking science were presented to two women scientists and two young professionals received awards for originality and communication. The list of the awardees in each category is presented below.

Winners of the Women in Science Competition

1. **ABUKUTSA MARY O. ONYANGO, KENYA:** *Development and promotion of technologies for sustainable production and utilization of indigenous vegetables for nutrition security and wealth creation in Kenya*
2. **ANDREA ROTHER, SOUTH AFRICA:** *Pesticide risk reduction strategies for vulnerable African populations through regulatory capacity building and gender appropriate risk communication strategies*
3. **BRIGITTE NYAMBO, KENYA** - *Enhancing food safety and market access for smallholder export vegetable producers in East Africa*
4. **JOLLY KABIRIZI, UGANDA** - *Participatory testing of forage legume innovations with women farmers in Masaka district, Uganda: Impact on fodder availability, animal performance and household*
5. **ABAY FETIEN, ETHIOPIA** - *Farmer-breeder partnership in barley varietal selection: A case for decentralised plant breeding in drought-prone areas of Northern Ethiopia*



Dr. Jolly Kabirizi, Uganda, 4th place Women in Science, with Ugandan Official

Special Award - Ground Breaking Science

ASTER GEBREKIRSTOS, ETHIOPIA - *Climate Change in Africa, based on Tree Rings and stable isotope results, with implication for climatic teleconnections.*

Special Award – Outstanding Contribution to Science and Role Model for African Women Scientists

PROF. AMEENAH GURIB-FAKIM, MAURITIUS – *Traditional medicines and its impact on livelihoods.*



Her Excellency, Tumusiime Rhoda Peace, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union & Prof. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, Mauritius

Winners of the Young Professionals in Science Competition

1. **JOEL NWAKAIRE, NIGERIA** - *Design, construction, and test-running of a biodiesel pilot plant*
2. **EDMORE GASURA, ZIMBABWE** – *Breeding potential of selected sweet potato cultivars in Uganda for improvement of yield, nutritional quality and sweet potato virus disease resistance*
3. **FRANK MWENECHANYA, MALAWI** - *Development of spiral pump technology*
4. **JOSEPH MACHARIA, KENYA** - *Status and prospects of stingless beekeeping in Kenya*
5. **EMILIENNE LIONEL NGO-SAMNICK, CAMEROON** - *Vulgarisation de la construction des biodigesteurs en vue de la production du gaz domestique et du compost organique dans les fermes paysannes –*



Joel Nwakaire, Nigeria, 1st Prize – Young Professionals, with Nigerian Delegation

Special Awards for Originality and Communication

NAMUENE NGANDO, CAMEROON - *Vavan information communication technology (ICT) agricultural sustainable project*

CHARLES LAGU, UGANDA - *Evaluation and promotion of Cambrough breed of pigs for improvement of livelihoods in the South Western Rangelands of Uganda*

The finals and award winning ceremony marked the culmination of a very intense competition among the entrants. In the Young Professionals competition, a total of 140 scientists from 22 African countries had submitted 2 page abstracts on their projects. In the Women in Science competition, 130 entrants from 21 countries had submitted abstracts. A multi-disciplinary expert panel, representing the partner organizations, evaluated all 270 abstracts and selected 42 to be developed into full papers. In the end, only 10 women scientists and 11 young professional were invited to vie for the top 10 places during the finals on April 20 & 21, in Addis Ababa. The panel of judges for the finals was made up of senior African scientists.

The judges concluded that all the presentations were of very high quality and that most research issues addressed were based on practical problems of farmers as well as other stakeholders. It was, therefore not surprising that most research studies presented had early participation of farmers, particularly women, whose knowledge and experiences informed the research processes. This approach empowered stakeholders and enabled them to make informed choices and resulted in a high rate of adoption of research outputs and contributed towards the improvements in yields and livelihood security.



Winners Row and Chief Judge – Dr. Judith Lungu, Dean Faculty of Agriculture, [University of Zambia](#)

Although it was clear that their research was contributing to community and national development, the extent to which it depended on support from external donors was noted. Most of the participants got limited financial resources from national institutions. African governments and regional bodies need to invest more in agricultural research, if they are to set the agendas for agricultural and by extension, economic development. Governments must also support women and youth so that they make their full contribution towards development. These competitions had demonstrated the ability of young professionals and women scientists to produce high quality work with additional spin off benefits for agricultural development.

Most of the research initiatives of these accomplished women and young professionals had created opportunities for the establishment of new enterprises, diversified income sources for rural people or increased access to markets. Some of the research was able to integrate smallholder farmers into the global economy improving their knowledge of the international food safety regulations that often present barriers to their access to international markets. Improving farmers' knowledge of food safety standards provided an opportunity for them to be able to influence the interpretation of food safety standards. The competitions also highlighted the importance of research on value addition that is needed to grow African economies. Their efforts to engage policy makers in the research process were shown to be very important for influencing policy decisions.

Yet Africa's scientific capacity is undervalued. Governments and non-governmental organisations, including the private sector, turn to other regions for scientific solutions.

Governments need to be aware of the fact that supportive scientific institutions and policies are critical in the production of this high quality work. The need to build confidence in Africa's scientific capacity cannot be over-emphasized. These competitions demonstrated that it could be accomplished by showcasing some of the best scientific work being done by young professionals as well as women scientists and bringing it to the attention of African policy makers and other stakeholders. As was highlighted at the meeting of Ministers of Agriculture, Land and Livestock, Africa needs the political will and increased investments to support agricultural research and development.

In addition to raising awareness of Africa's scientific capacity, the competitions created opportunities for sharing results of innovative research work. They highlighted the need to create more such opportunities that allow for scaling out successful initiatives across regions in Africa. The competitions also afforded an opportunity to authenticate research outputs while providing a valuable learning experience for those participating. They demonstrated that when you make room for the underrepresented you unleash a great deal of potential that can contribute significantly towards improved livelihood security and development in general.

CONCLUSION

The competitions succeeded in mobilizing women scientists and young professionals both in Africa and the Diaspora who are doing pioneering research and communicating the results for making impact on agricultural and rural sectors in Africa. By bringing together young professionals with great potential together with accomplished women scientists these competitions also provided an opportunity for mentorship. However, the need to institutionalize and broaden the mentoring processes was noted. The meeting in Addis Ababa called for the creation of mentorship at all levels for career development of the youth and women. They further brought to the attention of policy makers the importance of the work done by African scientists, particularly women and young professionals and the need for adequate national funding to support agricultural research for Africa's development. African governments are urged to recognize, value and harness the scientific capacity that exists in Africa for economic development.