



Gebisa Ejeta

Distinguished Professor/2009

World Food Prize Laureate

BIOGRAPHY

Gebisa Ejeta was born and raised in a small rural community in west-central Ethiopia. He completed his early education in his native country including a BS in Plant Sciences from Alemaya College in 1973. He attended graduate school at Purdue University earning his Masters (1976) and Ph.D. (1978) in Plant Breeding & Genetics. In March 1979, Gebisa joined the International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics (ICRISAT) and conducted seminal sorghum research in Sudan for five years. In January 1984, Dr. Ejeta returned to Purdue University as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Agronomy. Since then, he has led a comprehensive educational and research program at Purdue with emphasis on African agricultural research and development. He currently holds the position of Distinguished Professor of Plant Breeding & Genetics and International Agriculture at Purdue University.

Professor Ejeta has served on numerous science and program review panels, technical committees, and advisory boards of major research and development organizations, including the international agricultural research centers (IARCs), the Rockefeller Foundation, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, and a number of national and regional organizations in Africa. He was a member of the team that launched the Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa, a joint effort of the Rockefeller and Gates Foundation. Dr. Ejeta has served the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), the largest publicly

funded agricultural research consortium in the world as a member of its Science Council (2008–2010) and currently as a member of its Consortium Board. He is also a board member of Sasakawa Africa Program. Dr. Ejeta was recently designated special advisor to USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah.

Dr. Ejeta is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a Fellow of the Crop Science Society of America, and a Fellow of the American Society of Agronomy. Among his many awards, Gebisa Ejeta was the recipient of the 2009 World Food Prize, and a national medal of honor from the President of Ethiopia.

RESEARCH INTEREST

Professor Ejeta is an advocate for purpose-driven research. His own research is focused on elucidating the genetic and physiological mechanisms of important traits in sorghum. Grain sorghum is the fifth most important cereal crop in the world. With its superior drought tolerance and broad adaptation, sorghum is grown worldwide, serving as a staff of life for over 500 million people in developing countries, and as the second most important feed crop in the United States. Ejeta's research addresses some of the most crucial traits of sorghum production and utilization including nutritional quality, drought tolerance, cold tolerance, resistance to pests, diseases, and the parasitic weed, *Striga*. Concerns of global biodiversity, gene flow, and the use of sorghum as a bio-fuel crop are also investigated.

The goal of Ejeta's sorghum research program is the development, release, and deployment of improved sorghum cultivars for both food and feed use. His sorghum research is generally characterized by its sustained commitment to translational approaches that generates products and technologies from research findings to impact farm productivity and the eventual utilization and profitability of the crop post-harvest. Dr. Ejeta utilizes a variety of research tools and works in interdisciplinary collaboration with a number of other scientists and programs. Professor Ejeta has released a large number of inbred lines, improved sorghum varieties and hybrids for use both in the United States and several countries

in Africa. Several of his cultivars have been successfully deployed in a number of African countries.

Graduate education, mentoring of professionals, and developing partnerships are integral components of the sorghum research program. Professor Ejeta has trained and mentored a large cadre of domestic and international students and professionals at Purdue and in collaboration with other institutions. He has led many collaborative agricultural research and development projects, catalyzed the creation of public and private seed enterprises, and facilitated the formation of public-private partnerships in collaborating countries.