

**Ethiopian scientist Segenet Kelemu awarded the L'Oréal-UNESCO prize for Africa and the Arab States.**

Laureate for Africa and the Arab States, Doctor Segenet Kelemu Director General, International Center for Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE) is honored for improving the resistance and productivity of tropical and sub-tropical forage grasses via the use of microorganisms.



The 16th Annual L'Oréal-UNESCO For Women in Science Awards were held in Paris - Sorbonne's historic lecture hall tonight, before an audience of stars from the worlds of science, economics, academia and culture. Five outstanding researchers were awarded the L'Oréal-UNESCO prize by Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, Jean-Paul Agon,

Chairman and CEO of L'Oréal and Chairman of the L'Oréal Foundation, and Professor Günter Blobel, Winner of the Nobel Prize for Medicine and President of the Jury.

Ethiopian scientist Segenet Kelemu is working to improve the resistance and productivity of forage grasses, which are used to feed the animals (and so to produce milk and meat). Born in a rural village and defying strong cultural norms, she managed to have an international career and return to Africa where she shared her much needed knowledge.

The main food source for much of the world's livestock, forage grasses are vitally important to meeting the increasing demand for meat and milk. Dr. Segenet Kelemu has been recognized for her research on how microbes living in symbiosis with these grasses influence their health, their capacity to adapt to environmental stress and their ability to resist disease. By enabling small-scale farmers in tropical and sub-tropical regions to choose the most productive, most pathogen-resistant forage grasses, her work has both helped them improve their lives and increase supplies of much needed animal proteins. In particular, Dr. Kelemu's research on Brachiaria grasses has shown that their capacity to thrive in diverse environments is related to an endophyte fungus which lives within these plants, protects them and exists in symbiosis with them. Her work has led to solutions for disruptions in food supplies caused by pathogenic organisms and extreme climatic conditions and may help to determine which microbes allow crops to survive environmental alterations.

Dr. Kelemu grew up in a remote village in Ethiopia. Although she bore the unequal burden carried by rural African women, she had an uncommon determination to overcome any obstacle to achievement and to help her continent's farmers. Defying strong cultural norms, she became the first woman from her region to attend what was then Ethiopia's only university.



She excelled in her chosen field, plant sciences, and after obtaining her PhD in the United States, she went to Cornell University as a post-doctoral fellow. In 1992 she joined the International Center for Tropical Agriculture in Cali, Colombia as Senior Scientist and was eventually appointed Leader of Crop and Agro ecosystem Management of the Center.

Dr. Kelemu returned to Africa in 2007 to help establish the Biosciences eastern and central Africa (BecA) Hub laboratories, hosted and managed by the International Livestock Research Institute in Kenya, and is currently Director General of the International Center for Insect Physiology and Ecology.

Video link: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5Tq2ZtrJY8>