



Melaku Ayele Gedil Alemaya 1985 40th Anniversary



Bio Sketch Principal Scientist, Molecular breeder IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria

Upon graduation, three dormmates/classmates - Kiros, Mussie, and Melaku - were assigned to IAR, and then dispatched to Pawe, Metekel - an unexpected storm after surviving the Gambella campaign. At Pawe, in particular, we faced countless challenges, but perseverance fueled our spirit, a relentless drive to escape the shadows of that place. Later, Kiros and I earned the opportunity to do our MSc studies at Alemaya after about three years of dedicated service. After four transformative years as postgraduate students, we graduated in Aug 1993.



The next journey was to the USA as a six-month visiting Scholar which I turned into a PhD opportunity and completed my studies, majoring in Crop Science with a minor in Molecular and Cellular Biology at Oregon State University, USA. In 1999, I accepted a postdoctoral position at IITA in Nigeria as a cassava molecular geneticist. I got married and moved back to the USA after the 9/11 attacks, 2001. For six years, I worked in medical research at Georgetown University and published several papers in a new field. I also earned a second MS degree in biotechnology from GU.



In 2007, I returned to IITA, Nigeria, where I currently work as a principal scientist and molecular geneticist/breeder. I have researched several crops and developed a broad laboratory skills including DNA sequencing, bioinformatics, expression studies, gene/marker identification, tissue culture, and more. My current research focuses on using functional genomics techniques to develop efficient molecular breeding programs. To sum it up, I have over 25 years of post-PhD experience in cutting-edge genomics and bioinformatics research at IITA and academic



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institutions in the USA. I served as the Head of the Bioscience Center at IITA for over 8 years. I have authored and co-authored over a hundred and twenty publications. I have gained extensive experience supervising visiting scientists, postdoctoral fellows (>4), PhD students (>17), and MSc students (>15), and have served as a resource person in many workshops, graduate courses, PhD examiner, and curriculum reviews at universities.

Teaching

- Molecular Plant Breeding (PPB723, MSc Class), Visiting lecturer at Pan African Union University, Institute of Life and Earth Sciences, University of Ibadan, Nigeria: 2014-2020
- Molecular Plant Breeding (Plbr7031), PhD program in Plant Breeding and Genetics at the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia: 2020-2023

Contribution to Biotech activities in Ethiopia

- Provided training in group and individual training courses in Ethiopia - Debrezeit and Holeta; supported the Holeta Biotechnology Research Center laboratory.
- Participated in high-level conferences in EIAR and AASTU as an invited speaker.
- Organized an international workshop in Awassa and spoke in other workshops in EIAR.
- I hosted Ethiopian students in Nigeria for short- to medium-term training, including co-supervising two PhD students who are now in the workforce in the USA and Ethiopia.
- Participated in curriculum review of a biotech program at Addis Ababa University and Jimma University.
- Collaboration with Bio and Emerging Technology Institute (BETin, formerly IoB)

I have earned some fellowships and awards and became a member of world-renowned scientific societies, such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Maize Genetics Association, Int Parasitic Plant Society and several others.

I am a father of a 24-year-old son and two daughters, aged 19 and 9, who live in Maryland, USA.