

Kenyan agricultural scientists win international award for genetic work unappreciated at home

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis.

Ruth Wanyera, a plant pathologist, and wheat breeders Godwin Macharia and Peter Njau, all based at the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation (Karlo) Njoro station, on Thursday scooped the prestigious 2015 Gene Stewardship Award for their contribution to food security in Kenya.

These eminent Kenyans, but unsung heroes who keep the country going in their courageous frontline war against food insecurity, were recognised for helping increase the wheat acreage from 160,000ha in 2009 to 180,000ha in 2013 and productivity in individual farmers' fields from 2.5 to 3ha.

Their recognition in the international arena is a painful irony. Kenyans—late Nobel Laureate Prof Wangari Maathai, Prof Calestus Juma, an eminent scientist at Harvard Kennedy School, Dr Florence Wambugu, a plant pathologist and virologist, and the late Prof Thomas Odhiambo, an entomologist — are ever honored abroad, but not in Kenya.

And how many of us in this politically bewitched country know that in 2011 Karlo's Njoro station put up has a world-class facility to screen Ug99, devastating a stem rust which threatens to wipe out wheat globally?

Hardly, save for the scientists. Stem rust has been a wheat farmers' curse for centuries. This is why Wanyera, Macharia and Njau are the true heroes the world celebrates, but Kenya so casually shuns!

The National Biosafety Authority (NBA) has one malady; non-communication! It has yet to tell the public the status of its activities. NBA should keep public focus on food insecurity, malnutrition and poverty, not the sideshows on the adoption or rejection of genetically-modified organisms (GMO) foods.

Read full, original post: [Karlo's wheat scientists have done us proud](#)