

Press Release

OFAB Media Awards unveils 2020 Africa's best journalist in biotechnology reporting

The awards promote best practices in science reporting with emphasis on agriculture biotechnology



[Nairobi, 4 December 2020]: Leopold Obi, a science and environment journalist working for the Nation Media Group in Kenya, emerged the winner under print and online category and the overall winner of the 2020 Open Forum on Agricultural biotechnology in Africa (OFAB) Africa Media Awards, at an event held virtually in Nairobi, Kenya.

Obi was one of the 14 finalists from across the seven OFAB countries in Africa namely Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, Uganda, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso. He was distinguished for his story titled: “Kenya closer to giving long awaited GMO Cotton a green light”, published on the Business Daily. The story aimed at creating awareness to the

public on the progress Kenya has made towards adopting Bt Cotton, taking a critical look on what the crop is all about and its benefits to farmers and Kenya's textile industry.

OFAB Media Awards aims at recognizing exemplary journalism that promote best practices in science reporting with emphasis on agriculture biotechnology through responsible, professional, ethical and effective reporting. The annual event is sponsored by AATF through its OFAB project.

The chief guest during the award ceremony Dr Denis Kyetere, Executive Director, AATF noted that AATF is proud to celebrate journalists and the critical role of the media in promoting better public understanding and acceptance of agricultural biotechnologies for food security, sustainable development and poverty eradication.

"The media is our key partner in ensuring smallholder farmers benefit from the same innovations that are transforming food production around the globe," said Dr. Kyetere.

He urged African countries to adopt favourable policies that support agricultural development through the adoption of technology particularly agricultural biotechnology for Africa's sustainable economic growth.

Speaking at the same event, Mr. Vitumbiko Chinoko, the OFAB Africa project manager noted that a platform that started as a monthly biotech café meeting to discuss matters related to agricultural biotechnology, OFAB initiative has now grown into seven countries.

"OFAB has excelled in facilitating conversations at all levels from grassroots, national and even at pan-African levels among stakeholders such as policy makers, politicians, civil society organizations and the media," he pointed out.

"The Media Awards component of OFAB celebrates exemplary media reporting of agricultural biotechnology to help deal with misconceptions, misinformation and propaganda," he added.

Speaking on behalf of the judges at the awards ceremony, Eva Georgia, a South African community radio trainer and a consultant said the judges were impressed by the work of

the journalists by interpreting newly passed laws and breaking down scientific research in bite sizes and making it palatable to their audiences.

“You transported us through picturesque harvest fields, making us see through your eyes, you painted pictures with words, used local music to add a bit of spice, used infographics in an innovative way to bring your message across in addition to the production of good quality video and audio. These are the things we look at as judges,” she explained.

Pretty Ngozi, a TV journalist from Nigeria was declared winner under the television category while Sarah Natoolo, a radio journalist from Uganda was the winner under the radio category.

The overall winner received USD 3,500 in prize money, a trophy and a certificate. Each category winners received USD 1,500, iPhone 12 Pro and a certificate while first runner ups for each category received USD 1,000 each, iPhone 11 Pro Max and a certificate.

The awards, now in its 4th year, aims at promoting excellence in agricultural biotechnology reporting by celebrating and awarding three winning journalists in the categories of: Television, Radio and Print & Online.

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About AATF (<https://www.aatf-africa.org/about-us/>)

Founded in 2003 to address Africa’s food security prospects through agricultural technology, AATF believes that the agricultural sector is a key foundational pillar as Africa consolidates its economic growth and carves out its new position as a major global economic powerhouse and the next growth market in the world. It was formed in response to the need for an effective mechanism that would facilitate and support negotiation for technology access and delivery and formation of appropriate partnerships to manage the development & deployment of innovative technologies for use by smallholder farmers in SSA.

About OFAB

OFAB is a partnership platform that contributes to creation of an enabling environment for biotechnology research, development, and deployment for the benefit of smallholder farmers in Africa. Driven by a vision of sustainable food security and agriculture-driven economic development in Africa, OFAB enhances knowledge and awareness on



agricultural biotechnology to build understanding of the technology and inform decision making. Established by AATF in 2006, OFAB operates in 7 countries - Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, Burkina Faso and Nigeria. The OFAB key stakeholders include policy makers, the media, farmers, biosafety regulators, scientists, industry and consumers.

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