



Photo courtesy of Purdue University/College of Agriculture

Gebisa Ejeta

Sorghum Hybrids

U.S. PATENT NO. 11,505,804: Immune receptor conferring broad spectrum fungal resistance in sorghum

Inducted in 2026 Born: June 1, 1950

Plant geneticist Gebisa Ejeta developed higher-quality sorghum hybrids that are resistant to drought and disease. By increasing the production and availability of sorghum, a versatile and important cereal grain, Ejeta's efforts have helped feed millions of people across Africa and around the world.



Full Bio: <https://www.invent.org/inductees/gebisa-ejeta>

Primary Connections:

- Purdue University: Executive Director, Purdue Center for Global Food Security; Distinguished Professor, Plant Breeding and Genetics, 1984-2025
- International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), Wad Medani, Sudan: Principal Plant Breeder, 1978-83

Education:

- Alemaya College, Ethiopia: B.S., Plant Sciences, 1973
- Purdue University: M.S., Plant Breeding and Genetics, 1976; Ph.D., Plant Breeding and Genetics, 1978

Key Memberships/Awards:

- National Medal of Science, 2023
- Haramaya University, Ethiopia: Honorary Doctorate, 2015
- African Academy of Sciences, 2013
- National Sorghum Producers: Outstanding Achievement in Sorghum Improvement, 2013
- Jimma University, Ethiopia: Honorary Doctorate, 2012
- Oklahoma State University: Honorary Doctorate, 2011
- Crop Science Society of America: Presidential Award, 2009
- Government of Ethiopia's National Hero Medal (Science), 2009
- World Food Prize, 2009
- American Association for the Advancement of Science: Fellow, 2005

Things You Should Know:

- Ejeta was born in the small, rural village of Wollonkomi in Ethiopia in 1950.
- He grew up experiencing poverty and food insecurity, but his mother made sure he had access to an education.
- As an elementary student, he walked about 12 miles to his school each Sunday, then walked back home each Friday.
- After graduating from Alemaya College, he had an opportunity to play for the Ethiopian Olympic basketball team but instead came to the U.S. for his graduate studies.
- In the early 1980s, Ejeta developed the sorghum hybrid Hageen Dura-1 (HD-1). In field trials, it produced 50% to 100% more grain than traditional sorghum varieties, leading to widespread adoption by farmers, who saw yield increases of more than 150%.
- He developed Striga-resistant sorghum hybrids and created a Striga management program, helping farmers by combining resistance to this parasitic weed with soil-fertility enhancement and water conservation.
- He has personally trained and continues to inspire a new generation of agricultural scientists.
- When Ejeta won the National Hero Award in 2009, it was the first time the nation's highest honor had been given to an Ethiopian for work in science and technology.
- He also was awarded the World Food Prize, and he used the funds to establish an educational foundation supporting Ethiopian and other African children.