



## Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

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# Investing in the Next Generation of Agricultural Leaders



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Dr. Gerardine Mukeshimana, recently appointed Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources in Rwanda, accepts an award from BIFAD in 2012 for her research on bean breeding.

In July 2014, Gerardine Mukeshimana was appointed by President Paul Kagame of Rwanda as the new Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources. Minister Mukeshimana, a graduate of Michigan State University (MSU), brings to this prestigious position a wealth of expertise achieved over more than a decade of higher-level education and training supported by the U.S. Government.

Both under Feed the Future and prior to the launch of the initiative, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has played a major role in Minister Mukeshimana's professional development by supporting her participation in several institutional capacity strengthening and training programs. In 2001, Gerardine Mukeshimana first enrolled in a Master of Science program at MSU as part of USAID's "Partnership for Enhancing Agriculture in Rwanda through Linkages" project. After returning to Rwanda to serve both as a lecturer in the Faculty of Agriculture of the National University of Rwanda and Coordinator for the World Bank's Rural Sector Support Project, she returned to MSU in 2008 to pursue a PhD with support from the [Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Collaborative Research in Grain Legumes](#).

Minister Mukeshimana completed her doctorate in plant breeding and genetics at MSU in 2013 under the guidance of Dr. James Kelly, one of the principal investigators under the Grain Legumes Innovation Lab. Mukeshimana's doctoral thesis research focused on genes for drought tolerance in the common bean, an important staple crop in Rwanda, which has the highest per capita consumption of bean of any country in the world. Her findings were highlighted in two scientific papers published in 2014 in *Crop Science* and the *Journal of the American Society of Horticulture Science*.

Minister Mukeshimana is also a former Fellow of the [Norman E. Borlaug Leadership Enhancement in Agriculture Program](#), a fellowship program funded by USAID under Feed the Future. This fellowship enabled her to spend three months at the [International Center for Tropical Agriculture](#), a CGIAR center, conducting field research on beans under the mentorship of Dr. Steve Beebe, head of the bean program. This unique opportunity strengthened Mukeshimana's doctoral research by supporting her field work in Colombia and Rwanda, broadened her exposure to drought selection techniques, and expanded her international network.

After completing her doctoral degree, Minister Mukeshimana joined the research team at [Biosciences for East and Central Africa Hub](#), a state-of-the-art research facility housed at the [International Livestock Research Institute](#) in Nairobi, Kenya.

In 2012, the [Board of International Food and Agricultural Development](#) (BIFAD) recognized Mukeshimana's achievements by awarding her the prestigious BIFAD Student Award for Scientific Excellence in a USAID Collaborative Research Support Program. The recognition was based on her contributions to Rwanda's bean breeding program, including the identification of genes for drought tolerance, and the development of a fast and cost-effective method for screening for drought tolerance mechanisms.

Now poised to directly influence agriculture and food security in Rwanda, Minister Mukeshimana is an example of why the U.S. Government invests in human and institutional capacity development through Feed the Future, contributing to the formation of a new generation of agricultural leaders in Sub-Saharan Africa.

*This article was contributed by Dr. Irvin Widders, director of the Legume Innovation Lab at Michigan State University.*