



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/food-scientist%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9Chomemade%E2%80%9D-business-catalyzes-innovation-and-entrepreneurship>

Food Scientist's "Homemade" Business Catalyzes Innovation and Entrepreneurship



Kwaku Nyarko

Master's student Millicent Yeboah-Awudzi promoting her improved hibiscus drink, Pinnasob.

"I started this business with less than \$40," said Millicent Yeboah-Awudzi, a Fellow with the Feed the Future Norman E. Borlaug Leadership Enhancement in Agriculture Program (Borlaug LEAP). "Through discipline and hard work, I was able to build something that not only endures but has provided employment for others."

Yeboah-Awudzi is a master's student in Food Science at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana and a successful business owner. With support from Borlaug LEAP, Yeboah-Awudzi hopes to leave a lasting legacy in business and in her educational career. The program identifies ambitious young graduate students from Sub-Saharan Africa who have demonstrated leadership potential and supports these scholars in completing their research and making a difference with their work.

Her brainchild-turned-business, Homemade Foods, revolves around the local hibiscus beverage, sobolo. Traditionally sold in plastic baggies to school children, sobolo lacks wide consumer appeal and does not generate significant income for its mostly female vendors. Additionally, the quality of the product tends to vary greatly, plagued by contamination issues due to poor production practices. However, the beverage has appreciably more vitamins and minerals than other, more expensive drinks on the market—and it can be produced at a low cost. Recognizing the limitations of the drink, as well as its economic potential, Yeboah-Awudzi set out to make an income by making a change.

"[As a] food scientist, [I] decided to research more on how to improve the quality of this local beverage, both in packaging and in nutritional content," she said. "[I] worked on microbial contamination, [...] and came out with interventions and good manufacturing practices to reduce contamination." The result was a modified product called Pinnasob. "Sob" is short for the traditional name for the hibiscus drink sobolo, while "Pinna" is Millicent's local middle name.

Pinnasob is now sold in sterilized bottles at local supermarkets and in cold dispenser machines at private, catered events through Homemade Foods.

Yeboah-Awudzi's inspiration for Homemade Foods came while she was an intern at the Niche Cocoa factory in Tema, Ghana. The owner of the factory, Edmond Poku, is also a young entrepreneur who was happy to mentor her.

"Thanks to Mr. Poku, I gained insight into how the food industry works," Yeboah-Awudzi said. Not only was she grateful for the instruction but also for the insight into how a young person could make a difference in the business world. In June 2012, Homemade Foods began production. Yeboah-Awudzi said she was able to fund "almost half of her graduate program due to the success of her business." She has since hired 10 young women, many of whom have gone on to start their own businesses or used their earnings to pay for a portion of their university fees. She hopes to continue to mentor ambitious and forward-thinking women like these.

In a country where women have traditionally lacked a voice in the public sphere and a stake in the business world, Yeboah-Awudzi is breaking the mold. As a hardworking woman intent on pursuing her education, she's embraced the ideals of initiatives like Feed the Future and is making them work for her and other similarly minded women.

Last month, Yeboah-Awudzi attended an entrepreneurship training at the University of California, Davis. As a result, she's started a "Youth Agri-preneur" group in Ghana, and is well on her way to making a lasting impact.

The Norman E. Borlaug Leadership Enhancement in Agriculture Program (Borlaug LEAP) is administered at the University of California, Davis International Programs Office with funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development.