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Kenyan and Ugandan Journalists Emerge Winners in Continental Agricultural Journalism Competition

MAPUTO (2 December 2008)— **Patricia Oyella** of WBS TV in Uganda and **Wandera Ojanji** of the *East African Standard* in Kenya were today announced winners of the CGIAR-FARA 2008 Award for Excellence in Agricultural Science Journalism in Africa.

Ms. Oyella won the prize for outstanding broadcast story while Mr. Ojanji received the outstanding print media prize. Each award, carrying a cash value of US\$5,000, recognizes journalists' efforts in effectively communicating agricultural science issues to the general public. This year's prize was jointly offered by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA).

"We received an impressive array of entries from about 20 countries in Africa. Ms. Oyella and Mr. Ojanji impressed the judges most for thoroughly exploring the issues without losing their audience in the complexity of science. We recognize and applaud their efforts in showing how agriculture research contributes to development in Africa," said Catherine Mgendi of the CGIAR. "Extensive and well-researched coverage of these important issues contributes to the mission of the CGIAR and FARA, and we are grateful for their contribution."

Saving the Cooking Banana

Patricia Oyella, editor and reporter at WBS TV in Uganda, received the award for her broadcast feature, "Saving the Cooking Banana," shown on WBS TV and on Business Africa, a program broadcast on a network of more than 45 African and five European partner channels. Combining powerful, captivating imagery with precise narratives, the feature demonstrated the importance of this food crop in Africa, the problems faced by banana farmers, and the solutions offered by researchers.

The panel of judges—comprising senior journalists and editors across Africa—applauded her entry as "a brilliant story well told with strong human interest." The judges commended Ms. Oyella for a story well-researched that also employed unforgettable images and experts who explained the issues clearly.

Endangered Species

Wandera Ojanji, science and environmental writer at the *East African Standard* newspaper in Kenya, received the outstanding print award for his article, "Endangered Species," published on September 2, 2007. In his article, Ojanji effectively highlighted the plight of diminishing indigenous livestock breeds in Kenya and neighboring countries, and advocated strongly for the conservation of their genetic diversity through research, local breeding programs, and policy interventions.

“‘Endangered Species’ is a good agriculture research story and the journalist has done proper justice to a difficult theme,” said the judges.

The CGIAR-FARA 2008 Award for Excellence in Agricultural Science Journalism in Africa attracted 49 print and broadcast entries on issues affecting Africa’s key crops (banana, cassava, maize, rice) and livestock, namely biofuels, climate change, the role of biotechnology, food safety, access to fertilizers, pest management and efforts to control noxious weeds such as striga.

“In this day of information overload, journalists have to be concise, accurate and relevant. They additionally have to present agricultural information attractively and innovatively. Their choice of words and images sometimes has more impact than loads of scientific evidence,” said Francois Stepman, Communications Specialist for the Accra-based Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa. “We truly laud the efforts of journalists to inform and educate the public about the importance of issues affecting agriculture in Africa, and solutions offered by research.”

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About the CGIAR:

The CGIAR, established in 1971, is a strategic partnership of countries, international and regional organizations and private foundations supporting the work of 15 international Centers. In collaboration with national agricultural research systems, civil society and the private sector, the CGIAR fosters sustainable agricultural growth through high-quality science aimed at benefiting the poor through stronger food security, better human nutrition and health, higher incomes and improved management of natural resources. For more information, please visit www.cgiar.org.

About the FARA

FARA is a continent-wide forum of stakeholders focusing on agricultural research and development. The Forum encompasses all stakeholders, African and non-African, who are committed to enabling African agriculture to reach its full potential. FARA was established by three sub-regional organisations (SROs): the Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA), West and Central African Council for Agricultural Research and Development (CORAF/WECARD) and Southern Africa Development Community-Food Agriculture and Natural Resource Directorate (SADC-FANR) to help promote and facilitate the members’ collaborative action. The African Union Commission and AU-NEPAD have given the FARA Secretariat the mandate to serve as the lead institution responsible for coordinating CAADP Pillar IV activities. For more information, please visit www.fara-africa.org