

Biographical Note

Distinguished Professor Umezuruike Linus Opara, PhD CEng CFS FIAgrE FSAIAE FNIAE

Professor Umezuruike Linus Opara is a chartered agricultural engineer, certified food scientist, development practitioner, Chair of the South African Research Chair Initiative (SARChI) in Postharvest Technology, founding Director of the Africa Institute for Postharvest Technology, and a Distinguished Professor at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He Graduated with degrees in Agricultural Engineering (BEng Hons and MEng, First Class Hons) from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, and PhD from Massey University, New Zealand. In 2012, he completed the Certificate in Innovation for Sustainable Development at the Kennedy School, Harvard University, USA. He has published over 300 peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters and conference papers, and graduated more than 68 postgraduate students in South Africa, Sultanate of Oman, and New Zealand. Prof. Opara was recognised in 2019 and 2021 as a “Highly Cited Researcher” by the Web of Science Group, which distinguishes the “world's most influential researchers of the past decade”. He is a Laureate of the African Union Kwame Nkrumah Continental Award for Life and Earth Sciences – Africa’s highest research award for senior researchers; Winner of the Impact Research and Science in Africa (IMPRESSA) Award for “excellence in research & building Africa’s human resources capacity”, Founding President – the Pan African Society for Agricultural Engineering; and Founding Editor-in-Chief – International Journal of Postharvest Technology and Innovation. He is the Executive Secretary of the International Academy of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering and past President – International Commission of Agricultural & Biosystems Engineering.

In 2006, he was honoured with the Distinguished Researcher Award by Sultan Qaboos University, Oman – the highest recognition for excellence in research for impact. In 2019, Stellenbosch University bestowed its higher honour on Prof. Opara – the Chancellor’s Award, for his “sustained excellence in research”. Prof. Opara is widely recognised leading expert on agricultural transformation and policy. He was a visiting expert at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and provided advise in Rome, Iraq, and Timor-Leste where is a co-author of the first medium-term agricultural development plan. In recognition of his international standing and influence in education and research, the Imerienwe Autonomous Community in Imo State, Nigeria, honoured Prof. Opara with the Chieftaincy title of Akaraugo.

In New Zealand, he served as member of the Governing Council of Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand (1992-96), where he held the positions of Programme Director of Engineering Technologies, Senior Lecturer in Postharvest Engineering, and member of the Professorial Board, among others. At Sultan Qaboos University in the Sultanate of Oman, he was Director of the Agricultural Experiment, Deputy Dean for Postgraduate Studies & Research, Associate Professor of Agricultural Engineering, member of Academic Board, among others. He has served on the boards of several international agencies including Postharvest Africa (USA), Agricultural Transformation Initiative (Malawi), and the Postharvest Innovation Lab of the USAID Feed the Future Program, among others.

Prof. Opara is currently leading the establishment of the UNESCO International Centre for Biotechnology at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, as a leading institution for research, innovation and capacity building, focusing on food and nutrition security, tropical diseases,

and conservation of bioresources. His latest research and professional activities focus on building Africa's capacity to radically transform and modernise agriculture and food systems for wealth creation and socio-economic development.