My Motivation...

My story is my source of inspiration every day. I was raised by a single mother whose fate in her marriage was decided the moment she had a baby girl as her first issue. She had to leave, had to raise me alone, had to create a means of survival for us, then, agriculture saved us. She was hardworking and resourceful in many ways than I can think of and taught me how to grow vegetables the moment I could walk. Together we grew crops all season round, during the dry season, we moved closer to the river to plant vegetables for easy irrigation. I developed a deep connection and understanding of crop production ever since. She was able to raise me, give me the best education and till date I strongly believe that agriculture could save so many more people especially the girl child.

Major achievements and success stories...

After my graduation from the University of Nigeria Nsukka, where I studied Agricultural Extension I decided to intern in major Agric-based organizations mostly international NGOs to understand the work they do, the progress made towards grassroots agricultural development, the effectiveness of various existing Federal Government interventions in agriculture, the strategies to achieve the SDGs 1 and 2 and challenges limiting our goal of achieving food self-sustainability. This opportunity was one of the best times of my life, being a part of creating a solution to problems facing agriculture.

A few years later I decided to get actively involved in food production, to deploy my knowledge, skills and creativity into crop production, I had on lease a hectare of land for 5 years where I started with most crops; vegetables- Watermelons, Peppers, Tomatoes on a rotational basis. I germinated the seedlings in my house, raised them in the nursery before transplanting to the field. I was making enough profit as a startup, putting healthy food out there and progressing while doing what I love most. There are downsides to this, the expensive agro-inputs, labour, irrigation problems and unpredictable weather conditions, after the first few months I was learning, unlearning and keeping my records to ensure I was making progress.  Today, I have added a new staple crop, a vegetable –Maize, Okro and as I gain more space I will keep expanding and adding more crops. The benefits of being an agroprenuer most times outweigh the disadvantages because agriculture is risk-filled and some of these risks are not under our control, we can avert most of them by adequate planning.

I have never been more optimistic about the future, recently I was awarded by the Institute of International Education (IIE), New York through the Indigenous Biocultural Exchange Fund a grant of $5,000 due to impact from the work I do in food production in my local community. I was also selected for a prestigious scholarship this June to pursue an MSc in Food Security in the UK and my overall goal is to understand how other countries got to the stage where they are food secure, to understand the global drivers of food insecurity and policies that could yield huge benefits for the sector.

The Conference should address...

Post-harvest losses among other threats in Africa, especially Nigeria’s goal of achieving food security is a major setback. More than 70% of Nigerians are farmers, yet we are hungry, prices of foodstuffs go up as soon as there is a seasonal change. During the on-season of certain crops, the quantity disposed of in marketplaces and farms are so much that we are left with nothing in the coming months. Value addition to our agricultural produce could assure food available all year round. Also, according to World Bank Group Agriculture, women farmers could raise 150million people out of hunger and malnutrition if equipped with as much knowledge, information and capital as the men. Women involvement in Africa’s (Nigerian) agriculture is still very little because most of them do not have access to arable land, capital and training on new farming knowledge. These are factors that if addressed could secure Africa’s food future.