



Shika Brown Breed

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Introduction

The African Chicken Genetic Gains Project (ACGG) is led by the International Livestock Research Institute and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The project tests selected chicken strains for egg and meat productivity, adaptation and preference by farmers in Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Nigeria under semi-scavenging and intensive management conditions.

Selection of chicken strains for the test was based on prior knowledge of their productive performances in different tropical countries. The Shika Brown breed has been identified as tropically-adapted and productive and will be tested in Nigeria. This factsheet outlines the history of the breed and its characteristics, and the potential for Shika Brown to increase incomes for smallholder farmers in Nigeria, especially women, and lift them out of poverty.

Origins of Shika Brown

Nigeria's commercial chicken industry used to depend on the importation of parent stock, which had economic and health implications on the country. Trying to find solutions to these challenges, the National Animal Production Research Institute (NAPRI) at Ahmadu Bello University embarked on research that culminated in the development of a layer parent stock. Twenty years of research led to the development of a chicken breed noted for its brown eggs, persistent egg production, high feed conversion efficiency and large egg size. The breed is named Shika Brown after the Shika village, near NAPRI.

The birds from Shika Brown breed improvement—obtained from a series of crosses between two specialized lines of the foundation stock—were tested and performed well in all six geo-political zones of

Nigeria (Kallah, 1999). A complete description of the foundation stock and breeding activities on the egg-type chickens in the Institute (NAPRI) was given by Adeyinka (1998).

While the breed has been tested and performed well under intensive management conditions (Table 1), it has not been adequately evaluated under village management system conditions and was chosen as one of the breeds for ACGG on-farm activities in Nigeria.

Shika Brown breed characteristics

The Shika Brown chicken breed is the preferred layer strain in Nigeria. Its characteristics include excellent shell quality, high production rate, persistency, egg weight, liveability, and feed conversion. The Shika Brown is well adapted to the harsh tropical environment and resistant to many diseases of economic importance.

Shika Brown performance in Nigeria

Table. Average performance of Shika Brown commercial layers (on-station)

Trait	Local chicken	Shika Brown	Commercial strain
Age at first egg (d)	135-158	136	134
Hen housed production to 72 weeks	141	278	290
Hen day production to 72 weeks (No. of eggs)	146	290	300
Body weight at maturity (kg)	1.5	1.9	2.0
Average egg weight at 40 weeks (g)	38.4	58.2	60

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For more information on the program, and to find out about future development and performance of the Kuroiler breed in Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tanzania, go to: <http://africacgg.net/>

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) works to improve food security and reduce poverty in developing countries through research for better and more sustainable use of livestock. ILRI is an international research institute with its headquarters in Kenya and co-hosted by the Government of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa. It works through a network of regional and country offices and projects in East and Southeast Asia, South Asia, East, Central, Southern and West Africa and in Central America. ilri.org

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African Chicken Genetic Gains is an Africa-wide collaboration that uses genetics so the continent's smallholder can get more productive chickens.

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