

Assessment of Available Chicken Breeds in Ethiopia

Introduction

There are local and exotic chicken breeds available in Ethiopia. Formerly the exotic ones were kept only in commercial farms with intensive management and local or indigenous breeds in backyard chicken production systems. Currently, exotic/cross breeds are being kept in backyard chicken production systems with certain inputs.

Indigenous Breeds: There are local breeds of chicken mostly called by their local name, which are named after the color of their feathers or their location. Their performance and genetic potential has not been studied, but EARO is doing efforts in characterizing the breeds and improving their potential by cross breeding. Most of the urban and peri-urban community keeps these indigenous breeds because they are well adapted to the current environmental condition. Thus, these chickens can survive well with low input and the taste of their eggs and meats is flavorful.

Commercial or Exotic Breeds: Commercial breeds are developed based on the demand of consumers. Currently the commercial breeds are either layers or broilers. There are also pure, exotic breeds but currently they are not available in the commercial markets of Ethiopia. Formerly Rhode Island Red and White Leghorns were available in Ethiopia.

Layers

These breeds are used primarily for egg production. Most of the time, the eggs of the parent stock are imported. Then the generations are used for their egg production while the parent stock is used for hatchery purposes. Previously, several layer breeds were imported to Ethiopia, but currently there are just two hybrids used for egg production:

Bovans Brown:

This breed was formerly known as Bovans Goldline and is a hybrid of Rhode Island Red (cock) and Light Sussex (hen). Bovans Brown is a brown feathered, brown egg layer which has the ability to meet the expectations of a variety of egg producers with different objectives. She is the bird of choice for today's egg farmers who expect high egg numbers and a forgiving bird—essential ingredients to keeping business profitable. She not only performs well for the egg producer with



traditional production facilities, but is very docile making her the perfect bird for alternative production methods as well

Issa Brown

Issa Brown: Also available in Ethiopia, this layer is a hybrid of Rhode Island Red (hen) and Rhode Island White (cock). It is known for its high egg production of approximately 300 eggs per hen in the first year of laying. They are easy to raise and prolific producers of large richly colored brown eggs of excellent shell quality. They are quiet and friendly and easily trained to lay in their nests



Broilers:

Broilers are chickens raised specifically for meat production. Modern commercial broilers are specially bred for large scale, efficient meat production and grow much faster than egg laying hens or traditional dual purpose breeds. They are noted for having very fast growth rates, a high feed conversion ratio, and low levels of activity. Broilers often reach a harvest weight of 4-5 pounds dressed in only five weeks, although more slow growing free-range and organic strains reach slaughter weight at 12-16 weeks of age. Typical broilers have white feathers and yellowish skin. This cross is also favorable for meat production because it lacks the typical "hair" which many breeds have that necessitates singeing after plucking. Both male and female broilers are slaughtered for their meat. Babcock is the chicken breed that is currently imported in Ethiopia and used for fattening purpose.



Dual Purpose Breeds:

Additionally, there chicken breed that is imported to Ethiopia from Egypt for trial purpose namely **Fayomi breed**.

They are known for their best adaptability in the harsh, hot and arid environment of Egypt and they have been in trial in lowlands of Ethiopia by Ethiopian Agriculture Research Institute. They are breeds of dual purpose, and can be used both for egg production and meat. Since it is a short time they are introduce and still going on, there is no clear information about their performance in Ethiopia and they are only distributed in trial bases.

Few years before Rhode Island Red chicken breeds; were imported in the country as dual purpose birds and distributed to the community both by government and NGOs. Currently, there is not importer that is importing this chicken breed in the country.



Conclusion: Among the above birds that are legally imported to Ethiopia for commercial purpose, Bovans browns and Issa brown were found to survive well, high adaptation quality and friendly nature of birds created great demand in the industry. After finalizing the assessment, due to the budget shortage, the activity of procuring chicken breeds to year 4 gardeners was cancelled.