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Village Chicken (*Gallus gallus domesticus*) Intensification and Production in South-South Nigeria for Food Security: The Role of Research

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Abstract

The high cost of production of chicken in Nigeria has resulted in high prices and reduced its availability to a large majority of Nigerians thereby reducing food security in the country. The village chicken in Nigeria is a valuable resource that is threatened with extinction because of competition with the exotic breeds and subsequent neglect of the species by most farmers in Nigeria. This paper analyses the development and integration of the local village chicken into the production stream in Nigeria with a view to stem the tide of neglect and reduction in the population of the breed. The study used data collected from purposively selected respondents that keep village chicken and those that kept the exotic breeds as well as researchers on chicken in South-South Nigeria. Data collected were analysed using simple percentages, T-tests and rankings. The results show that the village chicken had a greater acceptance and preference for meat quality than the exotic breeds. It also had a wider range of preferred products with traditional, cultural and spiritual significance than the exotic breeds in Nigeria. The T-test results showed that there was a significant lower difference ($p < 0.01$) in production cost of the village chicken than the exotic breed. Similarly, the resistance to disease and stress was higher in the village chicken than the exotic breed. There have been some genetic improvements in some village chicken through cross breeding that further improves village chicken preference. The study recommends the promotion of village chicken production to stem the extinction tide. Intensification and further genetic engineering through research is recommended to boost production and output characteristics of the village chicken. The village chicken still has a lot to contribute to the development and promotion of animal protein supply in Nigeria and poverty alleviation in Africa.

Keywords: Comparative analysis, exotic chicken, genetic engineering, intensification, production cost, village chicken