



## 2009 AWARD Fellow Aishatu Bashir Ardo

<b>Position:</b>	Master trainer
<b>Institution:</b>	Association for the Promotion of Livestock Production in Sahel and Savannah
<b>Country:</b>	Nigeria
<b>MSc:</b>	Animal Science , Federal University of Technology Nigeria 2008
<b>Mentored by:</b>	Dr. Yakubu Haruna Aliyara, Lecturer Federal University of Technology, Nigeria

*"I have no interest in being what they call a 'small holder.' I say, 'Go big or go home.' This time next year, I plan to be milking 100 cross-bred cows."*

Aishatu Bashir Ardo, 31, is a Nigerian animal scientist with a singular passion: cattle. This may not be surprising given that Ardo is Fulani - a West African ethnic group who are predominantly pastoralists.

These nomadic herders are renowned for their dedication to their livestock; some Fulani even compose love songs to their cattle. "For us, cattle have economic, social and religious significance, but our animals' productivity is very low due to poor genetic potential, lack of adequate feed and water, and poor management," says Ardo.

Ardo plans to change that. She is not afraid to challenge centuries-old breeding practices in order to help increase milk production and improve food security in her impoverished region, where most people live on less than \$2 a day. And she's well on her way. Recently, this Muslim scientist became the first female artificial inseminator in her area, and probably in Nigeria.

Influencing cattle breeding practices and introducing new techniques, such as artificial insemination (AI), has not been easy, says Ardo. "But seeing is believing," she notes. She demonstrates AI to sceptical local farmers using her own small herd. "They mock my cross-bred cows, saying they are ugly and look like donkeys because they do not have humps like our traditional breeds. But when they see that my animals are producing much more milk, they stop joking and start listening." A cross-bred cow can give 20 litres of milk daily, compared to 1.5 litres produced by the local breed, says Ardo.

Ardo holds a Bachelor of Agriculture Technology (Animal Science) and Range Management from the Federal University of Technology in Yola - a notable accomplishment in northern Nigeria where only 20 percent of girls are enrolled in school. She currently works as a master trainer with the Association for the Promotion of Livestock Production in Sahel and Savannah (APESS) in Garoua, Cameroon, introducing AI and training women farmers in improved fodder production.

Receiving an AWARD fellowship this year has already boosted her self-confidence and her vision, says Ardo. "I have no interest in being what they call a 'small holder.' I say, 'Go big or go home.' This time next year, I plan to be milking 100 cross-bred cows."

*Ardo is one of 180 African woman scientists who have won an AWARD Fellowship. AWARD is a professional development program that strengthens the research and leadership skills of African women in agricultural science, empowering them to contribute more effectively to poverty alleviation and food security in sub-Saharan Africa. For more information, please visit [www.awardfellowships.org](http://www.awardfellowships.org)*

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