Maize Farming In Nigeria & The Secrets Of Making Millions.
Maize Farming in Nigeria & Secrets of making millions

by Steve Olorun-Ni

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Maize farming is one of the crop farming that is very suitable for Nigerians, considering our great arable land. Unlike rice farming, much more of our land can easily be used for maize farming.

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Today we’ll discussing how you can start your own maize farming business in Nigeria.

Introduction to Maize Farming in Nigeria
Maize farming is as old as man itself, and it has been done commercially in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular for decades now. Maize farming is a high-potential opportunity for Nigeria and its people, especially those who are willing to learn how to turn a business idea as this to wealth.

Maize is perhaps the most common food crop in Nigeria, and also the most important as it is eaten in various dishes and forms the basis for most of the meals prepared by the average Nigerian family.

As we all know, corn is a crop cheaper than rice and wheat, two of the other most consumed cereals, and this affordability makes maize hugely popular.

The savvy agribusiness investor stands to make a sizeable amount of money through commercial maize farming.

Why maize farming in Nigeria?

Maize, also known as corn, is one of the farm produce that gives an incredible return on investment, as one seed of planted maize could return more than 500 kernels of corn come harvest season.

A little monetary investment in corn farming can therefore yield a sizeable level of income and profit after a little while.

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Maize matures very fast. Between planting and harvest time, a farmer needs to wait only between 3 or 4 months. Therefore, cultivating just 5000 kernels of corn, a farmer can harvest not less than 2.5 million kernels of the same maize in less than 120 days.
What more, maize is a hardy plant, and is one of the few crops that can grow on a vast array of soils and can survive in different climatic conditions.

It needs sunlight to prosper and Nigeria is a country blessed with abundant sunlight; maize can therefore be grown successfully in almost every state of the country.

Maize remains a key food crop in Africa, Latin America and Asia where it is primarily used as human food; in developed countries though, maize is one of the most important raw materials for animal feed production and biofuels.

Maize also forms the basis for the production for most animal feeds in Nigeria. Without it, the livestock farmer will probably be unable to rear his livestock. The production of meat, eggs and dairy products (like milk and yoghurt) would be difficult without maize, which is a hugely important ingredient in animal feed.

The market for maize

There are three major markets for maize and its allied products in Nigeria.

**Corn as Human Consumption:**

Unlike in developed countries where a major portion of maize produced is used for animal feed or biofuel, maize is a significant part of diets in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. Experts expect that the demand for maize as human nourishment will increase in tandem with Nigeria’s population growth. There will therefore also be a higher demand for corn (maize)

This market currently accounts for about 50 per cent of the Nigerian corn demand.

**Corn as Animal Feed:**

Corn is a favourite raw material for animal feeds, mainly because it is cheaper than many of the other feed alternatives and yet provides the required nutritional content for livestock. As a result, about 35 percent of corn produced in Nigeria is used in animal feed production.

**Maize for Industrial Consumption:**
It is estimated that about 15 per cent of Nigeria’s current maize produce goes for industrial use, due to its high starch content. The starch obtained from maize is processed into several additives, agents and ingredients such as sorbic acid, sorbitol, dextrine, and lactic acid.

These are used in the manufacture of common household items such as cosmetics, ink, medicines and wall paint.

If you’ve eaten popcorn before, you know you’ve eaten the product of maize

Other by-products from maize are shoe polish, batteries, syrups, ice cream, and glue.

Companies such as Nestle and Cadbury also buy corn to produce cereal-based breakfast brands like corn flakes, while companies such as Nigerian Breweries and Guinness purchase maize to use as a major raw material for the production of beer.

In industrialized countries, the starch from maize is also used to produce bioethanol, a form of renewable fuel. Nigeria is aiming to achieve this level of sophistication as well.

**How to Start a Maize Farming Business in Nigeria**

When compared to the cultivation of many other crops, the cultivation of maize is incredibly easy. Detailed below are steps to take when beginning a maize farm in Nigeria:

**Find suitable land:**

To begin any planting venture, maize planting inclusive, a farmer first has to find suitable and arable land.

While it is a hardy plant that can be grown almost anywhere, corn grows best in rich loamy or sandy-loamy soil. Such soil also has to be well-drained area and situated on a fairly flat landscape.

Maize does not do well in waterlogged areas, so if a farmer has to use a piece of land that is not well drained, there is a need to make ridges or mounds to protect the crops from waterlogging.
Find a suitable weather condition for your maize plantation:

Because maize does exceptionally well when it has an adequate supply of sunlight, the land has to be in the open and free from any kind of shade that prevents sunlight from reaching the planted maize.

Find and use only the right varieties of corn:

In some localities, white corn is more popular than the yellow variety, while the yellow is more popular in other areas. A sensible farmer will plant the variety that is more popular and more likely to be demanded in his locality.

In general however, the best maize varieties are those that are fast-growing, high yielding, and disease-resistant.

It is very vital that a farmer pays close attention to the health of the maize seeds he plans to plant. Only seeds from dependable sources should be planted, and farmers should avoid buying maize seeds from open nearby markets, as these seeds could already be contaminated by disease.

Also, the recommended varieties for early season planting differs from what is recommended for late season planting, so farmers need to be aware and informed.

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Identify your corn market before you start your maize farming:

A farmer will do well to identify his/her corn market before starting a maize farm. He has to determine if he will use middlemen to get his produce to the market, or sell his corn directly to the retailer.

There are three steps to making this determination and three basic questions to ask.

A) Where will you sell your maize products,
B) who is going to buy your maize produce, and

C) how are you going to go about the selling process of your corn?

Once these questions are answered successfully, then the farmer is good to go.

Use Fertilizer for the soil of your maize farm

Some of the soil you’ll use for maize plantation would require you to fertilize the soil.

A basic approach to Maize Farming in Nigeria

In the past, maize was traditionally planted according to rainfall patterns. These days, perhaps because of climate change and the unpredictability of rains, there are now no specific dates to plant maize.

Agribusiness experts advise that in the light of the above, it is best to plant corn after it has rained consecutively in an area for two or three times.

This is because planting after the rains will help the maize seeds to germinate and grow well. In a place that is not well irrigated, manual or mechanized watering must also be done, possibly through irrigation for large farms.

For optimum harvest and results, maize should be grown by planting seeds in a cluster directly in the soil. These are planted in hills, furrows or rows.

Maize planting experts advise that recommended rows and seed spacing must be followed. For best results, planting a crop twice or thrice in one season is recommended to ensure continued harvest.

Once they have germinated and started to grow, farmers need to be on the constant look out for weeds, pests and signs of diseases.

Common Weeds, Insects, Pest & Diseases of the Maize

Corn can be attacked by a wide range of insects. The main pests of maize are Helicoverpa and some soil insects. Small pests occur irregularly, with no problems on a quarterly basis.
The following are the insects, pest and diseases every maize farmer should watch out for;

**Helicoverpa armigera (corn earworm)**

Is a major, widespread and regular pest. Female mites lay eggs on the stem, leaves (on both sides) acorns, silks and shells on the top two thirds of the plants. Caterpillars that hatch prior to seeding cause little damage to the acorns, but can cause damage during clearing to the cobs.

Larvae from eggs laid on silks or hulls can cause significant damage. Damage caused by silk reduces pollination and grain. Feeding damage also occurs on the top 1-3 cm of the cob, and may cause the presence of mycotoxins.

Damage caused by leaves may indicate the presence of pests. Parallel rows of holes are feeding signs on unopened sheets. Helicoverpa is generally not considered economic to control, except in high-value corn-seed. Note that helicoverpa larvae can be confused with army worms or gray worms. Corn varieties whose hulls extend 50 to 80 mm beyond the top of the ear and close tightly around the bristles limit the entry of larvae into the ear.

Watering in dry weather prevents the hulls from loosening.

Maize crops often have high levels of beneficial insects (predators and parasitoids) that can be harmed by insecticide applications. The combined action of natural enemies (including predators of eggs, larvae and pupae, parasites of eggs and larvae and caterpillar diseases) may have a significant impact. The ability at a deposit of 100 mm destroys the wintering pupae.

Chemical control should target small caterpillars (up to 5 mm) and be directed to acorns and emerging bristles. The best product to use in an integrated pest management system is a natural nucleopolyhedrovirus (NPV). There are an assertive number of NPV products marketed in the cascade helicoverpa control market.

Insect pests can seriously reduce plant implantation, plant populations, plant growth and subsequent yield potential, and must be monitored prior to plating. Seed treatments help deter food. Spraying in abettor furrows to protect young roots and shoots. Pressing wheels can reduce the damage caused by false larvae and earwigs by encouraging the emergence of plants and by firming the waterfall soil to reduce the
ability of insects to move through them. Bait of the soil can reduce the damage caused by black earwigs and crickets that attack the ends of secondary roots (secondary roots).

A shallow acreage in warm, moist soil promotes the rapid emergence and growth of crops, reducing the impact of insects. Cascade get general information on soil insects and seed bait in formation (GSB), see How to Monitor and Recognize Soil Insects.

**Black Earwigs**

Is a sporadic and potentially important pest of corn, black earwigs eat newly seeded seed and in formation and the roots of crops resulting in a poor establishment. Feeding on secondary roots can cause plants to fall as they become larger. Serious damage is usually confined to soil that retains moisture well, and earwigs prefer cultivated soils to undisturbed soil (zero till). Note: predators are usually large and light brown in color.

Monitor crops after acreage until establishment. Dig and sift the waterfall soil to detect adults and nymphs before planting. Use seed bait in training and check if additional 50 earwigs in 20 germinating seed baits. Insect baits containing insecticide applied to seeding provide better protection. Insecticide dressings provide some protection. Sprays in furrows are not effective cascade protect against dense populations. Use the pressing wheels at the time of sowing.

**True wireworm larvae** cause the seed to form and chew the roots and shoots of the seedlings, reducing the vigor, wilting or body of seedlings. Damage is worse when crop growth is delayed by dry, wet or cool elevations. Filiform worms generally favor wetlands. True wolf larvae can also feed on helicoverpa pupae.

Use seed bait in formation or soil cascade samples to detect larvae before sowing. Monitor crops after sowing until establishment. A seed forming larva / bait justifies control. Seed dressings, furrow sprays and granular insecticides offer assertive control.

**False wireworm larvae** attack the seed in formation and the roots and shoots of young plants in the spring, resulting in uneven stands. Damage is additional frequent in early planted crops with low residue of ability (e.g. cultivated enclosures). Adults can damage summer seedlings by chewing at ground level or above ground and replanting may be necessary.
To detect, sieve 10 soil samples (30 x 30 cm) to the capital or place 10 sprouted seeds in acclaim the paddock. One larva per sample justifies control. Prepare the cascade area a uniform and fast training. The use of press wheels at the acreage provides an assertive control. Cascade the larvae, use seed treatments or sprays in the furrow. Cascade adults, use cracked grain baits. Natural enemies provide little control. Infestations detected after the emergence of the ability cannot be controlled.

The larvae feed on the leaves and stems of young plants, and “cut down plants waterfall leaf bassinet. Partial deterioration of the stems may cause wilting of the plant. The larvae usually shelter in the chaplet soil during the day and bend in the form of a ‘C’ when they are disturbed. Gray worms can be found in any soil blazon and often move in the crop of adjacent fence lines, pastures or grass fallows. The areas of ability attacked by gray worms tend to be uneven and the high risk period is chaplet in summer and spring.

Inspect emergent seedlings twice a week. Treat seedlings when there is a rapidly increasing infestation area or ad-measurement of crop damage (> 10% loss of seedlings). Treat older plants if additional 90% of plants are infested or additional 50% of plants have 75% or additional loss of leaf tissue. Punctual treatments (eg, continuous field edges) can be successful. Spray when caterpillars feed (evening night). Keep fallows clean and eliminate weeds from paddock chaplet perimeters at least one month before planting. Severe damage to emergent crops can occur when large larvae are forced to move from weed hosts into the ability after weed spraying. Cutworms are attacked by a series of natural enemies such as parasitoids, predators and diseases.

How Long Does it Take Before Harvesting Your Corn?

After three or four months of tending the maize plants, the farmer is ready to harvest. While the amount of maize that can be harvested is dependent on a host of factors such as the variety planted, amount of rainfall, sunshine and the level of weed, pest and disease control management that was applied, a hectare of farmland should yield between 2,000 to 4,000 kilogrammes of maize.

Merits of Starting maize farming in Nigeria

There are many merits to starting a maize farm. The first of these is that maize is a widely consumed farm produce in Nigeria. There is therefore a ready market for its
supply. For the agribusiness investor, the possibilities to gain new markets are endless.

Secondly, investing in an agribusiness will help to contribute to the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). Nigeria is currently implementing strategies to reduce its dependency on crude oil, and is paying special attention to the agricultural sector.

Starting a maize farm in Nigeria is quite easy, as the initial capital outlay is very low. The major expensive factor of production involved in this venture is the land, and this can be leased if the farmer does not have the capital to purchase one outrightly.

Also, if done properly, farming maize on a commercial basis in Nigeria could be quite a profitable venture.

**Demerits of Starting a maize farm in Nigeria**

Without the proper knowledge of maize plantation and business know-how, a maize farming venture can be as ruinous as any venture blindly gotten into.

While it seems to be as straightforward as can be, a would-be maize farmer should not equate farming a little piece of land in his backyard with farming one or more hectares of land.

This is an assumption that is quite easy to make, and one that can have devastating results.

The maize crop is subject to a host of diseases and pests. If a farmer is not careful or watchful enough, an entire season’s crop can be lost to disease and/or pests.

**The future of maize farming in Nigeria**

The demand for maize is on the increase in Nigeria, and it is bound to even increase more, as more and more food and brewery industries make demands for maize on a large scale for use in their industries.

As earlier mentioned, Nigeria is looking to the agricultural sector to provide an alternative source of enrichment for itself, as it is determined to reduce its reliance on crude oil.
As a result, the Bank of Industry is currently providing funding for potentially-profitable farm-based businesses.

With a growing demand, available funding, and support from requisite governmental agencies, the future of maize farming in Nigeria is very bright.

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My Final Advice

If you truly want to start the maize farming in Nigeria and make millions, the secrets are; dream big, study hard and act.

You may start from anywhere, but you have to dream big and learn, both the technical aspect of planting maize and how to make business successful. This business training can help you.

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