Tomatoes Farming In Nigeria; 11 Steps To Start & Make Money
Ever thought of starting your own a tomato farming business in Nigeria?

You may think that only the northern part of Nigeria grows tomatoes, but I can tell you that anybody, in anywhere can grow tomato provided you are well informed, well planned and have done all the necessary things.

Just like the popular garri, rice, beans, and yam; tomato is among the popular foodstuff that Nigerians can’t do without. If it is not used in making stew, it is used in making jollof rice, fruit salad, juice and even soup.

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This is the more reason why its present was indeed felt during the outbreak of its scarcity which was caused by ‘Tuta Absoluta’ Disease between the months of May-June 2016.

The scarcity of tomatoes had a huge effect on Nigerians causing some of them to use the artificial tomato paste to prepare their meal and even to the extent of preparing their meals with only plenty of pepper. No doubt tomato is indeed among the versatile and most important cash crops in Nigeria.

**Brief History of Tomato Farming**

According to [wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomato) tomato species are originated in Central and South America. The Nahuatl (Aztec language) word *tomatl* gave rise to the Spanish word “tomate“, from which the English word tomato originates. Its use as a food originated in Mexico, and spread throughout the world following the Spanish colonization of the Americas.

However, the Spanish explorers brought in tomato into Spain and it was later taken to Morocco, Turkey, and Italy. In Italy and France, it was termed “love apple”. It was then, generally believed that the tomato was poisonous and its use as a food crop was only accepted in the 18th century.

So you see tomato is not only consumed in Nigeria but worldwide. One might even go to the extent of exporting this plant to other countries, but in this article, we will only be discussing on selling your tomato locally; that is within Nigeria.

**Tomato Farming; Health Benefits and Nutrition Values of Tomato**

**Wait!**

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Most people do refer to tomato as the world healthiest fruit because of its many health benefits (You might call it a fruit or vegetable. It’s up to you).

Here are the health benefits of tomato and more reason why you might consider tomato farming in Nigeria;

- **Tomatoes helps in managing blood pressure;** Tomato can help in the management of high blood pressure.
- **Tomatoes helps to maintain a healthy hair;** Tomatoes are good for the hair; the vitamin A in tomato helps in making the hair strong and shiny.
- **Tomatoes are good for the skin;** the high level of lycopene in tomato makes the skin to look tender, shiny and smooth. And sometimes, it can also be used as a facial cleanser.
- **Tomatoes helps to prevent cancer;** The outstanding thing about tomatoes is its ability to prevent cancers. Lycopene is a natural antioxidant that works effectively to slow the growth of cancerous cells so therefore, cooked tomatoes produce even more lycopene which can aid to fight against cancers.
- **Tomatoes repairs cigarettes damages;** this amazing fruit contain coumaric acid and chlorogenic acid that work to protect the body from carcinogens that are produced from cigarette smoke. So if you know someone who is a heavy smoker; you might want to recommend this fruits to him/her.
- **Tomatoes keeps the kidney in shape;** Tomatoes helps to keep the kidney health; thus helps in preventing kidney stone.
- **Tomato is good for the eyes and perfect checker for sugar level;** The Vitamin A found in tomatoes is a perfect remedy for improving vision and also prevent night blindness. Tomato can also help diabetes patient to keep their blood sugar levels under better control.
- **Tomato provides essential antioxidants for the body;** the Vitamin A and Vitamin C in tomatoes serve as antioxidants and this is because these vitamins and beta-carotene work as antioxidants to neutralize harmful free radicals in the blood.
• Tomatoes help to maintain strong bones; Tomatoes contain a considerable amount of calcium and Vitamin K. These nutrients are usually known for maintaining strong bones.

As you can see, tomatoes have so many nutrients which make it be among the healthiest fruit or vegetables for healthy living.

We can keep on discussing the many values of tomatoes but in other to stick to our main topic; we will be discussing on how to plant and make considerable money from tomato farming in Nigeria.

Where Can I Grow Tomatoes in Nigeria?

You can grow your tomatoes anywhere in Nigeria, provided you have a good and healthy soil and water facilities. Though in Nigeria, there are states which are well known for growing tomatoes. They are;

• Bauchi State
• Taraba State
• Gombe State
• Kano State
• Zamfara State
• Jigawa State
• Sokoto State
• Katsina State
• Kaduna State

As you can see, all these states are in the northern part of Nigeria. But do not have a reluctant mind on setting up your tomato farming business, like I earlier said anyone, from anywhere in Nigeria can grow tomatoes, provided you have a good and healthy soil and water facilities.

How to Start Tomato Farming in Nigeria
Just like few fruits which are simple to plant; planting tomatoes or setting up a tomatoes farm in Nigeria and growing them is quite simple as putting a seed in the ground and covering it up with sands. I will walk you through the process of planting your own tomatoes.

1. **Find a perfect site for your tomato farming**

   The first step you need to take is for you to find a perfect site for your tomatoes farm. Choose a site that is not too far from the market. And also, there should be an easy transportation access available, in order to have an easy way of transporting your tomatoes when the time comes; after harvesting.

2. **Choose a healthy land/soil for your tomato farming**

   It is important to carefully choose or select a good soil for planting your tomatoes because a good and healthy soil will determine the type of tomatoes that will be produced and the overall productivity of your tomato business.

   The soil could be a well-managed sandy loam and heavy clay loams free of hardpan but know that the best tomatoes are obtained from deep, well-drained loam. Keep in mind that the soil should be rich in organic matter and it should be endowed with plant nutrients, with a pH value of 6 to 7.

   In preparing your land; the soil should be well-prepared, loose and in good tilth. The soil should be cleared of all weeds and might be ploughed (if heavy) for about 1-3 times to make it light weights. In any case where you have an acidic soil; you can reduce or level it by applying lime in an appropriate quality.

3. **Choose the right tomato varieties**
another good way of getting the best from your tomatoes farming is to plant the right tomato varieties. The different varieties of tomatoes grown in the world generally are;

- Beefsteak tomatoes
- Cherry tomatoes
- Plum tomatoes
- Grapes Tomatoes
- Campari tomatoes
- Tom berries Tomatoes
- Oxheart tomatoes
- Pear tomatoes
- Slicing or Globe tomatoes

But in Nigeria, the varieties of tomatoes in Nigeria can be classified with their shapes, local names and places of cultivation. They are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variety Local Name</th>
<th>Place of cultivation</th>
<th>Tomatoes shapes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>Agbara</td>
<td>Round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausa (Scissors)</td>
<td>Kano</td>
<td>Oblong (pointed tip)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiwantiwa</td>
<td>Kajola</td>
<td>Oval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausa</td>
<td>Sokoto</td>
<td>Oblong (banana shape)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>Ogbomosho</td>
<td>Round</td>
</tr>
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<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beske (Ebira)</td>
<td>Okene</td>
<td>Round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausa</td>
<td>Zaria</td>
<td>Oblong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beske</td>
<td>Kajola</td>
<td>Round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beske (Ebira)</td>
<td>Okene</td>
<td>Oval (folded-in base)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausa</td>
<td>Zaria</td>
<td>Oval (pointed tip)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausa (Scissors)</td>
<td>Kano</td>
<td>Oblong (pointed tip)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausa</td>
<td>Sokoto</td>
<td>Oval (shield-like)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hausa</td>
<td>Sokoto</td>
<td>Oblong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Though, if you are confused on which variety to plant, it is recommended that you plant the Roma tomato (which is a plum tomato because of its slender and firm nature). It is commonly used in Nigeria, also popular and has no objection with climate.

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4. Plant Your Tomato

The best way to plant your tomato is by first planting it in the nursery, then later transplanting to the field. Make sure you prepare the nursery bed for a period of about 5 weeks.

This is done by covering them with a polyethylene sheet to prevent weed growth, fungus, nematodes, pests, and bacteria. You should consider applying organic manure and fertilizer before planting. Know that your seedbed should be 55-65cm wide, 5-6cm long and 20-25cm high.

On How to Plant Your Tomatoes; Planting your tomatoes can be done around March/April during the beginning of raining season. Plant by placing the tomatoes seeds on the soil and cover with a quarter inch layer of soil and press it with your hand or handle (you may cover it with dry grasses if you want. This is to prevent loss of moisture).

After planting, you will see them growing in the next 5-7 days (you can then remove the dry grasses to allow for proper growth) then allow it to grow for about one month or 5 weeks before transplanting to the field.

(Note; Your Tomato Nursery can be done on a small farm or on your garden; if you have one. Just make sure that the soil is healthy and cared for.)

5. Transplant Your Tomatoes (moving your tomato plant to the plant)
After one month or five weeks of planting your tomato in the nursery then you can now freely plant them in the field. Tomatoes are very tender and fragile, it is best transplanted the same day you uprooted it from the nursery to avoid dehydration and fatigue.

You should do the transplanting with hand to prevent damages (do not use any machines for this). If your farm is large, then you should consider employing more labors to assist you in this.

**On How to Transplant Your Tomatoes;** You should open the soil of where you want to transplant with a piece of small wood, insert the seedling into the hole and cover it with loose soil. The soil where you intend to transplant your plant should be moist.

*(Note; after transplant, the seedbeds should be irrigated regularly after sowing and until the seedlings reach a height of 5 to 7 cm. Do not just leave it like that, or else, it will die.)*

**6. Irrigate Your Tomato Farm**

If you want to get the best of your crop; then ensure you supply your plant with enough water. During the dry season (these are the critical times), between the month of October and February, make sure you constantly supply your water with enough water; like in every 3-7 day’s interval (depending on the type of soil). Know that you shouldn’t put too much water on it to prevent them from cracking.

**7. Weed and Fertilize Your Tomato Farm**

After one to two months of transplanting your tomatoes from the nursery, you should consider weeding your tomato farm. You should be careful as you weed to prevent damages on your tomato crop.

You can also use Chemical weed control, by applying registered chemicals. If you intend to use Mechanical methods to weed, it should be shallow and not too close to the plant; to prevent damages to the plants.

Fertilizer should be applied after the first weeding. This is to help restock the soil nutrients taken or affected by the weeds. The fertilizer should have contents like nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, potash, molybdenum, calcium, and magnesium,
along with other trace minerals, all in adequate quantity. Tomato requires these minerals to grow and flourish.

8. Control Pests and Diseases in Your Tomato Farm

Apart from weed control, you should also control your tomato plant from pests. Example of some tomatoes pests and diseases are;

- Plusia looper
- Cutworm
- Rust mite
- Red spider mite
- Nematodes
- Aphids
- Leaf miner/potato tuber moth\Bacterial wilt
- Fusarium wilt
- Late blight
- Erinose mite
- Bacterial canker
- Thrips

These pests and diseases can be controlled by;

- Practicing crop rotation.
- Always destroy infected plants and throw them away from the field.
- Using registered chemicals.
- Practicing of proper sanitation.
- And controlling drainage.

9. Harvest You Tomatoes

Your tomatoes will mature after 3 month that is about 8-12 weeks. By then, you should start picking them. The color also should also tell you that it is ripe. You should pick your ripe tomatoes according to size, color, and quality.

10. Store Your Tomatoes

If you’re not taking your tomatoes to the market immediately, you may choose to store your tomatoes. Pack your tomatoes in wooden boxes, basket or cartons. Store them in a room which temperature is about 12°C and 86% to 90% relative humidity.
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11. Market Your Tomatoes

After harvesting and storing, then it’s time to market your tomatoes.

It’s very important you’ve identified the best market/sellers to sell your tomatoes for because tomatoes are very fragile and perishable.

Unlike rice, cocoa, etc, you cannot store tomatoes for a long period of time, so the market must be ready, even before you harvest your tomatoes.

**Tomato farming in Nigeria** is a good business that has a promising profit if it’s been practiced adequately.

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