Vegetable Farming Nigeria
(How to start & make money)
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Vegetable Farming in Nigeria (How to Start & Make Money)

by Steve Olorun-Ni

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Everybody eats vegetable, every day. If you think about this in a country that is fast approaching 200 million people, you’ll understand the reason why vegetable farming business could be profitable in Nigeria.

Today I’ll be sharing with you how to start, run and make money from vegetable farming in Nigeria.

To start with,
What is Vegetable Farming?

Vegetable farming is the growing of vegetables for the purpose of consumption by human beings. Vegetable growing is a practice that began in several parts of the world more than ten thousand years ago.

Initially, humans could only grow vegetables via manual labour, but as civilization came, livestock were domesticated and used to plough the farms, for vegetable plantation.

In the recent time, nearly all vegetable farming processes are mechanized (especially in the advanced countries of the world), and specialist farmers tend to cultivate the vegetables and crops that are genetically disposed to doing well in their environment.

In Nigeria, vegetable farming is one aspect of farming with the ability to generate income and profits year round.

As it is, vegetable farming is one of the easiest agricultural engagements a farmer can venture into and the demand for edible vegetable is year round, creating a veritable stream of income for the would-be farmer.

Different Kinds/Types of Vegetables

Wait!

People like you said, this is the best business book in Africa

Click Here to download it for FREE today because ABC is 10. To so many Nigerians, vegetable is Ugu, tete, bitter leave, efo, ewedu and nothing else. That would be wrong.

We have various kinds of vegetables.
We have Leaf vegetables, root vegetables, fruit vegetable, pod vegetables, seed vegetables, flower vegetables and bud vegetables.

All these vegetables have their different benefits and nutrients, as well as some common features and nutrients.

Every vegetable with strong colouring contain vitamins, often very much. Green (in vegetables) indicates Vitamin B9, C or Pro-Vitamin A. Red or orange in vegetable signals Pro-Vitamin A.

Leaf vegetables such as cabbage, chard, lettuce, spinach, sorrel are usually low in energy and rich in Vitamin B9. They usually contain high levels of Pro-Vitamin A and as Vitamin C.

Root vegetables such as radishes, beet, carrot etc. usually have few calories. Instead they have much fibre, and some contain high levels of Pro-Vitamin A.

Seed vegetables such as flageolet beans are higher in calories (60-90 kcal/100 g). They are also very high in fibre, iron and magnesium.

Pod vegetables such as wax beans, mange-tout, green beans, runner beans, peas and fruit vegetables are low in calories. They supply fibre, Vitamin B9 and Vitamin C.

**Flower vegetables** and bud vegetables such as artichokes, broccoli, cauliflower etc. are low in calories but high in fibre.

A glance look at the list of vegetable would look like the following list

**NOTE:** don’t worry if you don’t understand some of their names, as stated bellow. If you’re tired of reading those vegetables’ names, just move to the next section of this article.

The types of vegetables includes;

- Okra (you know this, don’t you?)
- Arugula
- Onion (you know this too)
- Asparagus
Carrot (everyone knows this)
Green, Purple, White
Plantain
Bell Pepper
Avocado
Tomato
Bamboo Shoots
Beans- see Bean List
Artichoke
Winter Melon
Beet
Bitter Melon/Bitter Gourd
Belgian Endive
Brussels Sprouts
Burdock Root/Gobo
Cabbage
Green, Red, Savoy
Broccoli
Calabash
Capers
Cassava/Yuca
Cauliflower
Celery
Celery Root/Celeriac
Celtuce
Chayote
Chinese Broccoli/Kai-lan
Corn/Maize
Baby Corn/Candle Corn
Cucumber
English Cucumber
Gherkin
Pickling Cucumbers
Daikon Radish
Edamame
Eggplant/Aubergine
Fennel
Elephant Garlic
Endive
Bean Sprouts
urly/Frisee
• Escarole
• Idlehead
• Langlej
• Arlic
• Inger
• Green Beans/String Beans/Snap Beans
• Wax Beans
• Greens
• Amaranth Leaves/Chinese Spinach
• Beet Greens
• Dandelion Greens
• Kale
• Kohlrabi Greens
• Mustard Greens
• Rapini
• Spinach
• Swiss Chard
• Turnip Greens
• Earts of Palm
• Horseradish
• Jerusalem Artichoke/Sunchokes
• Shallots
• Jicama
• Curly
• Lacinato
• Ornamental
• Kohlrabi
• Grape Leaves
• Leeks
• Lemongrass
• Collard Greens
• Lettuce
• Butterhead- Bibb, Boston
• Iceberg
• Leaf- Green Leaf, Red Leaf
• Romaine
• Lotus Root
• Lotus Seed
• Kale
• Mushrooms- see Mushroom List
• Napa Cabbage
- Olive
- Green Onions/Scallions
- Parsley
- Nopales
- Parsley Root
- Parsnip
- Peas
- green peas
- snow peas
- sugar snap peas
- Peppers- see Peppers List
- Potato
- Purslane
- Radicchio
- Radish
- Sea Vegetables- see Sea Vegetable List
- Spinach
- Squash- see Squash List
- Sweet Potato
- Swiss Chard
- Taro
- Tomatillo
- Turnip
- Water Chestnut
- Water Spinach
- Yams etc.

I understand that most Nigerians who are reading this post are interested in growing the leafy vegetables like the one in this picture;

Image credit; Flickr
So, this post will hence fort focus on leafy vegetables.
To start your commercial leafy vegetable business in Nigeria;

There are certain factors to consider;

**Vegetable Market development:**

A farmer must consider the fact that most vegetable crops are highly perishable, and he would therefore first need to develop suitable markets for his produce, even before he starts vegetable cultivation.

Most startup vegetable operations for the most part flop because of the absence of market development and marketing skills.

For a vegetable grower who is keen to succeed, there is the need to first develop a line of middle men who will ensure that his produce get to the selling point on time.

**Vegetable Site selection:**

Once the market for the produce has been well thought out and developed, a farmer must then embark on proper field selection. When considering sites for the purpose of cultivating vegetables, the farmer must take into consideration field topography, soil type, and water availability and quality.

Topography has to do with physical attributes of the farm site and takes conditions such as contour, soil depth, water and air drainage, and, the presence of rock out cropping and trees into consideration.

Soil type refers to the physical composition or properties of the soil while water availability refers to the ease to which water can be accessed.

Vegetables usually need more water than most other agronomic crops do, and this should be accounted for during site selection. Only fields that have easy access to an abundant water source should be considered for vegetable production.

**Crop selection:**

Another important factor to consider when going into commercial vegetable farming is crop and variety selection. The greatest limiting factor to successful vegetable production from a pest stand-point is the high incidence of disease outbreaks. There is
therefore a great need to cultivate mainly disease resisting species, to greatly increase the chance for success.

Questions to answer;

To develop a sound **marketing plan** for vegetable produce, a farmer must be able to answer the following questions:

The kinds of vegetables to grow?

How much of these vegetables to produce?

To whom or where would the vegetables be sold?

How much real demand is there for the vegetables being grown?

How much would it cost to produce and market the vegetables?

What if any are the sizes of the market windows for these vegetables?

What are the risks associated with the production of the vegetables?

Once the questions above have been successfully answered, then it is safe to commence vegetable farming on a large scale.

**Profitable types of commercial vegetable farming in Nigeria**

In the bustling metropolis of Lagos alone, over 30 different types of vegetables are farmed commercially.

These vegetable farms are usually situated in residential backyards or open space areas along roads, streams or in open fields. In other major cities around the country, as well as rural areas, there are scores of different vegetables that are commercially produced for profit making purposes.

Below are a select few vegetables that are popular in Nigeria:

**Fluted Pumpkin:**
This is popularly known as Ugu leaf. Ugu leaf is perhaps the most consumed vegetable in Nigeria, used to prepare a host of dishes by almost every tribe in Nigeria. It is valued for its high nutrient value when cooked, and its blood volume enhancing ability when consumed raw.

This is one of the vegetables that can be cultivated in every part of Nigeria due to its tolerance of drought and poor soil conditions.

**Okra:**

Green okra, also known as gumbo (in New Orleans, US) and lady’s finger in many English speaking countries, is an edible green pod vegetable well known for its high nutrient content.

Containing a significant level of Vitamin A and well known for its antioxidant properties, it is also rich in Vitamin-C, Vitamin-K, and some form of Vitamin-B Complexes. It is a hardy vegetable and can be grown on almost any kind of soil.
Cabbage:

Popularly used to prepare salads and coleslaws, cabbage is another popular vegetable in Nigeria. It is traditionally consumed raw, but can also be used in a variety of dishes. Compared to other vegetable produce in Nigeria, it is relatively expensive for the end user, and this is because it requires more effort to cultivate than the others.

Cabbage fares better in colder climates, it grows well on fertile, well drained, and properly-fertilized soil. It must also get at least 6 hours of sunlight every day.

Cucumber:
Cucumbers are usually consumed raw, but are also used for preparation of many kinds of food in Nigeria. It is also marketed as a cosmetic product. It is said that the human skin and cucumbers share the same level of hydrogen content, which makes it easier for cucumber to deal with the skin problems by engulfing them. It is therefore a vegetable produce that is in high demand by cosmetic companies.

This is a vegetable that thrives on soil that is well drained and rich in organic matter, and is relatively easy to grow. Just make sure they have full sunlight and soil that is rich in organic matter.

**Jute leaf**

Known as Ewedu in Yoruba Land, the jute leaf is probably the most popular vegetable among the Yoruba people of Western Nigeria. It is a hardy vegetable that grows
almost anywhere, in any condition. When it is grown on a properly irrigated piece of land, it matures quickly and is a fast seller.

**Water Melon:**

![Image of a watermelon](Image credit; Wikimedia Commons)

A vegetable that is also regarded as a fruit, water melons are cultivated and harvested within three months. They need a warm ground for seeds to germinate and grow.

**Tomatoes:**

![Image of tomatoes](Image credit; Public Domain)

A must for every Nigerian table, tomatoes cultivation can be an amazing source of income. There are six musts for growing tomatoes. They require a minimum of 8 hours of continuous sunlight each day, and 3 to 4 months of warm, clear, fairly dry weather to produce best.

**Start-Up Capital for the Vegetable Farming in Nigeria**
The start-up capital required to grow vegetables will depend on the scale of operations envisaged by the farmer. To begin cultivation vegetables on a piece of land that is sized between one and two hectares of land, experts put the startup capital at between N50,000 and N70,000 (as at 2016 and depending on your location). This would include payment for seedlings, pesticides, manure and labour.

Challenges of Vegetable Farming in Nigeria

As with any other venture undertaken by man, commercial vegetable farming has its own challenges.

The first one is vegetable glut, a condition in which the harvest of many farmers mature and are brought to the market at the same time. This occurs once in a while and drives down the price of vegetables considerably. And since they are quickly perishable, a farmer at this time has to sell at whatever price he can get in order to avoid total loss.

A major challenge of the vegetable farming profession is closely tied to the first. Preservation is a major problem. One way to avoid glut is preservation in order for vegetables to last for longer. Nigeria however is still struggling with the preservation problem, leading to excess and then waste in glut periods, and scarcity and costliness down the line.

Success tips for Nigerian commercial vegetable farmers

Proximity to city markets is a huge advantage in this business, due to the perishable nature of the product. Vegetable farms located too far away from the markets may supply vegetables that may lose their freshness before they arrive at the markets.

Profit minded farmers must target a huge proportion of their production volumes to coincide with the dry season, as income from vegetable sales during the dry season can be up to three times the wet season prices.

Sell beyond the farm. Vegetable vendors (who sell in the markets) can make up to three times more than actual vegetable farmers, therefore gaining direct access to consumers is a good way to increase profits. Major supermarkets, restaurants, and caterers will take advantage of a direct buy from farmers to reduce costs and have guaranteed freshness. They therefore make good targets.
Consider using manure, especially poultry manure to improve the vegetable yields. **Poultry** manure is known to be perfect for vegetables due to its high nutrient content and it is cheaper than fertilizer.

Employ pesticides to overcome pest problems, but be sure to use only safe ones to avoid significant health risks to the consumers and the environment.

**Conclusion**

Farming seems to be one of the ways to revive the Nigerian economy and reduce its dependency on the oil industry. The industry creates instant employment, and can actually produce millionaires and billionaires and owners of farming empires, if given a chance.

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