

Youth and Agriculture

POWERED BY

AGROPRENEUR
N I G E R I A

"Promoting Agriculture and Agribusiness among young people"
Facebook-www.facebook/groups/agropreneur9ja, Twitter-@agropreneur9ja

AGROPRENEUR NIGERIA is an initiative of Walty-EDGE Farms and Agro Service. It aims to sensitize, promote and encourage agriculture and agribusiness among young people (18yrs to 39yrs). The need for young people to begin to change their mind set and get involved in agriculture and agribusiness is always stress. The Agropreneur Nigeria Team recognizes that the present day farmers are getting older and thus it is necessary for youths to get involved in agriculture and to help them do this effectively there is need for the youth in Nigeria to see agriculture as a business (agribusiness) where revenue can be generated and they can get funds to take care of their selves and family too. Its online presence is felt through its Facebook group/forum called

MENTORS CORNER



The Mentorship Corner by AGROPRENEUR NIGERIA is to bring to your doorstep successful men and women in the Agriculture and Agribusiness

Today, we are with **Mr. Femi Bolaji** a graduate of the Lagos Business School and an entrepreneur for sixteen

years now. He is the Chief Executive Officer of Wauley Farms in Kogi State. The farm's current project is a 300 hectare of tomato and ugwu.

We are pleased to be with you sir

AGROPRENEUR NAIJA: For how long have you been into agriculture?

Mr. Femi Bolaji -I have been into agriculture since my

childhood years when I used to assist my father in both production and sales activities. My father was into production of Ugwu and sugar cane in Ikorodu in the 80s to late 90s. I have been into corporate commercial agriculture since February 2010

AGROPRENEUR NAIJA: What challenges did you face while starting up?

Mr. Femi Bolaji -In the early days I had to rely on my experience in project and supply chain management to tackle the teething problems as they surface. However, the greatest challenge I had was human resources. Our youth are not ready to pick up jobs in the agric sector and some that are ready to work are mostly found to be insincere. Stealing and sharp practices are usual occurrence and the impact on the business is d i s a s t r o u s . Another major challenge is that of funding. The commercial banks are not ready to finance agric business and the ones that show some commitment will ask for discouraging collateral.

AGROPRENEUR NAIJA: how did you overcome the challenges?

Mr. Femi Bolaji -For the human resource challenge, I had to poach workers from other farms and motivate them with nice incentives. Also, some farms that were having rough times in my state were laying off staff so I picked up some and offer good incentive to work in our farm. However, we developed and put in place a robust mechanism to control, monitor and discipline erring s t a f f e r . For the financial aspect, we had to fall back on our resources including support from angel investors. Of recent probably because of the latest conscious efforts of the federal and state governments to develop the agriculture sector, some back have been talking nicely to us and I want to believe that they mean business.

AGROPRENEUR NAIJA: Would you consider your training in entrepreneurship from the Lagos Business School as an added advantage?

Mr. Femi Bolaji -My reason for going to LBS was for capacity development with focus on Entrepreneurial Management. I discovered early

that my passion and past working background were not enough to see me through in the complex business of agricultural value chain. My managerial ability has been greatly impacted having gone through courses in strategy, sales, use of social media, customer service, law and taxation, marketing, human resources management, financial management and use of accounting software, web design and use of the web for marketing, business ethics, operation management, etiquette etc

AGROPRENEUR NAIJA: what your opinion about the involvement of Youth in Agriculture right now in Nigeria?

Mr. Femi Bolaji -At present, the involvement of youth in agriculture is very low and a great source of concern. Not a fault of the youth totally, a larger blame goes to the government with their age long lack of support and inconsistency policy in the agricultural sector. Youth in agricultural institution of learning are not thought as medical students are being trained with focus on working in the health sector. Agric students upon graduation rush to work in other sectors including banks, insurance companies and so many others that have no relevance to the agricultural sector. The negative impact is what we are witnessing today with lack of interest in agric by the youth. However, it's not all bad news as some youth have taken to agribusiness and are doing nicely. Am also proud of hard working guys using social media to boost the sector.

AGROPRENEUR NAIJA: What advise do you have for upcoming agric-entrepreneur as it relates to getting more involved in agriculture and agribusiness in Nigeria?

Mr. Femi Bolaji -Agriculture remains the bedrock of any nation and will always provide numerous source of income including business opportunities. Everybody including the youth should get seriously involved in agriculture and agribusiness in Nigeria for food security as a nation and import substitution.

OPPORTUNITIES AND FUNDINGS

1. Join the CUAD Farmers Network for just 4000 Naira a year to get linked with other farmers. To join send a request to urbanagric@yahoo.com.
2. Internship Opportunity at CTA- www.cta.int/en/content/view/full/5281
3. International Post Graduate Research Scholarship is now opened at Australian Universities for 2013-2014 Applications.
4. TED FELLOW FOR 2013. Apply on www.ted.com
5. Watch out for the 2012 YOUWIN Competition. Register on www.youwin.org

RABBIT REARING -A PROFITABLE ENTERPRISE

Rabbits provide meat and other products, and can be quickly sold for cash or turned into a nutritious meal when needed. With careful attention, they are not difficult to raise. With a society that is now more health conscious, many more people are now consuming white meat. Rabbit meat is tasty and has low fat content. This has resulted in a high demand for rabbit meat from individuals and the hotel industry, an opportunity the youth can take advantage of to make income. In Nigeria one kilogram sells for about between N1500 and N2000. The best breeds available in East Africa are California White, Chinchilla, New Zealand White, Flemish Giant, Angola, Earlop, Paramino, Dutch, Agut, Rex, Checquered and Franskvender

How to start rabbit keeping

The first thing needed is a decision on the sort of pen (hutch) to be built. A good one should be three feet long by two feet wide. This is enough room for

a single rabbit. One only requires a little space on which to put elevated sheds. The initial capital for constructing a hutch is minimal. One can also use scrap wood and buy a roll of wire to enclose it. One can also have the cage under a house roof that saves costs and well utilizes space. To start, one needs a doe (female) and a buck (male). Once the kindling begins, the colony increases rapidly. One doe is capable of yielding about 30 to 40 rabbits a year. If one starts the business having borrowed the initial rabbits, within half a year one can return live rabbits of the same age. Rabbits produce litters of six to ten offspring after a gestation period of only 30 days.

Feeding rabbits

A rabbit requires very little feed and water. It is easy to feed them as they can eat a variety of foods. Rabbits are monogastric (single stomach), herbivorous (eat plant material) animals. They feed on forage such as grass and leaves, or leftover food. Forage should be kept off the cage floor by tying it together in a bunch and hanging it from the ceiling or wall of the cage. This prevents the food from contamination by urine and droppings. Wet forage could

lead to diarrhoea and even death. If forage is wet when harvested, it should be allowed to dry for a few hours first before it is fed to the rabbits. Rabbit feeds can also be prepared from many readily available ingredients. Containers for water and food should be clean. Rabbits need clean water at least twice a day.

Health of rabbits

To know if your rabbits are healthy check out for signs such as a smooth coat, standing ears, clear eyes, quiet breathing, no mange (scabies) forming crusts around the nose, eyes, at the edges of the ears or inside the ears as a dirty mass. Put the animals on the ground or a table with a rough surface and lift the front part of the animal to watch for irregular legs, inspect the anus to see whether it is dirty from diarrhoea, which is often the case in young rabbits. Check the stomach (abdomen) of the animal. It should feel soft but smooth; a spongy feeling may indicate some intestinal troubles. Watch for sneezing. Dirty front legs and/or a dirty nose may indicate a coughing disease (pasteurellosis), because the animal 'rubs' its nose with its front legs. Pneumonia and diarrhoea are the two common ailments that may attack rabbits but they are easily countered by sheltering rabbits in a warm and clean environment. Cures are also readily available at agro vets

