

Greenhouse Farming: Benefits and Opportunities in Nigeria

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The present agriculture sector faces the daunting challenge of providing adequate fruits and vegetables for booming Nigeria population which is growing at more than 3% annually. There is limited scope for expansion of arable land in peri-urban and urban areas, and growing threat to open-field agriculture from climate change in the form of unpredictable weather, high temperature, drought, delayed/short rainfall, high incidence of pests and diseases, low yield and other disastrous events. These make the task of providing enough fruits and vegetables for the growing Nigeria population even more challenging. The changes in lifestyle and the accompanying increased needs brought on by new consumer habits has led to increased consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Fruits and vegetables enjoy wide acceptance by consumers, largely due to their beneficial health aspects. The new needs presented by consumers demand products of good quality and taste. The increase in demand for these products has caused farms to incorporate new production technique known as greenhouse farming technology.

Greenhouse farming technology involves the growing of high-valued fruits and vegetables in a controlled protected structure. This controlled protected structure is what we call Greenhouse. Greenhouses have been used to grow tomatoes, bell pepper/sweet peppers, hot peppers, cucumbers, leafy/root/fruit vegetables, fruits, strawberries herbs, spices, flowers, tissue cultured seedlings etc.

Greenhouse provides the most suitable micro-climate for the maximum plant growth. The design, construction and management of greenhouses in the tropical climates are quite different from the temperate climates. The tropical climates require lowering of temperatures inside the greenhouses as against increasing of temperature in the temperate climates.

Benefits of greenhouse farming

1. Greenhouse farming is a sure guarantee for off season and year-round production.
2. Greenhouse farming can be started on marginal lands or using soilless culture (Hydroponics) in urban and peri-urban areas.
3. Greenhouse farming technology maximizes small inputs (such as space, water, nutrients/fertilizers etc.) to give large output and resource-use efficiency is assured.
4. Greenhouse farming allows you to use less agrochemical. You can incorporate organic amendments, fertilizers and treatments into greenhouse farming. You can even go organic with greenhouse farming.
5. Yield from greenhouse farming is 5 - 10 times higher than open field cultivation. Hence, greenhouse farming is more profitable and secured than open field cultivation.

6. Greenhouse produces have longer shelf life and better quality. They are protected from external adverse weather conditions and there is low/no incidence of pests and diseases.
7. Greenhouse farming technology is not a rocket science. It can be learned with the guide of a greenhouse farming expert.

Opportunities in greenhouse farming

1. **Ready market:** Greenhouse produces are in high demand by supermarkets, farmers' markets, fruits and veggies stores, processors, restaurants, confectioneries, hotels, domestic and international markets. Hence, greenhouse technology allows you to supply all-year-round.
2. **Low-medium cost greenhouse solution:** There are low-medium cost solutions for greenhouse farming technology in Nigeria. Low-cost greenhouses are often constructed using timber, hard wood or bamboo while medium-cost greenhouses are constructed with G.I pipes.
3. **Group or cooperative farming:** Greenhouse farming is a worthwhile investment in Nigeria for group of individuals, investors, farmers, agripreneurs, entrepreneurs, graduates, professionals or retirees. Existing farms can conveniently expand into greenhouse farming.
4. **Funding opportunity:** Expanding farms/greenhouses, groups, cooperatives, even start-ups can get funding from banks and financing organisations in Nigeria. Greenhouse farming technology offers more crop security than open field farming.
5. **Payback period:** Greenhouse investment can be recovered in 1.5 - 2.0 years.

How to access greenhouse technology

Greenhouse technology is readily available and can be accessed through Kaspharyn Solutions, Nigeria. Their greenhouses are fabricated locally using high quality materials.

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