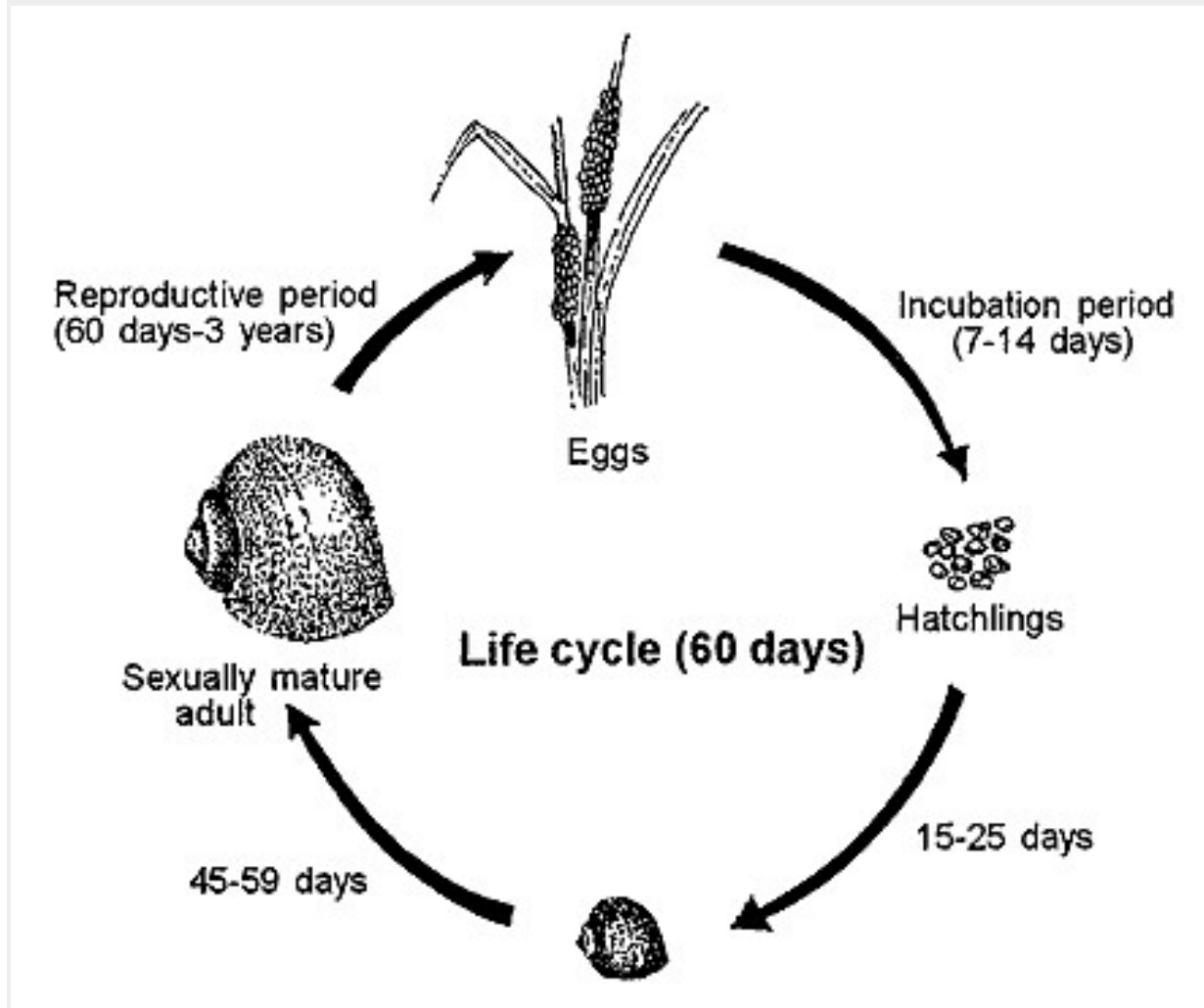


How To Start A Lucrative Snail Farming Business



Life-Cycle of Snail



Snail farming is a large agribusiness in the United States and the United Kingdom. Many supermarkets and stores place them on their shelves for sale to customers. Irrespective of this international market size, the demand for snail farming products in Nigeria is also extremely large. In Kenya, Ghana, and several other African countries, the demand for edible snails also sits on a high margin.

To be more specific on the demand, millions of households around the world prepare snail meals in their various homes. They also use them in party meals, events, and other occasions.

Despite this large demand for edible snails, many people stay away from the trade. They'd rather only choose to purchase the snails in markets, while they focus on other agribusiness endeavours. A large reason for this is the great misconception that snail farming in Nigeria or anywhere else in Africa can only be done by handpicking the snails in vegetative environment (usually bushes). This reasoning generally places the idea of snail farming as one only done in the rainy seasons, and is majorly carried out in the villages.

What many entrepreneurs still haven't learned is that West Africa is home to the largest species of land snails (*Achatina* species) in the world. This species is known to grow to as long as 30 cm, lives primarily in the tropical rain forest, and can majorly be located in Nigeria, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and a host of other African countries.

With the exploding African population and the hidden potentials in snail farming, new and existing farmers that choose to look in the direction are reaping good benefits from the agribusiness because the supply especially, cannot meet the demand. This reason has not only made the industry more valuable, but as one with large long-term business opportunities.

What Is Snail Farming About?

Snail farming, also know as heliculture, is the process of raising land snails for food or other purposes by humans. Generally, their flesh can be used as edible escargot, their slime in cosmetics, and their eggs for human consumption as a type of caviar.

Snails belong to a molluscan class Gastropoda, that has a coiled shell large enough for the animal to retract completely into. But when snails are been referred to, the focus isn't only on land snails, but also to thousands of species of sea snails and freshwater snails.

The purpose of this article is to focus on land snails because, they're the most widely used for snail farming.

Business Opportunities In Snail Farming Around The World

1). Food Consumption:



Edible snails are a part of regular meals in most households around the world. In Nigeria for instance, many homes prepare their soups with snails occasionally.

Despite the infrequent use of snails in meal preparations in the country, the demand still exceeds the supply. This want doesn't just show a large snail farming business opportunity in the country, but also shows the large potential in exports outside the country.

A short list of some countries that consume edible snails are Spain, Nigeria, Algeria, Cameroon, France, Cyprus, Ghana, Malta, Italy, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Terai of Nepal, southwestern China, and several parts of the United States.

As long as people will continue to demand snails in their meals, it will constantly remain a lucrative business opportunity for agribusiness entrepreneurs to take advantage of.

2). Cosmetics:



Snails have great uses in the cosmetic industry. Different skin creams are gotten from the *Helix Aspersa*, and can be used in treating scars, acne, wrinkles, and dry

skin. The secretions from the Helix Aspersa under stress, can be used in the regeneration of wounded tissue.

Benefits Of Snail Farming

- ✓ Employment.
- ✓ Easy to handle.
- ✓ Shells can be used for ornaments.
- ✓ Less land for cultivation.
- ✓ They're cheap and easy to raise.
- ✓ Not capital intensive.
- ✓ Snail Meat contains anti-tuberculosis attributes.
- ✓ Snail meat is used in the production of local herbs to be used by pregnant women.
- ✓ Snail farming can be done part time.
- ✓ Snail farming can be done along side grasscutter farming.

And many other benefits.

The Suitable Snail Species For Snail Farming

1). Achatina Fulica:



This African land snail is largely located in East Africa, especially Kenya and Tanzania, and has the scientific name *Achatina Fulica*. They are famously known as the “*giant African snail*” or the “*giant African land snail*”.

Although they’re largely found in East Africa, these snails are can also be found in the US, China, Taiwan, and India. The adult *Achatina Fulica* snail is usually around 7 centimetres (2.8 in) in height and 20 centimetres (7.9 in) or more in length.

The shells of these snails are conical in shape, and also about twice as high as it is broad. The colours of their shells highly vary because they depend largely on their diet, but brown is the most common colour of these African land snails.

The major down side of the Achatina Fulica is they're a large cause of pest issues around the world.



2). Achatina Achatina:

Also know as the "*African tiger land snail*" or the "*African giant snail*", these species of snails are air-breathing land snails. They are said to be largely located in West Africa, between 160 to 300 kilometres off the coast of countries as, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Benin, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Liberia, and Togo.

The shells of the Achatina Achatina can grow to a length of 18 centimetres (7.1 in) with a diameter of 9 centimetres (3.5 in). Some have been observed in the wild to

grow to 30×15 cm. These measurements makes them the largest extant species of land snails.

The Achatina Achatina, is a great source of protein, are hermaphrodites just like almost all pulmonate gastropods, and have both male and female organs. This makes each snail able to lay up to 1,200 eggs in a year.

The downside of the Achatina Achatina is they can be serious pests, and cause adverse effects to agriculture, natural ecosystems, commerce, and human health.



3). ArchachatinaMarginata:

The ArchachatinaMarginata are giant West African snails or Banana Rasp snails.

They are air breathing tropical land snails, can grow up to 20 cm long, and have the ability to live for up to 10 years.

This species of land snails are majorly found in Nigeria, through Cameroon, the republic of Congo, the Caribbean, and Martinique.

These snails are nocturnal forest dwellers, and dislike overcrowding. If they get too crowded in a particular space, they begin to spread out.

Their mating method varies per location. Because they do not have both sexual organs, they have to mate with the opposite sex to reproduce. This mating method makes reproduction and population increase very slow for the ArchachatinaMarginata, unlike the Achatina Achatina.

These land snails eat plants at a ferocious state, and so, this behaviour leads to the destruction of crops and damages to homes. This is one of the strongest reasons the ArchachatinaMarginata are banned in the United States.



What And How Do Snails Feed?

Land snails generally eat plants, fungi, and algae. A great way to handle their diet is to provide them with plant matter and vegetables such as carrots, lettuce, cucumbers, and a host of other vegetable meals.

They can also feed on fruits such as mangoes, tomatoes, paw paw, cucumber, banana, and more.

How To Setup Your Snail Farm

1). Location And Environment For The Snail Farm:



Because of the high dehydration level of snails, the farm must be located in a less windy environment else, the moisture-loss rate of the snails would be high, which would subsequently lead to a highly dehydrated state for the animal. Keeping them away from windy environments would prevent them from losing water quickly.

The perfect environment for your snail farm would be an area with adequate trees (vegetation), usually located downhill. Planting crops like mangoes, bananas, and a few others around the farm would be wise, to reduce the impact of any winds skimming through the snail farm on the snails.

2). The Right Soil Type For Your Snails:



Not all soil types are suitable for rearing land snails. Since the natural habitat of land snails is generally the soil, it's important that the soil they're raised on, has all the chemical substances and components that make it suitable for the snails to survive and fully mature.

An ideal soil that is suitable for rearing snails must be non-acidic, not water-logged, must be balanced, and must not be too dry. In the selection of the soil type, sandy and clayey soil must be totally avoided for your snail farm. What should be used is loamy soil that doesn't hold too much water.

3). Sourcing For Snails:



When sourcing snails for your snail farm, the ideal location to get them are in the forests, bushes, or any vegetative environment that is partially dry and wet. This location is far too important. Avoid getting them from the markets because, a large exposure to sunlight would leave them highly dehydrated. Snails drink a lot of water, and an absence of adequate water supply can make them easily dehydrated, which could subsequently lead to infertility in the snails.

While getting the snails from the bushes may be the best option, many individuals will not be able to pull through with this. What then you can do is to buy the land snail eggs from a market, then put coco-yam leaves in a plastic bowl with wet sand

in it, and leave them to hatch. Within 21 to 28 days, the eggs would have fully hatched, and you'd have a lot of fertile snails ready for your snail farm.

If you're going to get them from the bushes, the best way to do this is to clear a small expanse of land during a rainy season, then dress it up with fruits, vegetables, and other snail foods that snails generally find enticing and can't resist, in the evening, everyday between 4pm to 6pm. Later in the night before 9pm, you can head back to the spot and pick up the snails gathered there that are great for rearing.

Before purchasing any snail eggs, it's important you're very familiar with the types of snails suitable for rearing as stated above, and should know what it would take to raise them.

4). The Snailery (The Snail House):



Depending on the size of your proposed snail farm, your snailery could be covered with a box, for a patch of fence-protected ground

If your snail farm is going to have a lot snails, you can make a concrete pen with soil, or dig a trench of about 10 inches deep, then cover it with wires or a screen to prevent your snails from getting out. This move would keep them from becoming pests when their population begins to explode because of their extremely high reproduction rate.

Ensure the snailery is a dark and cool place. This is important because snails prefer those environments. Also make sure the humidity levels of the snailery doesn't fall

to levels dangerous to snails. One great way to regulate the temperature of the snailery is to use wet leaves or clothes.

5). Harvesting Your Snails:



Your snails can be harvested into containers, bowls, boxes, baskets, or through other means. It's important that during the harvest process they are handled with care, because of their high fragility. Because of this, it's important that every container the snails are harvested into shouldn't exceed 10 kilograms, so they can be easily conveyed.

Also, your snails should be harvested only when they've reached full maturity, so you can sell them for a good price and make high returns from your investment. Check the brim of their shells to know if they are well mature. The brim should be harder and generally thicker than every other parts of the shells if they've matured enough.

Lastly, keep a good portion of the snails for subsequent reproduction. Selling off everything in the market is a no-brainer for any farmer.

A Short Feasibility Study On Snail Farming

A snail is usually sold at 50 Naira (\$0.4) in a market. Depending on the inflation rate of various countries and location, the price of the snails could be affected. Since they're usually harvested in thousands (for medium sized farms), selling 200,000 snails could result in a revenue of 10 million Naira (\$50,000). Though this value may be for large producers, smaller producers can also sell mature snails at this price by targeting fair sale quantities.

How To Sell Your Farm Land Snails

With a vast market for agricultural products in Nigeria, Kenya, and many other countries around the world, edible snails are equally not left out. You can sell your snails at hotels, restaurants, to market women, large supermarkets that sell agro products, and as exports to other countries. Selling your snails at wholesale prices would increase your chances of closing faster sales

Challenges Of Snail Farming

The major challenge of raising snails is that uncontrolled rearing can lead to a pest break-out. Snails can be invasive and become threatening to crops. They consume over 500 types of crops, and can single-handedly destroy a farm's products.

While raising them, make sure their enclosures are well secured to keep them from escaping, and to protect them from predators like birds and other land animals.

Conclusion

While there are several other profitable agribusiness ideas like poultry farming, fish farming, grasscutter farming, and more, snail farming stands as another profitable agribusiness to invest in, at the right scale.