ARRIVES

IS THE SESAME SECTOR FOR YOU?

Business and job opportunities in Nigeria

A project by
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ABOUT THE PAPER

This sesame sector profile has been developed within the framework of the ARRIVES project. It provides detailed insights to support members of vulnerable groups – including migrants, refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons – who are interested in entering the Nigerian agriculture sector, and keeps other stakeholders informed.

The guide covers essential aspects of the broader industry, from market dynamics and emerging opportunities to key challenges and financial planning.

ABOUT ARRIVES

The Assisting the Reintegration of Returnees through Integrated Vocational and Entrepreneurship Support (ARRIVES) project supports the sustainable economic reintegration of voluntary returnees into the Nigerian economy. It focuses on Nigerians who have chosen to return from Germany, offering tailored support in skills development, employment, and entrepreneurship to enable a dignified return and build sustainable livelihoods.

ARRIVES provides holistic, individualized assistance throughout the reintegration journey – from the decision to return and the development of a business idea to establishing a business or working in Nigeria. Social Impact GmbH, the International Return and Reintegration Assistance, and the International Trade Centre (ITC) implement the project. This partnership ensures long-term, locally grounded support for returnees.

The project also publishes reports that examine opportunities, challenges, and support mechanisms across Nigeria's evolving economic sectors and entrepreneurship ecosystem. These evidence-based publications inform stakeholders.

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ACRONYMS

Unless otherwise specified, all references to dollars ($) are to United States dollars.
As of 27 July 2026, 1,364 Nigerian naira = $1. Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH
Kg	Kilogram
ITC	International Trade Centre
NEPC	Nigerian Export Promotion Council
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
SPS	Sanitary and phytosanitary
HACCP	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point

Nigeria's sesame seed sector is one of the country's most promising non-oil export industries, connecting local farmers and businesses to growing global markets for sesame seeds, oil, and value-added products.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's sesame seed sector is one of the country's most promising non-oil export industries, connecting local farmers and businesses to growing global markets for sesame seeds, oil, and value-added products. Its strong international demand – particularly from Asia and the Middle East – combined with Nigeria's favourable agroecological conditions and expanding production base, creates attractive opportunities for entrepreneurs and returnees looking to start or expand a business in an export-oriented industry.

This profile offers detailed insights to guide members of vulnerable groups who are interested in entering the sesame sector. As refugees, migrants, returnees, and internally displaced persons often face significant barriers to starting a business – including financial, networking, and social hurdles – this profile addresses key elements of the sector relevant to the target group. From market dynamics and new opportunities to the main challenges and financial planning, the report provides a realistic, practical understanding of the industry to enable informed decision-making.

- **Is this sector realistic for me?:** The first section is a summary that offers an overview of the sector, market trends, business opportunities, skill and capital requirements, and the top challenges involved. This chapter offers concise insights to anyone thinking about entering the industry.

- **Operational reality:** This chapter examines the most important subsectors and business models in greater depth, outlining accessible entry opportunities along with their benefits and potential drawbacks. It also highlights key stakeholders and the regulatory environment, the main business risks, and available training programmes.

- **Grounded economics:** This section provides a practical summary of the capital requirements for starting a business in the sesame sector, including pricing structures, profit margins, and financial sustainability. It also explores financing options to help new entrants make informed investment decisions.

- **Common mistakes and success factors:** This chapter highlights recurring pitfalls as well as best practices that offer opportunities for growth and sustainability.

- **Self-assessment test:** This final section offers the opportunity to take a self-assessment test. By answering a few questions about the realities of working in the sesame sector, it may be easier to gauge whether one is ready to start a business in this industry.

This profile is based on primary and secondary research, including interviews with key stakeholders in the sesame seed sector. The methodology integrates insights from a local expert in Nigeria's agriculture industry with a systematic content analysis of reports, articles, and relevant policy documents, creating a comprehensive perspective that blends empirical data with industry-based expertise.


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CHAPTER 1

Is this sector realistic for me?

This chapter offers a grounded introduction to Nigeria's sesame seed sector and is designed to assist individuals looking to start or expand a business in this field. It provides balanced, practical insights into the sector's opportunities and growth prospects as well as its operational challenges, helping readers make informed and realistic decisions.

Overview: Key market segments, markets trends, and growth drivers

Nigeria is the third-largest producer of sesame in Africa and accounts for around 7% of global production due to favourable agroecological conditions and consistent, strong demand from countries including China, Japan, and Türkiye (Nigerian Export Promotion Council [NEPC], 2018a; Afolabi et al., 2025; Africa Exchange, 2021). Driven by rising consumer demand for healthy foods, growing use in cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, and the increasing popularity of African and Asian cuisines, the sector offers major opportunities in value addition and investment across multiple stakeholder groups (NEPC, 2018a).

Two varieties of sesame – also known locally as beniseed – are grown in Nigeria: the brown/mixed varieties, which are primarily used for oil extraction, and the white/raw seeds, which are used in the baking industry (Africa Exchange, 2021). Maturation and harvest times vary depending on the region and the length of the rainy season. In some regions, sesame can be grown and harvested twice a year; in others, only once. On average, the crop reaches maturity in 90 to 120 days.

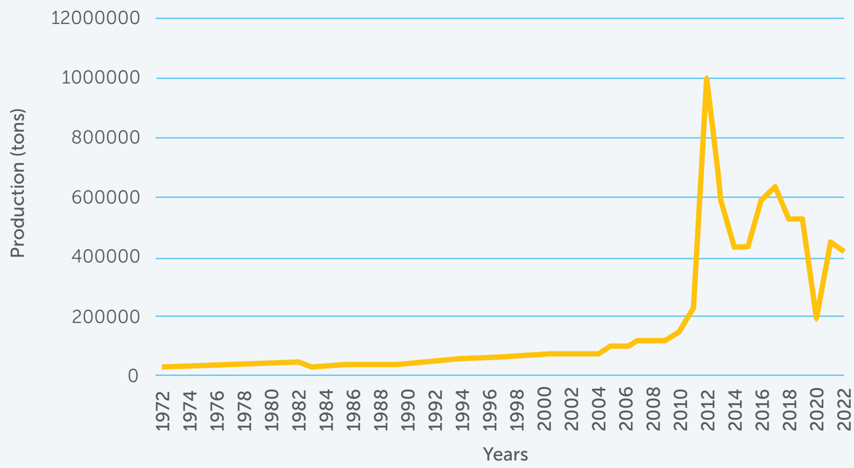
Boosted by rising demand from Asia and the Middle East, where sesame is widely used in food production and oil extraction, the crop has strengthened its position as one of Nigeria's major agricultural exports in recent years. Between 80% and 90% of the country's sesame production is exported, while only 10% to 20% is consumed domestically.

This makes sesame one of Nigeria's most important non-oil export commodities, contributing significantly to the global sesame trade market with an annual export value of about $459.4 million (World Integrated Trade Solution 2023; National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). As a result, sesame has the potential to create 1 million jobs a year in the northern states involved in its production (Africa Exchange, 2021; Junaidu et al., 2022).

A long-term analysis shows that production increased steadily after 2011, with output surging and peaking in 2013–2014, when it exceeded 1 million tons – the biggest increase. Production was erratic after 2014, with marked drops between 2016 and 2020. Market uncertainty, unpredictable weather conditions, and instability in the growing regions contributed to these downturns.

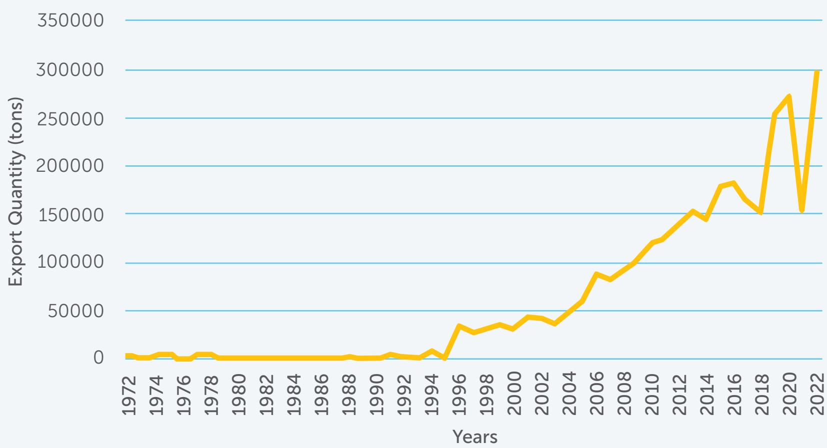
By contrast, exports rose steadily from the mid-1990s onward, with a compound annual growth rate of 9.63%. Only two declines occurred during this period, around 2017 and 2020, which probably reflects price fluctuations and uncertainties in the producing regions (Afolabi et al., 2025).

Figure 1: Sesame seed production rose sharply after 2011



Source: Computed from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) data 2025.

Figure 2: Sesame exports have climbed steadily since the mid-1990s



Source: Computed from FAO data 2025.

The growing emphasis on quality enhancement and adherence to international standards, especially regarding purity and traceability, is noteworthy. Although raw seed exports still account for most total trade volumes, there is a slow shift from raw seed exports to semi-processed and value-added goods (Afolabi et al., 2025).
Several factors underpin the expansion of Nigeria's sesame sector:

- Rising demand for health-conscious food items and sesame oil worldwide
- Nigeria's exceptional agroecological suitability for sesame farming
- Growing foreign exchange profits from agricultural exports other than oil
- The expansion of cultivated land in the central and northern states
- Increasing involvement of the private sector in export logistics, cleaning, and aggregation
- Regional trade agreements such as the Economic Community of West African States and the African Growth and Opportunity Act, along with export promotion programmes, have opened markets and stimulated investment in sesame value chains

Business opportunities

The Nigerian sesame sector offers business opportunities along its value chain, spanning primary production, collection and trade, primary and secondary processing, and export distribution. Smallholder farmers handle most production while small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) drive food processing, aggregation, processing, and export activities that target local and international markets (NEPC, 2018b).

- **Farming and production:** About half of all states in Nigeria – Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, and Yobe – grow substantial quantities of sesame. Due to its drought resistance, sesame grows best in northern Nigeria and in some areas in the west. It can also be grown in certain regions in the South-East and the South-South.

  With low input and limited mechanization, sesame production in Nigeria is mainly rain-fed, yet the adaptability and drought resistance of the crop makes it ideal for semi-arid regions (Usman et al., 2024).

- **Aggregation and trading:** Commodity traders and rural assemblers purchase the seeds in bulk from farm gates and transport them to urban centres and export hubs.

- **Primary processing:** Activities in this segment include cleaning, drying, sorting, and grading in accordance with international standards (customers typically require a purity of 99.99%, while acceptable moisture content varies by order). Only a few processing plants operate in the country, so most sesame seeds are still processed manually (Aremu, 2020).

- **Secondary processing:** This segment involves roasting, hulling, and extracting oil for industrial and domestic use. Value-added processing investment is still minimal, but it is increasing due to small-scale processing operations and the interest and involvement of the private sector (Oyedepo and Evbuomwan, 2025).

- **Export and end use markets:** The primary destinations for Nigerian sesame are China, Japan, Türkiye, and the United Arab Emirates, along with other markets where the crop is used for a variety of purposes (NEPC, 2018a).

Low-entry options

As exports dominate the sesame sector and local processing and consumption remain limited, only a few activities are directed exclusively at the domestic market. Even so, the sesame seed value chain is relatively accessible, especially in its early stages, for new entrants. While participation in later stages – such as collection, processing, and export management – is possible, these activities are far more capital-intensive.

Small-scale sesame cultivation

Sesame cultivation is an attractive option for entrepreneurs with limited resources, as the crop is drought-tolerant and requires relatively low inputs. The agroecological conditions for cultivation are most favourable in the northern and north-central states.

Sesame aggregation

Buying sesame directly from farmers and selling it to traders, processors, or exporters offers another low-barrier entry point into the sector. This pathway suits entrepreneurs with limited technical expertise, as it relies primarily on networking, communication, and a practical understanding of logistics.

Sesame snack production

The growing demand in urban areas for affordable, healthy, and readily available food makes the local processing of sesame snacks such as biscuits, roasted seed mixes, and sesame bars a promising business opportunity. Entrepreneurs can tap into informal markets, where street vendors account for most daily sales, as well as formal retail outlets and supermarkets, which are increasingly targeting middle-class households.

Regional differences

The states in the north-central and northern regions dominate sesame cultivation due to more favourable agroecological conditions. In the southern regions, excessive rainfall affects the quality of the seeds. While the central states benefit from their proximity to export corridors, infrastructure gaps – notably in the transport and storage sectors – are more pronounced in the northern regions (Sadiq et al., 2020; Usman et al., 2024).

Relevant skills and background

The industry's skill requirements can be divided into two groups. Technical skills – including agronomic techniques, post-harvest handling, grading, and adherence to sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regulations – are necessary to increase yields, cut losses, and meet export criteria. Managerial and behavioural skills such as supply-chain coordination, cooperative organization, and negotiation are equally crucial to maintain competitiveness and foster buyer trust (Sadiq et al., 2020; Anyogu et al., 2024).

Entrepreneurial opportunities in farming, primary processing, and aggregation are often attractive to youth, women, returnees, and rural households because they are easy to access, require minimal formal education, and demand only modest financial resources (NEPC, 2018b; Katanga et al., 2019).

Advanced activities such as secondary processing, quality assurance, and exportation require specialized training, technical expertise, and professional certification. Competence in food safety, certification, and international trade regulations has become increasingly important as Nigeria seeks to export more value added goods and reduce dependence on raw seed exports (Usman et al., 2024; Aremu, 2020).

Table 1: Skills and educational requirements vary by value-chain segment

Value-chain segment	Typical educational background	Hard skills	Soft skills
Farming and production	Basic literacy or informal training	Land preparation, crop management, harvesting, post-harvest handling	Time management, teamwork, adaptability
Aggregation and trading	Secondary education desirable	Grading, storage, weighing, inventory management	Negotiation, communication, customer relations
Sesame snack production	Secondary education desirable	Recipe formulation, food hygiene and sanitation, quality control, packaging and labelling, basic bookkeeping	Creativity and innovation, attention to detail, communication, customer relation
Primary processing	Vocational or technical training	Cleaning, sorting, drying, packaging	Attention to detail, problem solving
Secondary processing (oil extraction and hulling)	Technical training, diploma or vocational education	Equipment operation, maintenance, quality control	Teamwork, safety awareness
Packaging	Technical skills and training	Equipment and maintenance	Attention to details, safety awareness
Quality assurance	Technical training, secondary education, diploma or vocational education	Food safety, traceability, standards compliance	Analytical thinking, precision
Export and logistics	Technical training, secondary education, diploma or vocational education	Export documentation, market analysis, regulatory compliance	Communication, negotiation, networking

Source: ITC based on stakeholder interviews and NEPC (2018b).

Capital requirements and expectations

The capital requirements differ according to scale and level of involvement in the sesame value chain. It is possible to enter with farming or small aggregation at modest cost, while scaling into processing and export requires larger capital and specialized skills. Success is defined by consistent quality, cooperative action, and compliance with international standards.

Table 2: Capital requirements according to value-chain segment

Segment	Estimated start-up cost range	Key requirements
Input supply	₦500,000 – ₦5 million	Sesame seeds
Farming and production	₦250,000 – ₦600,000 per season	Land preparation, seed purchase, fertilizer, labour, basic storage.
Aggregation and trading	₦1 million – ₦2.5 million	Working capital for bulking, transport, networks with farmers and local markets.
Sesame snack production	about ₦300,000 depending on scale of production	Recipes, quality control, packaging and labelling, equipment, inventory management, compliance with food hygiene and safety standards, bookkeeping.
Brokerage and market linkage	₦200,000 and above	Market knowledge, social network, negotiation and communication skills, ability to travel, quality assessment skills and financial management.
Primary processing (cleaning, sorting, grading)	₦4 million – ₦12 million	Machinery, warehouse rental, compliance with sanitary standards.
Packaging	₦30 million and above	Equipment, compliance with standards.
Secondary processing (oil extraction and hulling)	₦40 million – ₦100 million	Industrial machinery, skilled labour, electricity and water supply.
Quality assurance and certification	₦2 million – ₦5 million annually	SPS compliance, Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) certifications, laboratories.
Export and logistics	₦15 million – ₦50 million per consignment	Export certificate, documentation (phytosanitary, certificate of origin, bills of lading), containerisation, transportation to ports.

Source: ITC, based on stakeholder interviews, 2026.

Key challenges

Operating a sesame business in Nigeria involves considerable operational and financial risks. These challenges affect actors along the value chain, from farmers to primary processors, industrial manufacturers, and exporters.

The following sector-specific challenges can affect operational efficiency and should be taken into account:

- **High labour costs:** Sesame production is labour intensive, with labour accounting for about half of the total variable costs in some regions.
- **Weak infrastructure:** Poor rural roads, limited storage facilities, and high transportation costs reduce margins for traders.
- **Water shortages:** Access to irrigation and water resources is limited in some regions, particularly outside the rainy season, which can affect the growth and ripening of sesame.
- **Unstable electricity supply:** Unreliable electricity supply remains a major challenge for processors, who depend on consistent power for efficient operations.
- **Post harvest losses and poor storage:** Manual drying and inadequate storage facilities lead to contamination and reduced quality and exportable volumes.
- **Limited processing capacity:** Most sesame is exported raw; local hulling and oil extraction facilities are scarce and capital intensive.
- **Limited access to inputs and finance:** Fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and improved seeds are costly, and most farmers cannot access formal credit facilities.
- **Quality assurance gaps:** Weak traceability and inconsistent compliance with SPS standards result in export rejections.
- **High export logistics costs:** Documentation, certification, and transport from northern parts of the country to Lagos ports are expensive and challenging.
- **Low value addition:** More than 80% of sesame exports are raw seeds, limiting Nigeria's ability to capture higher margins from processed products.

Nigeria is Africa's third-largest producer of sesame and accounts for

7%

global production

On average, the crop reaches maturity in

90 to 120 days

Between

80% and **90%**

of the country's sesame production is exported

Exports rose steadily from the mid-1990s onward, with a compound annual growth rate of

9.63%.

Nigeria contributes significantly to the global sesame trade market with an annual export value of about

$459.4 million

Production increased steadily after 2011, with output surging and peaking in 2013–2014, when it exceeded

1 million tons

Customers typically require a purity of

99.99%

for export

Sesame has the potential to create

1 million jobs a year in the northern states involved in its production

The primary destinations for Nigerian sesame are **China**, **Japan**, **Türkiye**, and **the United Arab Emirates**

CHAPTER 2

Operational reality

This section focuses on the daily operations, highlighting day-to-day responsibilities, and business realities. It outlines opportunities across the value chain and explains informal and formal market dynamics. It also presents the sectoral environment, including key stakeholders and relevant training programmes, while examining the regulatory framework.

Business and job opportunities

Nigeria's sesame value chain offers a wide range of business opportunities for new entrepreneurs seeking sustainable livelihoods, each requiring different skill sets and levels of expertise.

Table 3: Sesame value chain offers many business opportunities

Business opportunity	Description	Entry barriers	Key roles
(Smallholder) sesame farming	Cultivation of sesame for sale to traders, processors, or exporters. Farm owners can employ labourers to undertake most field operations.	Low	Farm manager/owner, land preparation labourers, planting labourers, weed control workers, harvest labourers, bagging and loading workers
Trading/produce aggregation	Purchase of sesame from farmers and sale to end users, processors or exporters.	Low	Aggregator, purchasing agent, storekeeper, loaders, transport operators
Primary processing	Cleaning, grading, and sorting sesame to meet buyer specifications.	Low to medium	Machine operators, sorters, quality inspectors, packers
Secondary processing	Hulling and roasting operations.	Medium to high	Production managers, machine operators
(Re-)packaging	Packaging sesame into standardized bags for local and export markets.	Low to medium	Packers, labellers, warehouse assistants

Business opportunity	Description	Entry barriers	Key roles
Input supply business	Supply of seeds, fertilizers, agrochemicals, and storage materials to farmers.	Low to medium	Sales agents, input dealers, customer service personnel
Food production	Sesame snack production	Low	Production manager
Storage and warehousing	Provision of storage facilities for farmers, traders, and aggregators.	Medium	Store managers, warehouse attendants, inventory clerks
Brokerage and market linkages	Connecting producers, traders, processors, and buyers for a commission.	Low	Marketing agents, brokers, business development officers
Transport and logistics services	Movement of sesame between farms, aggregation centres, processors, and markets.	Medium	Drivers, logistics coordinators, loaders
Export trading	Export of raw or processed sesame	Medium to high	Export managers, documentation officers

Source: Field survey and Aremu, 2020.

Insights for returnees

The most accessible and feasible opportunities for returnees are:

1. Farming using hired labour to grow sesame
2. Sesame aggregation and trading
3. Food production (snacks)
4. Services for market linkage and broking
5. Sorting, packing, and cleaning
6. Input supply business

Sesame farming – as a farm owner or seasonal worker – is one of the most accessible entry points for a sustainable livelihood. Seasonal workers usually carry out tasks such as land clearing, planting, weeding, harvesting, threshing, drying, bagging, and transporting, while farm owners concentrate on procurement of input, market coordination, and supervision. This approach improves employment prospects in rural communities while reducing the need for new entrants to have extensive agricultural experience.

Beyond farming, aggregation, broking, food processing, and packaging services offer attractive prospects thanks to their modest start-up capital requirements and strong potential for gradual scaling. Businesses that offer cleaning, grading, storage, and shipping services can also benefit from expanding market opportunities as international demand for Nigeria's premium sesame continues to rise.

Informal vs. formal market dynamics

Informal segment

A substantial portion of sesame transactions take place in the informal market. Smallholder farmers usually sell their produce to village aggregators and local dealers as soon as it is harvested because of limited storage facilities and household income needs. Most transactions are cash-based and controlled by verbal agreements and interpersonal interactions.

The informal market offers low entry barriers and a means of subsistence for farmers, merchants, transporters, processors, loaders, and brokers. Still, it is often characterized by limited market knowledge, uneven quality standards, weak producer negotiating power, and restricted access to high-end export markets (Aremu, 2020).

Formal segment

Registered aggregators, processors, exporters, commodity exchanges, and foreign buyers comprise the formal market. Participants must comply with food safety, traceability, quality, and export regulations and typically operate under structured contractual agreements.

Although formal markets require more cash, technical know-how, and regulatory compliance, they generally offer better prices, access to financing, certification opportunities, and stronger market linkages (Anyogu et al., 2024).

Key business risks

Running a business in Nigeria comes with unavoidable risks and challenges. The sesame sector is expanding quickly, highly lucrative and export driven. Key business risks in the sector include:

- **Financial risk**: No/overly small cushion for fixed costs, such as rent and bulk buys, or emergencies
- **Operational risk**: No/limited back-up equipment, erratic power, unskilled workers
- **Market risk:** No name recognition, limited marketing budget
- **Legal/regulatory risk**: Informal set-up, risk of being shut down or fined
- **Reputational risk**: Heavy dependence on referrals and social proof

In addition, several sector-specific risks could negatively affect the sesame value chain.

Table 4: Top business risks and their potential impacts

Risk category	Description	Potential impacts
Climate and weather risks	Dependence on rainfall exposes production to droughts, floods, and irregular rainfall patterns.	Reduced yields, crop losses, lower income
Pest and disease outbreaks	Infestations and crop diseases can lower productivity and quality.	Lower output and marketable volumes
Price volatility	Sesame prices fluctuate due to changes in global supply, demand, exchange rates, and market conditions.	Uncertain revenues and profit margins
Quality and food safety risks	Contamination from improper drying, storage, handling, or pesticide residues can lead to rejection by buyers.	Loss of market access and financial losses
Post-harvest losses	Inadequate storage, poor handling, and moisture damage can reduce product quality.	Reduced saleable output and lower prices
Market access risks	Reliance on a few export markets exposes producers and exporters to trade disruptions and changing import regulations.	Fewer export opportunities
Infrastructure constraints	Poor roads, storage facilities, and transport networks increase transaction costs.	Delays, higher operating costs, reduced competitiveness
Financing constraints	Limited access to affordable credit for farmers and small enterprises.	Restricted business expansion and investment
Regulatory and compliance risks	Failure to meet export quality, traceability, and food safety standards.	Shipment rejection and loss of contracts

Source: ITC field research.

Strategies to mitigate these risks include adopting good agronomic practices, investing in storage and quality management systems, joining cooperatives, diversifying buyers and export destinations, obtaining insurance and financing, and complying with international food safety and traceability standards.

Sectoral environment

Key stakeholders

A broad range of stakeholders supports the sesame value chain. Understanding the role of these stakeholders can help newcomers identify opportunities for skills development, business support, networking, and market access.

1. Major sesame-processing facilities

One of the largest processing companies in Nigeria is Wacot Limited, which operates a fully integrated plant in Ogba, Lagos, that also handles organic sesame. The company runs a sesame outgrower programme and has established the Sesame Farmers' Academy, supporting smallholder farmers through guaranteed offtake and specialized training.

Inaugurated in 2026, **Afcott Grains Limited** – part of the Kewalram Chanrai Group – is a multi-grain mill based in Kano, capable of processing 40,000 tonnes of sesame seeds annually and exporting to Japan and Europe.

Gudale Farms and **Processing Nigeria Limited's** new multi-tonne processing plant is located in Azuba, Lafia (Nasarawa State). The result of a public–private partnership, the plant was built with a design capacity of 10,000 tonnes per hour to process raw sesame seeds, empower local farmers, and boost local value addition.

2. Government ministries and support organizations

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security is the lead government body responsible for developing and implementing agricultural strategies and programmes in Nigeria. In the sesame sector, it creates favourable conditions for production, productivity gains, value addition, and sustainable export development, working with specialist agencies responsible for standards, quarantine, customs, and export promotion.

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria helps entrepreneurs and small businesses through business development services, entrepreneurship training, advisory support, and capacity-building programmes. Sesame processors and agribusiness entrepreneurs may benefit from the agency's enterprise development initiatives.

State-level **agricultural development programmes** provide extension services, farmer training, and technical support. Through field demonstrations and advisory services, these programmes help farmers adopt better production techniques and technologies.

3. Associations

The most important association for Nigerian sesame farmers is the **National Sesame Seed Association of Nigeria**. The Abuja-based organization has been committed to developing sesame as a major export product since 2002. It supports sesame farmers, promotes Nigeria's role as a key player in the international sesame market in collaboration with NEPC, and ensures a coordinated approach across the country's sesame sector.

Under the umbrella of the national association, other cooperatives, such as the Niger State Sesame Farmers Association, operate at the state level. These entities collaborate with local authorities and development partners to promote commercial sesame cultivation in their regions. Their activities often include initiatives related to organic farming and strengthening local processing capacity.

4. Research institutions

Nigeria's federal agricultural research institute, the National Cereals Research Institute, oversees beniseed research nationwide. Its work spans breeding improved varieties, developing cultivation techniques, and disseminating these innovations through partnerships in agricultural extension, thereby strengthening the country's sesame industry and enhancing its export potential.

The Institute for Agricultural Research studies agronomy, mechanization, irrigation, farming systems, and extension to support sesame production. It also collaborates with national and international research organizations and agricultural institutes.

The **Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi**, is one of Nigeria's leading research centres for oilseeds. The university carries out extensive research into sesame varieties, fertilizers, plant physiology and cultivation systems.

5. Development partners

Development partners include **FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development,** and the **German development agency, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)**.

While FAO works to improve production practices, food safety, farmer organizations, and sustainable agriculture, the International Fund for Agricultural Development targets rural development by strengthening smallholder farmers, facilitating access to finance, and supporting value-chain development and market access. GIZ is particularly active in export-oriented agricultural value chains, with a focus on private-sector development, increasing export competitiveness, and strengthening and farmer-business linkages.

6. Supporting services

The sesame value chain also relies on a range of support service providers, including agricultural input suppliers, extension and mechanization service providers, warehousing operators, financial institutions and microfinance providers, insurance providers, and business development service providers.

Logistics and transport firms, quality-testing and certification service providers, and freight forwarders play an important role for export-oriented companies.

Power dynamics

Understanding how power is distributed in the sesame sector is crucial, as relationships often determine market access and profitability as much production capacity does.

- Due to information asymmetries, fragmented output, restricted access to financing, and insufficient storage capacity, **smallholder farmers** remain the least powerful operators.

- **Traders and aggregators** often exert considerable influence over pricing because they control market access and have more working capital than farmers.
- **Processors and exporters** have considerable market power through their ability to set purchasing specifications and contractual conditions.
- **International buyers**, who determine export requirements related to product quality, traceability, and food safety, also influence the value chain.
- **Government agencies** shape the sector through regulation, quality and quality control, and trade facilitation.
- **Financial institutions** influence access to credit and investment capital, while **farmer organizations** and **farmer cooperatives** help improve collective bargaining power and market access.

Regulatory requirements

Participants in the formal sesame market must comply with applicable national and international regulations. Key requirements include:

a. Business registration
b. Tax registration and compliance
c. Export registration requirements where applicable
d. Compliance with phytosanitary standards
e. Food safety and quality management requirements
f. Product grading and quality specifications
g. Traceability and residue compliance standards
h. Export documentation and customs procedures

The following institutions, among others, ensure that the above criteria are met:

- The Corporate Affairs Commission registers, regulates, and manages companies.
- The Nigeria Agricultural Quarantine Service safeguards agricultural biosecurity and certifies the health status of exported agricultural commodities.
- The Nigeria Customs Service ensures that sesame exports comply with customs laws and international trade requirements.
- The Standards Organization of Nigeria oversees compliance with Nigerian Industrial Standards covering food processing, packaging, labelling, and product conformity.
- The National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control monitors compliance with food safety regulations and quality assurance requirements for foodstuffs marketed in Nigeria. For businesses that package processed sesame products, the agency sets out regulations governing packaging and product labelling.
- The Nigerian Export Promotion Council regulates sesame (product) exports and provide access to international trade opportunities.

Compliance with regulations, thorough quality control, and strategic integration into regional production clusters are the keys to success in Nigeria's sesame industry. Exporters in particular must meet the quality standards set by importing countries regarding moisture content, purity, impurities, pesticide residues, and food safety requirements (Anyogu et al., 2024).

Training and education programmes

Training along Nigeria's sesame value chain is delivered through a network of public institutions, development organizations, and private-sector partners. The Nigerian Export Promotion Council is the lead national institution coordinating capacity building for the sesame export value chain.

Through partnerships with public and private-sector stakeholders, NEPC offers comprehensive leadership in training on quality standards, value addition, processing, certification, export readiness, and international market access. Agricultural research institutes, extension agencies, state agricultural development programmes, and producer associations provide most production-related training.

However, different stakeholder groups have distinct training needs. Processing companies require more indepth knowledge of modern processing technologies and food safety, farmers often need capacity building to improve cultivation methods and post-harvest management, and marketers benefit from skills in digital marketing and the use of market information.

Cooperative membership and higher education levels can help close training gaps, showing why joint efforts and organized capacity building are essential for improving yields and market participation (Oyedepo and Evbuomwan, 2025; Ndaghu et al., 2025).

Table 5: Various training topics are taught in the sesame sector

Institutional provider	Target audience	Core curriculum and strategic focus
National Cereals Research Institute and Agricultural Development Programme	Smallholder farmers, extension workers	Good Agricultural Practices, improved sesame varieties, mechanized post-harvest handling (National Cereals Research Institute, 2026).
Sasakawa Africa Association	Extension agents, farmers	Training of trainers, post-harvest management, grain-quality improvement, climate-smart agriculture (Sasakawa Africa Association, 2024).
Nigerian College of Agribusiness	Agribusiness managers, entrepreneurs	Farm business management, financial planning, value-chain development, export readiness (Nigerian College of Agribusiness, 2023).
Nigerian Export Promotion Council and International Trade Centre	Exporters, aggregators, regulators	SPS compliance, Good Manufacturing Practices, HACCP, maximum residue limits, export quality management (ITC, 2026; Standards and Trade Development Facility, 2023).
NIRSAL Plc and Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security	Agribusiness operators and financial institutions	Agricultural finance, mobile business schools, cooperative strengthening, climate finance, digital agribusiness solutions (NIRSAL Plc, 2025).
GIZ	Micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, vulnerable communities	Entrepreneurship, digital literacy, climate-resilient agriculture, business development (GIZ, 2025).

Nigeria's training ecosystem in the sesame sector has evolved from a handful of isolated agricultural advisory initiatives into a comprehensive capacity-building framework that now covers the entire value chain. The training covers technical production skills, agricultural sector management, access to finance, food safety, compliance with export regulations, and market competitiveness.

Participation in these training programmes offers value-chain stakeholders an important pathway to increase productivity, reduce post-harvest losses, improve compliance with international standards, and expand access to high-value export markets.

CHAPTER 3

Grounded economics

This chapter examines the financial aspects of setting up a business, highlighting capital requirements, a breakdown of costs based on operational needs and corresponding price ranges, and an overview of entry pathways. To support new entrants, it also outlines available financing options and key financial considerations.

Financial accounting

Financial viability is a vital part of successful engagement in the sesame value chain. Businesses need sufficient capital and good financial management to continue operations throughout the production and marketing cycle. The financial structure for sesame sector stakeholders differs according to their business.

Producers incur costs associated with land preparation, seeds, fertilizer, herbicides, labour, harvesting, threshing, and transportation while aggregators require working capital to buy produce, storage facilities, weighing equipment, bags, and transportation. Processors face additional costs for cleaning, grading, processing equipment, packaging, quality assurance, and energy. Exporters require substantial working capital to finance procurement, certification, logistics, documentation, and shipment.

Grounded economics in the sesame value chain requires understanding cost structures, margin ranges, cash flow patterns, and scale thresholds.

Table 6: Cost structure and margin ranges along the sesame value chain

Segment	Typical start-up cost	Estimated operating cost	Margin range	Cash flow pattern	Scale threshold
Farming and production	₦250,000 – ₦600,000	₦50,000 – ₦150,000 per season	40%–60%	Seasonal (harvest sales)	2–3 hectares
Aggregation and trading	₦1 million – ₦2.5 million	₦500,000 – ₦1.5 million monthly	15%–25%	Weekly bulk trade depending on demand and supply	1 tonne and above
Snack production	₦300,000+	₦150,000 – ₦500,000 monthly	25%–40%	Daily retail and monthly bulk	SME to industrial
Primary processing	₦4 million – ₦12 million	₦1 million – ₦3 million monthly	20%–35%	Monthly contracts	Warehouse scale
Secondary processing	₦40 million – ₦100 million	₦5 million+ monthly	30%–40%	Contract sales, export cycles	Industrial
Logistics/export	₦15 million – ₦50 million per consignment	₦3 million+ per shipment	20%–45%	Quarterly shipments	30 tonnes (standard haulage) and above

Source: Author's compilation based on in-depth interviews.

Capital requirements

Farmers

The main costs associated with sesame production in Nigeria include land rental or acquisition, land preparation, the purchase of quality seeds, fertilizer, and other agricultural inputs, labour, and basic storage. Among these cost components, labour represents the largest share of variable production costs, accounting for 60%–70% in regions where production remains largely manual (Oniah and Edem 2021).

Labour is particularly intensive during land preparation, weeding, harvesting, threshing, and post-harvest handling. Consequently, labour availability and wage rates have a significant influence on overall production costs and farm profitability.

Although adopting mechanization can substantially reduce labour requirements, improve operational efficiency, and enhance timeliness of field operations, it requires considerable upfront investment in machinery and equipment. This can pose a financial hurdle for many smallholder farmers, who often lack access to affordable credit or reliable mechanization services.

Aggregators

For sesame aggregators, the biggest operating costs are tied to working capital for buying seeds from farmers, transport from production areas to aggregation centres or export hubs, storage and warehouse management, handling and packaging, and managing seasonal price swings.

Adequate working capital is the key cost driver because aggregators typically pay farmers cash at purchase, while revenue only comes later – after sesame has been accumulated, graded, and sold in bulk to processors or exporters.

As a result, liquidity becomes essential for keeping aggregation operations running, allowing businesses to buy enough volumes during the harvest, take advantage of favourable prices, and maintain a steady supply to downstream buyers. But when affordable financing is hard to access, an aggregator's purchasing power shrinks – and competitiveness along the value chain suffers.

Snack processors

For sesame snack processors, the major costs are investing in processing equipment such as roasters, ovens, mixers, and packaging machines, buying raw materials, complying with food safety rules, branding, packaging, marketing, and distribution. It is essential to comply with regulatory requirements – including product registration and certification by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control – to access formal retail outlets and ensure consumer confidence.

Branding and packaging are essential for competitiveness, especially in supermarkets and other formal retail markets, where product presentation, perceived quality, and brand awareness strongly influence consumers' purchasing decisions. Investing in attractive packaging and strategic marketing increases product visibility, strengthens market positioning, and promotes business growth in an increasingly competitive food industry.

Primary processors

For primary processors, the biggest costs come from investing in cleaning, drying, grading, and sorting equipment, storage facilities, quality testing, packaging, and meeting the SPS standards required in domestic and international markets. Maintaining quality control systems, minimizing contamination, and ensuring appropriate post-harvest treatment throughout the processing chain lead to additional operating costs.

These requirements must be met to access high-value export markets, attract reliable buyers, and secure better prices. Failing to meet them can result in product rejections, financial losses, and a weaker competitive position.

Secondary processing

For secondary processors, one of the biggest cost drivers is investing in industrial machinery – from oil presses and hulling factories to roasting, refining, and filtering plants, packaging equipment, and other specialized processing technologies. Other costs include the salaries of qualified staff, energy use, plant maintenance, quality assurance, packaging, and compliance with food safety and industry standards. Capital investment in modern processing technology directly shapes production efficiency, product quality, and processing capacity – and determines whether processors can produce high-quality items such as sesame oil, hulled sesame seeds, sesame flour, tahini (a rich, creamy paste, made from finely ground sesame seeds), and other value-added goods for domestic and export markets.

Exporters

For sesame exporters, the main cost drivers include purchasing export-grade sesame, quality testing and certification, export documentation, container loading, packaging, domestic transport from production and collection centres to export terminals, port handling charges, customs clearance, freight forwarding, and shipping logistics. Exporters also face costs tied to meeting foreign market regulations and international standards on quality, traceability and phytosanitary compliance.

Managing these processes effectively is essential to ensure on-time delivery, reduce transaction costs, safeguard product quality, and remain competitive in global sesame markets.

Entry pathways

New entrants can tap into in Nigeria's sesame value chain through several investment pathways, depending on their financial capacity, technical expertise, and business goals.

Greenfield investment

A greenfield investment involves setting up a sesame business from scratch. This is one of the most common ways to enter the market in Nigeria, particularly for entrepreneurs who wish to establish businesses tailored to specific market opportunities. Although this approach requires significant initial investment and longer start-up phases, it offers investors greater operational control and flexibility when it comes to intro-ducing modern technologies and quality management systems.

Acquiring existing businesses
Investors can also enter the sector by buying companies that operate along the sesame value chain. This approach gives investors immediate access to established supplier networks, experienced staff, customer relationships, and operational infrastructure. Acquisition opportunities in Nigeria are limited, as many sesame companies are privately owned family businesses that are not actively for sale. Furthermore, acquisitions typically require considerable capital as well as comprehensive financial, legal, and operational due diligence.

Contract farming and outgrower schemes

Contract farming has become an increasingly important entry route in Nigeria's sesame value chain. Under these arrangements, processors, exporters, or investors sign agreements with smallholder farmers to produce sesame that meets defined quality standards. Investors typically provide improved seeds, advisory support, inputs, or loans, while farmers deliver agreed quantities at harvest. This model gives firms a steady supply of raw materials without acquiring large tracts of land, while offering farmers and investors more stable market opportunities.

Aggregation and trading

Aggregation is one of the lowest-capital entry points into the sesame value chain, allowing newcomers to participate without heavy upfront investment. Entrepreneurs buy sesame directly from farmers or rural markets, consolidate produce to achieve commercial volumes, and supply processors or exporters.

Success in this segment depends on strong relationships with farming communities, effective quality control, adequate storage facilities, and efficient logistics. As demand for traceable, high-quality sesame continues to rise in international markets, professional aggregation services offer significant growth opportunities.

Service provision

New entrants may also participate by providing specialized services that support the sesame value chain rather than engaging directly in production or trading. Opportunities include input supply, mechanization services, extension and advisory services, warehousing, transportation, quality testing, certification support, packaging, digital market information systems, and financial services. As Nigeria continues to strengthen its agricultural value chains and improve export competitiveness, demand for these support services is projected to rise, creating additional investment opportunities with relatively lower risks.

Seasonality

Sesame is very sensitive to seasonal shifts, which directly affects price stability and processing operations throughout the year. Some of the issues arising from seasonality are:

1. **The production cycle:** Harvesting and high market supply occur from August to September and from November to December. During these periods, market supply peaks and farm-gate prices are at their lowest (₦1,800–₦2,000/kilogram [kg]), making it the ideal buying window for aggregators and processing factories.

2. **The off-season period:** From March to July, available stocks decline and prices rise by 20%–30% (₦2,500–₦3,000/kg). Processing companies that have not secured sufficient stocks during the harvest face falling profit margins during these months, while farmers can sell their remaining stocks at higher prices.

3. **Demand cycles:** Consumer snack demand peaks during festive periods (Christmas, Ramadan, Easter, etc.). International export demand remains fairly stable, but is subject to fluctuations in global commodity prices, geopolitical shocks, and changes in shipping logistics.

Funding options

Entrepreneurs in the Nigerian sesame sector often rely on a mix of formal and informal funding, including personal savings, financial support from family and friends, and grants or loans from microfinance institutions, banks, or the Government.

Although most small firms depend primarily on their own funds, particularly in the early stages, they can supplement this capital through external loans and other financing options. Some banks offer credit facilities specifically tailored to farmers and export-oriented businesses. Financing options in the sesame sector include:

Formal

- The Bank of Agriculture is a specialized agricultural finance institution that provides microcredits, (nano) loans, and other financial services to farmers, processors, cooperatives, and agribusinesses. Loans range from ₦250,000 to more than ₦50,000,000 with low interest rates – typically less than 10%.

- The Agri-Business Small Medium Enterprises Investment Scheme, run by the Central Bank of Nigeria, supports agricultural businesses and SMEs through low-interest loans and entrepreneurship training. The maximum amount for short-term loans is ₦3 million; no collateral is required, but busi-ness registration is necessary.

- The Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund, managed by the Central Bank of Nigeria, reduces lending risks through loan guarantees and improves access to agricultural loans for farmers and agribusiness operators.

- The National Agricultural Development Fund provides agricultural grants and funding support to enterprises and value-chain participants that improve agricultural productivity, processing, and commercialization. It also runs several programmes aimed at supplying agricultural inputs, engaging young people, and supporting smallholders.
- The Nigeria Incentive-Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending is a non-bank financial institution that uses credit guarantees and risk-sharing mechanisms to improve access to agricultural finance for farmers, processors, and agribusiness investors. It also offers low-interest loans and business development support to entrepreneurs in the sector.
- NEXIM Bank provides finance to farmers, processing plants, cooperatives, and agribusinesses across the entire agricultural value chain, and offers exporters direct pre- and post-shipment export finance as well as trade guarantees. Its designated Small and Medium Enterprise Export Facility is designed to support export-oriented SMEs by providing targeted financing to expand Nigeria's range of exports and to promote industrialization in the area of high value-added exports.
- The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria implements the Government's Agri-business Development and Empowerment Programme, which provides financial assistance, technical training, and capacity-building support to individuals and organizations involved in agricultural production, processing, and marketing.
- The Bank of Industry offers access to medium- and long-term financing, ranging from ₦5 million to ₦50 million, for start-ups and SMEs engaged in manufacturing and agroprocessing. It also offers special schemes targeting youth and women.

Informal

- **Trader advances:** Large exporters provide short-term cash advances to local brokers to secure crop volumes before harvest. This arrangement is also extended to farmers to ensure steady supply of sesame.
- **Cooperatives:** Group-based savings associations pool resources to provide low-interest internal credit to members.
- **Family and community financing:** Network capital remains an important source of seed funding for micro-scale ventures.

Key financial considerations

A sound understanding of market dynamics is essential to operate successfully in the sesame sector, as business profitability depends on the ability to overcome barriers to market entry, manage logistical challenges, and meet the requirements of international trade. Important financial considerations include:

International quality compliance costs: Exporters must make substantial upfront investments to meet the strict safety and plant health standards of international markets, as failure to comply with these quality requirements leads to costly rejections at the border or heavy contractual penalties.

Supply chain and yield volatility: Financial planning must consider fluctuating crop yields caused by unpredictable weather conditions, which affect the availability of seeds and lead to sharp rises in purchase prices.

Currency and exchange-rate risks: Local suppliers face considerable financial uncertainty due to unpredictable currency fluctuations, which erode their profit margins and make it difficult to formulate long-term pricing strategies for their products.

Seasonal cash flow and liquidity crises: Trading requires significant liquidity during the main harvest periods; a lack of access to flexible credit facilities limits an operator's ability to consolidate volumes before off-season shortages drive up prices.

Risk mitigation via value-added processing: Capital investment yields a much higher and safer return when diversified into secondary processing, such as manufacturing sesame oil. This protects profit margins from fluctuations in raw material prices and attracts buyers from the premium segment.

CHAPTER 4

Common failure patterns and success stories

The sesame sector offers a wide range of income-generating opportunities. Despite rising interest in the sector, establishing a sustainable business is not always straightforward.

This chapter highlights some of the most common mistakes made by sesame businesses, as well as the key practices associated with long-term success. These insights seek to help aspiring entrepreneurs make informed decisions, avoid costly mistakes, and improve their chances of building resilient and profitable firms across the sesame value chain.

Common mistakes

Overreliance on manual labour

The sesame sector is very labour-intensive, particularly in the cultivation and farming segment. Labour accounts for 60%–70% of variable costs in less mechanized regions, making production expensive and inefficient.

Poor post-harvest handling

The handling of sesame after harvest is important for the further processing and usability of the seeds. Inadequate drying, storage, and cleaning can seriously threaten a business, as contamination and declining quality often lead to product rejections by processors and on export markets.

Weak compliance with standards

Hygiene and quality standards are crucial for goods that are primarily intended for the export market. Failure to comply with SPS/HACCP requirements and traceability criteria severely restricts access to premium international customers.

Lack of financial discipline

More than 90% of farmers rely on their personal savings. Mixing personal and business finances can lead to poor decision-making and make it difficult to accurately assess the business's profitability. Over time, a lack of financial discipline can lead to liquidity problems and restrict access to formal funding, in turn limiting expansion.

Low-yielding varieties

Yields remain at 400–450 kg/hectare – well below the global benchmark of 750–1,000 kg/hectare – due to the continued use of traditional seed varieties and traditional farming methods. However, access to improved or organic varieties is sometimes limited, especially for farmers who do not belong to a cooperative.

Success factors

One factor alone rarely determines long-term success along the sesame value chain. Studies on agricultural value chains show that business performance depends not only the product or service offered, but also on factors such as financial management, market access, quality control, operational efficiency, and business networks.

For new entrants, particularly vulnerable populations and returnees, focusing on a few core business principles can greatly increase the likelihood of building a sustainable business and achieving long-term growth:

- **Adoption of improved seed varieties and Good Agricultural Practices**

  If you are interested in taking up sesame seed farming, use high-yielding, disease-resistant seeds when possible and adopt best agricultural practices, such as promoting soil fertility and plant protection, to boost productivity.

- **Mechanization of labour-intensive tasks**

  Depending on the segment and your capital, you will probably have to rely initially on manual labour. Expand your operations and replace manual labour with threshing machines, dryers, and storage facilities as your business grows to reduce labour costs and post-harvest losses.

- **Compliance with international standards**

  As hygiene and quality standards are critical in the sesame sector, focus early on meeting SPS, HACCP, and traceability requirements to gain access to premium markets in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

- **Cooperative organization**

  Relationships are crucial in the sesame sector. Join cooperatives, associations, and networks to access markets, training opportunities, funding, and shared infrastructure. Partnerships help you pool resources, strengthen your negotiating position, and provide access to improved varieties and sector-specific information.

- **Value addition through processing**

  To add value and increase profit margins, move beyond simply exporting raw seeds and branch out into processing stages, including oil extraction, hulling, and snack production.

- **Institutional support**

  The sesame sector is heavily export-oriented, as domestic consumption remains very low. Make use of the training, advisory services and support available from both government and private actors to prepare your business for export. Starting early and building your capacity from ground up will give you a stronger foundation and a far better chance of success.

Box 1: Building a value-added sesame enterprise in Benue State

Comfort Iye Ameh transformed her background in food science and nearly two decades of experience in Nigeria's food industry into a thriving sesame-processing business in Makurdi, Benue State. After leaving paid employment in 2018, she launched her agribusiness and quickly identified the growing demand for premium, sand-free sesame seeds.

She started her sesame enterprise in 2021 with just ₦18,000 from personal savings, using basic equipment such as stainless-steel trays, washing bowls, and food-grade packaging materials. Rather than relying on formal training, she applied her professional knowledge in food science alongside traditional processing techniques.

What began with processing around 21kg of sesame for fewer than 20 customers has grown into an operation handling 120–240kg annually and serving more than 100 customers. The business employs 4 people, expanding to a workforce of 10 during periods of high demand. By maintaining strict quality standards and introducing improved drying techniques, Ms. Ameh has established a strong reputation in the local market and is preparing to diversify into sesame oil and sesame powder production while also pursuing certification for export markets.

Despite challenges including high packaging costs, inadequate processing equipment, and limited access to finance, she continues to reinvest her profits into the business. Ms. Ameh believes that success in the sesame value chain depends on sourcing quality raw materials and maintaining consistent product standards, as well as continuously investing in value addition.

Her journey demonstrates how modest capital, limited technical knowledge, and a commitment to quality can create sustainable employment, boost incomes, and contribute to the growth of Nigeria's sesame value chain.

Source: Interview with small-scale business owner in the sesame sector.

Source: Iye.com AGRIC Concept Enterprise.

CHAPTER 5

Self-assessment test

Is the Nigerian sesame sector right for me?
Answer each question honestly with 'yes' or 'no'. At the end, review your pattern, not just your score.

A. Skills and experience

1. I already have hands-on experience in farming, processing, trading, logistics, or related activities.
2. I understand key sesame production practices or am committed to learning new technical skills in sesame production, aggregation, processing, quality control, or export procedures.
3. I pay attention to quality and food hygiene standards throughout production and processing.
4. I am prepared to supervise workers, casual labourers, or service providers where necessary.

B. Industry awareness and operations

5. I understand the demand for sesame and sesame-based products in local, regional, and international markets.
6. I am interested in learning about market trends and emerging opportunities in the sesame value chain.
7. I am aware of the high quality and hygiene standards in sesame processing.
8. I can accept feedback and make adjustments to my business operations if needed.

C. Capital and financial cushion

9. I have sufficient start-up working capital that I can lock in for 12–18 months.
10. I have separate funds to cover my personal living expenses.
11. I am comfortable starting small and expanding gradually as the business grows.
12. I am comfortable managing finances, maintaining records, and tracking profitability.
13. I can negotiate effectively with input suppliers, transporters, processors, buyers, or exporters.
14. I understand basic inventory, storage, and stock management practices.

D. Mindset and expectations

15. I am comfortable operating in an export-oriented, fast-expanding agricultural business environment.
16. I can handle delayed payments, price fluctuations, and changing market conditions.
17. I am comfortable seeking new customers locally and internationally.
18. I am prepared for seasonal workloads and periods of intensive activity.
19. I am adaptable when faced with weather, market, operational, or logistical challenges.

E. Nigeria reality

20. I can manage infrastructure constraints such as poor roads or unreliable electricity.
21. I have, or can develop, reliable relationships with farmers, aggregators, transporters, processors, financial institutions, or buyers.
22. I am physically present and available to supervise daily operations.

F. Motivation and long-term fit

23. I am entering the sesame sector with a long-term commitment to building a sustainable business or livelihood.
24. I am open to continuous learning, improved farming practices, and new technologies.
25. I am open to diversifying into higher-value activities over time.
26. I can remain committed even when faced with challenges such as price fluctuations, weather risks, or changing market conditions.

Interpreting your results

Mostly Yes	Good Fit	The Nigerian sesame value chain offers good opportunities for you. Proceed to the full sector profile and identify the business model that best matches your skills, experience, capital, and long-term goals.
Mixed	Conditional Fit	The sector may still be suitable, but any gaps in technical knowledge, finance, business planning, or market access should be addressed first. Consider participating in training programmes, partnering with experienced operators, or starting with lower risk activities such as aggregation, snacks production, brokerage, input supply, or contract farming.
Mostly No	High-Risk Entry	Entering the sesame value chain at this stage may present significant challenges. Consider gaining practical experience through employment, internships, or partnerships with established businesses before investing.

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