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**Planning a snail farming venture - 5 steps**

Step 1: Plan

* market
* production
* organisation

Step 2: Pilot production and sales, leading to: Step 3: 'Go or no go decision'

Step 4: Investment in facilities and know-how

 Step 5: Upscaling

* logistical control
* quality control
* financial control

Step 1: Plan

Marketing plan: why do you want to farm snails?

* Own consumption
* Selling live snails to local market(s), local restaurants
* Selling preserved (frozen, canned) snail meat on distant markets

(Note: this Agrodok is not primarily intended for the snail grower for distant markets.)

Production plan:

Type of farming

Part life cycle farming: young snails collected from the wild, bought from other breeders or agricultural institutes, then raised on the farm to table size.

Complete life cycle farming: snails born and bred on the farm.

(Note: complete life cycle farming is recommended, to prevent diseases from being introduced into your farm by snails from outside). Farm size: the size of your pilot snail farm will depend on your marketing plan. Nigerian experiments show optimal stocking density for the giant African snails to be 100 snails/ m2 for juveniles of 0.5-49 g,

and 30/m2 for pre-adults of 50-100g. Optimum density for breeding

2 (egg-laying) snails is much lower: 6-7/ m .

(Note: snail weight refers to the live snail, including the shell).

Species

This manual concentrates on GALS, giant African land snails: *Achat- ina achatina* (coastal West Africa), *Archachatina marginata* (Central African rainforest zone), and *Achatina fulica* (originally from East Africa, now widely dispersed throughout the world). Using the local species for farming is obviously preferable, keeping in mind that – at least in Ghana – *A. achatina* is considered the tastiest species for consumption, followed by *Arch. marginata,* and *A. fulica*, in order of preference.

Organization plan:

* Family operation
* Commercial venture, financially and organizationally separated from your farm.

Step 2: Pilot production

During the pilot production phase you should keep detailed records on which to base your go or no go decision to continue snail farming or stop.

* records of inputs: labour (your own or household members, hired labour), money, materials, feed and so on
* records of growth performance of your snails.

Step 3: Go or no go decision

Only after carefully balancing production costs (per marketable snail, or per kg live snail, or dressed snail meat) and sales revenue will you be able to start a snail growing venture safely.

Step 4: Investment in facilities and know-how

Facilities:

* Location, type and size of cages or pens, depending on the scale of

snail farming planned.

* Finance, corresponding to the scale of the snail farming operation:
* Private or family capital, micro-credit (Grameen Bank model) or commercial credit.

Know-how:

* Acquiring or improving your knowledge of snail farming through exchange of information, reading, attending courses, etc.

Step 5: Upscaling

* Logistical control: careful recording and control of inputs (labour, materials, feed and medicines).
* Quality control: growing and delivering healthy products (snails in this case).
* Financial control: careful recording and control of inputs, output, and profits.

Note: Points of attention under Step 5 apply to any farming operation.

**Costs of constructing snaileries**

 Because of inflation, prices are meaningless and have been omitted. Complete the cost calculations by entering the local prices of construction materials and labour. Construction costs must include the cost of any transportation charges.

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