* Agricultural farm making process
* Starting a farm requires proper information, so you must have the right knowledge and skills in other to grow your ufarm into a successful business.

## **Step 1: Identify a farming problem**

* The very first step to take when starting a farming business is to identify a problem that people have and focus on solving that problem. A few months ago, Uka launched[Thrive Agric](https://www.thriveagric.com/), a technology driven agricultural company that crowdfunds from individuals and corporate bodies that have interest in agriculture. The funds are invested in a farm with promised returns after a farming cycle.
* However, before starting this company, he worked with a lot of farmers around the country and during his interactions with them, he identified two key problems that they faced. These key problems involved the supply and demand of farming products.
* ***Supply problems***
* On the supply side, he noticed that farmers around the country had three major challenges:
* Firstly, they were experiencing low yield from their farms because they didn’t have a full understanding of standard practices in agriculture.
* Secondly, they didn’t have enough money to scale mainly due to lack of financial knowhow. For instance, they did not understand the concept of separating revenue from profit or know that they had to cost their labour and apportion personal salaries from their revenues. As a result, they were spending all their earnings and could not scale their businesses.
* Thirdly, they did not have access to profitable markets, which led them to sell their produce at unfavourable and demotivating prices. Here are what you need to know before you start a farm.

## **Carry Out Research on how to start a farm**

* I emphasized this on my first paragraph because it is the most important factor to consider when you want to start a farm; what aspect of farming are you venturing into?
* what skills do you have, do you have any basic knowledge about that type of farming, do you have practical knowledge?
* Do you have an experienced farmer available to assist you through the process, at least in the beginning? All these and more must be considered while learning how to start a farm.
* If you already know the type of farm you want to start, it is important  for you to seek the assistance of an experienced farmer.
* Someone who is into that aspect of farming and get a basic training to start. You will learn in the process and stick to what works for you.
* ***Demand problems***
* As a result of the aforementioned supply problems, market players who demanded produce from these farmers suffered. For instance:
* People in the nearby villages needed more farming produce than the farmers were able to provide.
* Also, processing companies in Lagos and other parts of the country wanted more raw materials than these farmers were able to supply.
* The identification of these problems was the trigger that led to the creation of Thrive Agric. Simply put, Uka wanted to produce enough to meet internal demand for food

## **Step 2: Close the knowledge gap**

* Once you have highlighted a farming-related problem that you want to solve, the next step is to close up the gap between what you know about that problem and what you need to know to be a successful farming entrepreneur.
* **There are two avenues you can use to hack this:**
* Seek agricultural education: You could get knowledge from available material (doing online courses or reading books) on the problem you are looking to solve.
* You could leverage the knowledge other people have acquired, by consulting experts in the field you would like to venture into; Nigeria has a whole lot of smart people to learn from, the problem is we hardly look out for them.
* I would personally advise that you use a mix of these two avenues, because having a good understanding of your farming enterprise is a major key for success. Not having this understanding could prove quite costly
* **Proper management**
* There is an old saying – “a castle crumbles with poor supervision”. Management is an integral part of any farming business and it involves – proper supervision, knowing when/what your crops/animals need to aid its growth, knowing the soil requirement, water retention, rainfall requirement, signs of disease infestation and also how to solve pest attacks.

#### At the early stage of growth in your business, it is best you act as the extension/farm manager; and even if you have grown to a level where you can afford extension services, you must still ensure that all these checks are considered. Lack of proper management will kill your farm business before it sees the break of day.

# **Get a suitable Land**

* This is a key factor of production, you can not do without it and this is more crucial when it comes to gathering information on how to start a farm.
* In Agriculture, the right type of land is everything. Starting your own farm requires you to check the suitability of the land available.
* The land has to be suitable for the type of farm you wish to start; you definitely can’t farm crops like cucumber in a water-logged soil but rice will do just fine on the same soil.
* You should also consider the land topography; Hill, Rocky, swampy, sloppy and types of soil in the available land when gathering your information on how to start a farm.
* The size of the Land available to you should also be considered. For instance I started a snail farm in a 50ft X 50ft space and made profits from it because that space could contain about five thousand growers but such space might be too small to make a reasonable profit rearing Pigs or growing tomatoes.
* **Site Selection**
* Where your site is to be located is an important part of your farming business. A lot of people don’t know this but there is a difference between land and soil. While land is generic, soil refers to the right environment that favours specific crop production under a right condition.
* Some pieces of land in Nigeria were planned for real estate and have lost their topsoil (which is primary for crop farming); it is important to ensure that you always do a soil test analysis before you choose what/where to farm. It is also important to locate your business in a place close to your produce market and consider cost of logistics and accessibility.
* **Security**
* Security from pest attack and theft of produce is an important aspect of any farming business, especially when you have a large farm. I also advise ALL farmers to **insure** their farms after all due diligence is done in order to protect themselves from unforeseen circumstances like fire, drought, floods etc.

## **Step 3 – Raise capital**

* After all is said and done, the primary factor that limits a lot of potential farming businesses is the money to start. However, in any business venture, it is important that you start with as little as possible and learn to grow patiently. With that being said, here are three ways you can raise capital to fund your farming business:
* **Through personal finances:** Starting a farming business with your personal finances will typically require you to fund the farm with money that you have saved up for some time. This is the most advisable way to start a farming business because it helps you test out your farming idea, learn valuable lessons and gather useful information before bringing external parties into the business in the form of loans or equity.
* This was Uka’s experience when he started Thrive Agric. Initially, he and his co-founder used cash they had saved up (₦60,000 to be exact) to start the business. It was their desire to scale the business and the lessons they had learnt from their previous farming businesses that helped them grow the business sequentially before they got the confidence to bring external parties into their business.
* Now at Thrive Agric, they pool funds from their subscribers to buy portions of farms and after the contracted period, the clients are paid back their capital along with their promised returns. You can find out more about how this process works[here](https://www.thriveagric.com/our-process/). Remember, it’s important to start with what you have, to get to where you want to be.
* **Through partnership/equity funding:** This is when a percentage of shares in the farming business are sold in exchange for capital to start your business.
* **Through loans:** Loans from a financial institution or even from close friends and family can be used to fund ideas. However, at this junction, I must strongly advise against starting your business on loans.
* It is wiser to save up and use your money to invest in the farm business at the initial stage, test the waters, before considering a loan agreement for your business. **There are too many uncertainties when starting a business to add the certainty of paying back a loan.**

## **Step 4: Launch**

* The last step is to officially launch your business. The version of your farm that you launch may not be where you want it to be, but it is imperative that you take a bold first step and start somewhere, learn from any mistake you might make and scale as you go about your business.
* No one ever knows it all when they start, so the fact that you do not have all the information you would require should not hinder you; you must keep learning and keep yourself abreast with current trends in the farming business because this information will help in expanding your business operations.
* Well that’s it for now. The four steps highlighted above should provide you with the basic information you need to start a farming business in Nigeria. Now that you have this foundational information, I challenge you to go ahead and start your farming business. Together, we can create economic prosperity across Africa through Agriculture. You need some amount of funds to kick-start any project and  starting your own farm is not an exception. How much fund is available and accessible to you? How much of the fund available will be enough to cover the farm setup expenses and getting seeds/breeding stock?
* Where will you get your startup funds and how do you intend to finance the farm before revenue starts coming in.
* If you are thinking of starting a fish farm for example;  the fishes need to be fed on a daily basis and this calls for daily expenses from the farmer so you must have such funds available to avoid a disaster.
* All of the above must be considered when brainstorming on how to start a farm. You will also need to prepare a business plan which will be the framework of your objectives and the process to achieve them. As the saying goes “when you fail to plan, you plan to fail”.

# My advice here especially to new and intending farmers who want to start a farm is to start small and grow big, this will help you gain experience in that particular aspect of farming and minimize risks. **Set Realistic Goals**

* Whether you want to start your own snail farm as a hobby or business. Setting goals will help to put you on the right track. You should set both short-term and long-term goals to enable you track your progress.
* This can also act as motivator to remind you of where it started and how far you have come. The beauty about farming is that you will get to witness even the thinnest progress.
* You will see seeds germinate to produce root, stem, flowers and eventually fruits. You will see your hard work springing forth into multiple fruits and  get to witness the mystery of multiplication.
* It’s an Amazing process and DON’T FORGET TO CELEBRATE EVERY MILESTONE ACHIEVEMENT.

#### **GOALS HELPS YOU STAY FOCUSED**

# **Farm what you Love**

* We have all been told by motivational speakers everywhere to do what you love, FOLLOW YOUR PASSION. This is also applicable when you want to start your own farm. Don’t try to be like someone else.
* Your friend might be into tomatoes Farming, don’t venture into it if you know you have passion for snail farming. It is easier to stay committed and dedicated on something you are passionate about than something you are not.
* Farming requires very hard work, you need to invest time and creativity into it. You need to study and carry out research. Try a variety of methods until you find what works for you and stick to it.
* I am not promising you a smooth ride to success but this post should make the journey easier and fun. Always try to network with fellow farmers.
* Join a community or Group where you can ask questions and get answers from realistic/experience farmers, this will help you grow quickly and you will gain exposure.
* Drop any questions that you might want to ask about starting a farm and i will be ready to help.