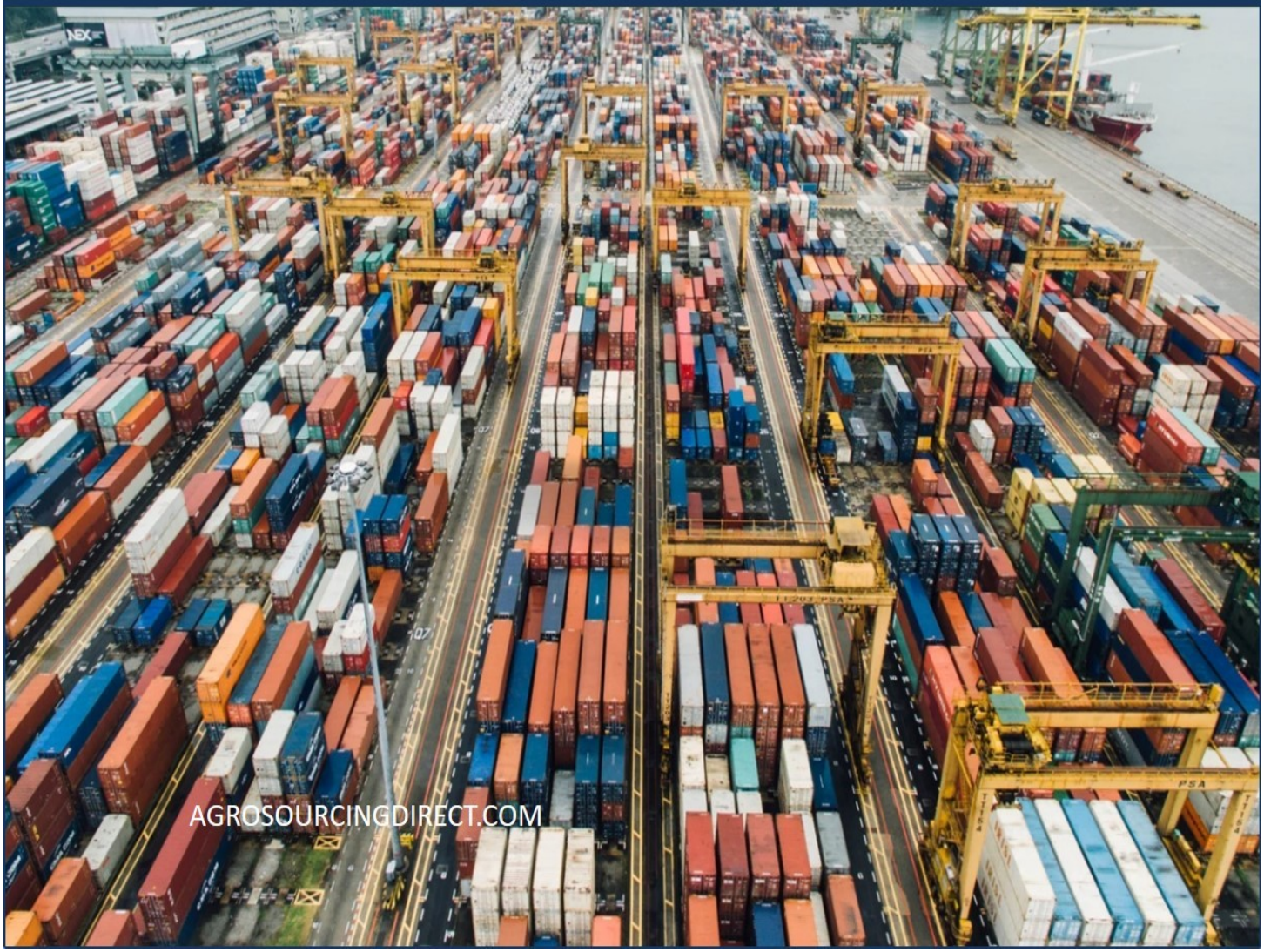
THE COMPLETE AGRO EXPORT BUSINESS GUIDE

A Complete Guide for Beginners



NOTE:

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only the first chapter.

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“Agro Export is the business of the past, the present and the future”.

~



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Inquiries concerning this guide book and other products and services should be sent to:
Email: agrosourcingdirect@gmail.com
Tel/WhatsApp: +234 (0)7083444249

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How to Use this Guide

This book is built to be worked through, not just read. Whether you are preparing your first sack of ginger or planning a container of sesame, these pages show you how to get the most from every chapter.

Read it in order the first time

The chapters build on one another. Chapters One to Three give you the foundation. Chapters Four to Seven show you how to get started. Chapters Eight to Twelve take you through packaging, buyers, shipping, products and destinations, and Chapters Thirteen to Fifteen give you a toolkit for support, problem-solving and quality. After that, treat the guide as a reference and return to whichever chapter you need.

What you will find in every chapter

- **Aim and "What you will learn."** A short preview, so you know what the chapter will give you before you start.
- **Boxes.** Key points, definitions and warnings such as "Check the current terms." Read the warnings twice, because rules, fees and websites change.
- **Tables and figures.** Comparisons, checklists and diagrams you can come back to for a fast reminder.
- **Chapter Summary.** The main ideas in a few lines, ideal for revision.
- **Actionable Points and To-Do List.** Real tasks and worksheets. Complete them before you move on.
- **Review questions and My notes.** Test yourself, then write your own ideas, contacts and questions on the notes page.

Find what you need fast

If you want to...	Go to
Understand what agro export is and whether you qualify	Chapters One to Three
Pick a business role and follow a step-by-step plan to start	Chapters Four and Five
Sell online, then find and verify buyers	Chapters Six and Nine
Prepare documents and packaging	Chapters Seven and Eight
Ship, clear customs and understand costs	Chapter Ten
Choose your first product and market	Chapters Eleven and Twelve
Find agencies, data and finance; solve problems; protect quality	Chapters Thirteen to Fifteen

Make it work for you

- Do the to-do lists and write in the book. Keep one notebook for your contacts, quotations and decisions.
- Visit the websites and confirm current prices, rules and fees with official sources. This guide gives direction, not guarantees.
- Use the appendix at the back whenever you meet an unfamiliar term, abbreviation or website.

Introduction

The world has developed a strong taste for what Nigeria grows. Ginger, cashew, sesame, cocoa, hibiscus, soya beans, palm produce and dozens of other products leave the country every day, packed in sacks, cartons and containers and bound for factories, wholesalers and food shops in many parts of the world. As the opening words of this book say, agro export is the business of the past, the present and the future. People will always need to eat, and industries will always need raw materials.

Crude oil and agro products are Nigeria's two major export earners, and the door to the second one is open to you. Agro export is not reserved for large companies. Farmers, civil servants, students, graduates, small businesses, co-operatives and organizations all take part, and because buyers pay in foreign currency, the rewards can be considerable.

Yet most beginners hesitate, and for understandable reasons. Where do I start? Which product should I choose? How do I find a buyer I can trust? Which papers do I need? How do I pack, ship and get paid? Stories of rejected shipments and online scams make the questions louder. This guide was written to answer them, one step at a time and in plain language.

It is written for the beginner. You do not need a trade background, a large budget or a registered company to start learning. Whether you want to export, process, package, source or supply, you will find the knowledge and the practical steps you need.

How this guide is arranged

The Complete Agro Export Business Guide draws on the Agrosourcingdirect agro export training program and is arranged as a practical journey in fifteen chapters:

- **Foundations (Chapters One to Three).** What agro export is, why it pays, who can take part, and straight answers to fifty of the questions beginners ask most.
- **Getting started (Chapters Four to Seven).** Ten business opportunities, seven quick steps to launch, the online platforms where buyers are found, and the export documents you will need.
- **Packaging, buyers and shipping (Chapters Eight to Ten).** How to package to international standards, find and vet good buyers, and move your goods through shipping and customs.
- **Products and markets (Chapters Eleven and Twelve).** Fifteen product profiles and the top international destinations for Nigerian agro products.
- **Support, problems and quality (Chapters Thirteen to Fifteen).** Where to find agencies, data and finance, how to overcome common challenges, and how to meet the quality standards that earn repeat orders.

What you will be able to do

By the end of this guide, you will be able to:

- choose a product and a market with confidence;
- register your business and prepare the right documents;
- find, vet and win good buyers, online and offline;
- package, ship and clear your goods the right way; and
- protect quality, manage risk and know where to turn for support.

Every chapter closes with a summary, a to-do list and review questions, because knowledge becomes a business only when you act on it. Do the exercises, visit the websites, and write your own notes as you go.

Who this guide is for

Aspiring exporters, farmers who want to sell beyond the local market, processors and packagers, freight and finance professionals, graduates looking for a business of their own, and anyone who has wondered whether the goods around them could earn foreign currency. If you can read this page, you can begin.

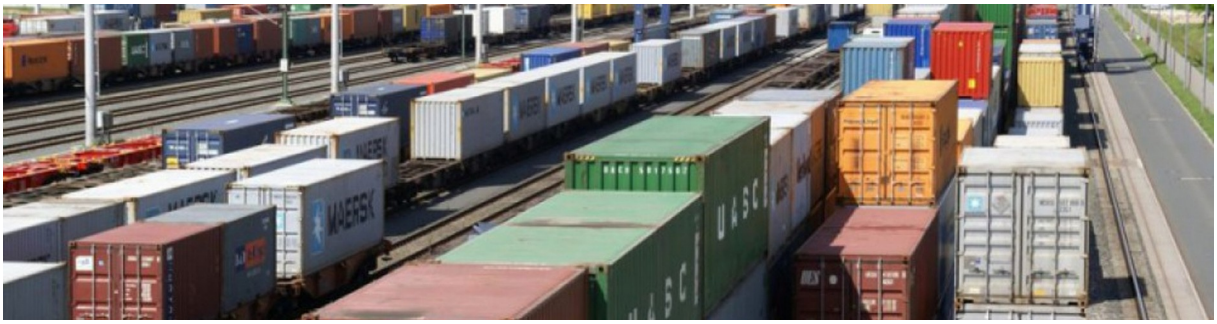
A word of honesty

Export is a real business with real risks. Prices move, rules change, and not every shipment goes smoothly. The figures in this book have been included for illustrative purposes, and are there to show scale, not to promise results. Fees, schemes, regulations and websites change over time, so confirm the current details with the official source before you spend money or ship goods. Start small, verify every buyer, and build step by step.

Agro export has opened doors for thousands of people. With the right knowledge, the right paperwork and the right partners, it can open one for you. Turn the page, and let us begin.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to Food and Agro Products Export Business



Containers stacked for export at a freight terminal. Agro exports travel the world in boxes like these.

Aim of this Chapter

This chapter introduces you to the food and agro products export business and shows how viable it is for a prospective exporter. By the end you will understand what the business is, why it earns so well, what is exported and by whom, and whether you qualify to take part.

What you will learn

- What agro export business is, and the basic facts every new exporter should know.
- How profitable it can be, and why the exchange rate works in the exporter's favour.
- Why foreign industries and households keep demanding Nigerian agro products.
- The seven categories of agro export products and the fifteen most exported commodities.
- Which locally packaged foodstuffs are already sold abroad, and which products are restricted.
- Who is allowed to export, and the first three actions you should take.

> **Did you know?**
>
> Tonnes of food and agro products leave Nigeria every day, shipped by individuals and by businesses of every size. **Crude oil and agro products are the two major export earners** of the country, and the door to the second one is open to you.

1.1 Overview of the Agro Export Business

What is agro export business?

> **Definition**
>
> Agro export business is a **business venture mainly focused on the movement of foodstuffs and agro products from one country to another, for the purpose of industrial and domestic consumption.**

Put simply, an agro exporter buys or grows food and farm-based raw materials in one country and sells them to buyers in another. The buyer may be a factory that needs raw materials, a wholesaler, or a shop that serves customers far from home. The exporter's job is to connect the two, and to get the product there in good condition, on time and with the right paperwork.



Figure 1.1 The agro export chain: from farm to foreign-currency payment. Each stage is covered in later chapters.

Basic facts every beginner should know

- **It is one of the oldest forms of trade.** Moving food and farm produce between peoples is as old as commerce itself, and anyone can take part.
- **It is a business of the past, the present and the future.** People will always need to eat, and industries will always need raw materials.
- **It is open to individuals and businesses of every size.** Tonnes of agro products leave Nigeria every year, exported by people and companies large and small.
- **It earns foreign exchange and supports the economy.** Agro exports bring foreign currency into the country and contribute to national economic growth.
- **Crude oil and agro products are the two major exports from Nigeria.**
- **The earnings are significant.** Some official sources put Nigeria's annual earnings from agro exports at roughly US$1.5 to 2 billion.

> **A note on the figures in this book**
>
> Export statistics differ between sources and change from year to year. Earnings quoted in this chapter come from the Agrosourcingdirect training program, which cites the National Bureau of Statistics for a figure of over **₦128 billion** a year. Treat them as a guide to scale and check the latest data from the National Bureau of Statistics or the Nigerian Export Promotion Council before using any number in a business plan.

1.2 How Profitable Is Agro Export Business?

Now let us talk about the money. Agro export is widely described as a money-spinner, and the main reason is the exchange rate. When you sell abroad you are paid in a foreign currency such as the US dollar, and each dollar converts into many naira. A product that fetches one price in a local market can therefore earn considerably more when it is sold to an overseas buyer.

Exporters also tend to work at a wide margin. Earning in foreign currency is a real boost, because the revenue is protected from the loss of naira value in a way that local sales are not.

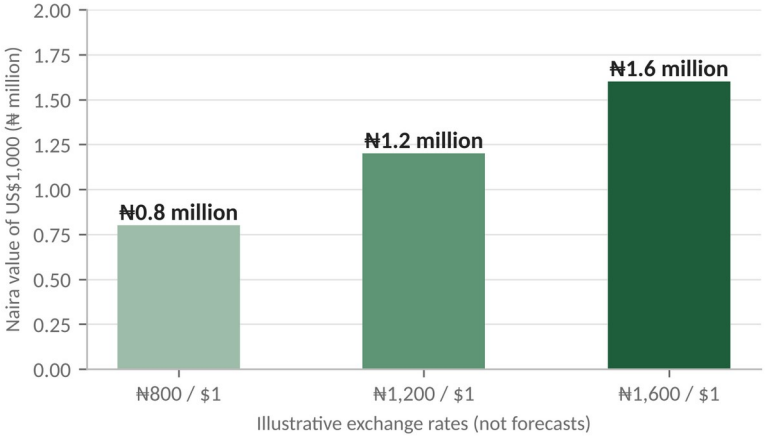


Figure 1.2 The same US$1,000 sale converts into more naira as the dollar strengthens. The exchange rates are illustrative arithmetic, not forecasts.

> **Key point**
>
> **Revenue in naira = price in US dollars × exchange rate.** Your costs (produce, labour, packaging) are largely paid in naira, so a stronger dollar widens the gap between what you spend and what you earn. The reverse also holds, so a careful exporter watches the exchange rate and prices accordingly.

1.3 Why Is There Demand for Nigerian Agro Products Abroad?

Agro products leave the country for two broad purposes: **industrial use as raw materials** and **home consumption as foodstuffs and ingredients.** Understanding both tells you who your buyers are likely to be.

Table 1.1 The two sources of overseas demand

	Industrial use	Home consumption
Who buys	Factories and processors that depend on agro products	Households and food shops, especially Nigerians and other Africans living abroad
What they need	A continuous supply of raw materials to keep plants running	Familiar foodstuffs, ingredients, oils and spices from home
Why demand is high	All agro products are raw materials for manufacturing	Growing diaspora communities and a growing number of Afro food shops
Examples	Cassava for processing plants, oils, grains, cocoa	Garri, palm oil, dried fish, pepper, spices, flours

Industrial use as raw materials

Industries that depend on agro products across the world need continuous supplies to keep their operations and business activities going. In fact, every agro product is a raw material for some form of manufacturing, which is why demand stays high. A cassava processing plant, for example, needs a steady flow of tubers to run.



Figure 1.3 A cassava processing plant in Vietnam. Plants like this need continuous raw material supplies.

Home consumption as foodstuffs and ingredients

There is a growing demand for Nigerian food and ingredients among Nigerians and other Africans living abroad. Nigerian and Afro food shops can be found across Europe, America, Canada, Australia, China, India and even the Arab countries, and each of them must be stocked from somewhere.

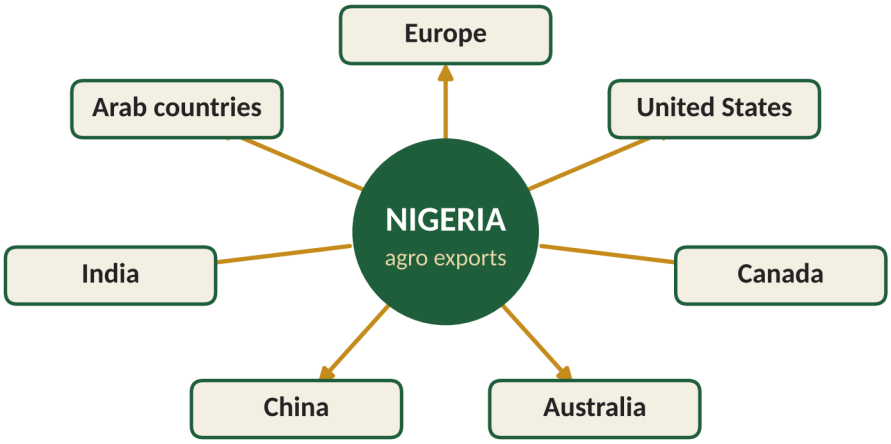


Figure 1.4 Some of the markets where Nigerian foodstuffs are sold. A schematic, not a map, and not to scale.

1.4 The Seven Categories of Agro Export Products

Agro products that leave Nigeria fall into seven categories. Learning them gives you a mental map of the whole business, and a way to organize your own product search.

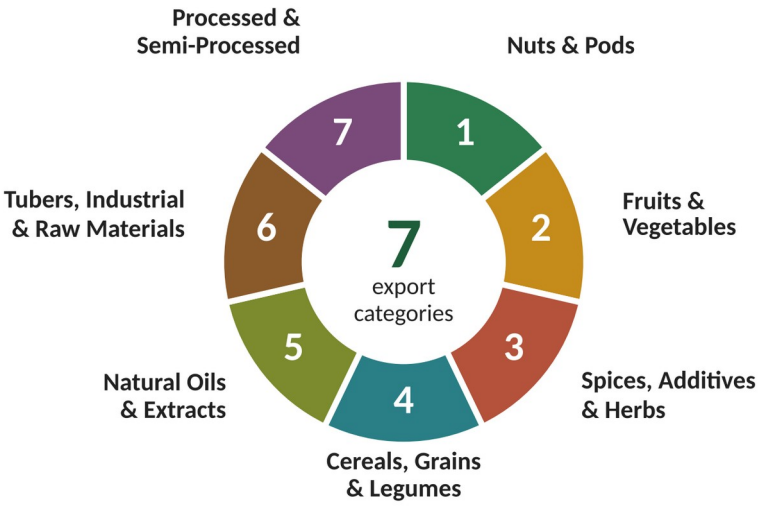


Figure 1.5 The seven categories of agro export products.

Table 1.2 The seven categories, with examples

#	Category	Examples
1	**Nuts & Pods**	Cashew nut, groundnut, kola nut, walnut, bitter kola, tiger nut, Bambara nut, desert dates, coconut, cocoa, coffee
2	**Fruits & Vegetables**	Pawpaw, orange, pineapple, mango, cucumber, avocado pear, guava, carrot, leafy vegetables
3	**Spices, Additives & Herbs**	Ginger, chili pepper, garlic, moringa, mushroom, soup thickeners, scent leaf, local herbs
4	**Cereals, Grains & Legumes**	Soya beans, sesame seed, sorghum, cowpea (beans), millet, locust beans, melon seed (egusi)
5	**Natural Oils & Extracts**	Palm oil, coconut oil, groundnut oil, palm kernel oil, castor seed oil, eucalyptus oil, neem seed oil, shea butter, honey
6	**Tubers, Industrial & Raw Materials**	Cassava, potatoes, rubber, cotton, cocoa, coffee, hides and skins, sugar cane, palm seeds, charcoal
7	**Processed & Semi-Processed Products**	Soya bean powder, starch, fruit juice concentrate, cocoa butter, yam, cassava, plantain and bean flours, garri, dried fish, cashew nut

Some products, such as cocoa and coffee, appear in more than one category because they are traded both as raw produce and as industrial raw material.

1.5 The Top 15 Agro Products Exported from Nigeria

Some commodities earn far more than others. The fifteen below are the products most commonly exported, ranked based on their reported annual earning. The last three are high-potential products that are not yet exported at scale, which makes them interesting for a new exporter looking for room to grow.

Table 1.3 The top 15 agro export products and their reported annual earnings

Rank	Product	Reported earning per year
1	Fresh ginger	US$40 to 60 million
2	Dried split ginger	US$40 to 50 million
3	Raw cashew nut	US$252 million
4	Sesame seed	US$450 to 500 million
5	Dried hibiscus flower (zobo)	US$35 million
6	Soya beans	US$201 million
7	Cocoa beans	Roughly US$670 million
8	Palm produce	Potential of US$20 billion
9	Cassava	US$1.14 million
10	Melon seed	US$192,000
11	Peanut butter	US$1.9 million
12	Gum arabic	US$43 million
13	Garlic	High-potential export product
14	Bitter kola	High-potential export product
15	Moringa seed	Very high-potential export product

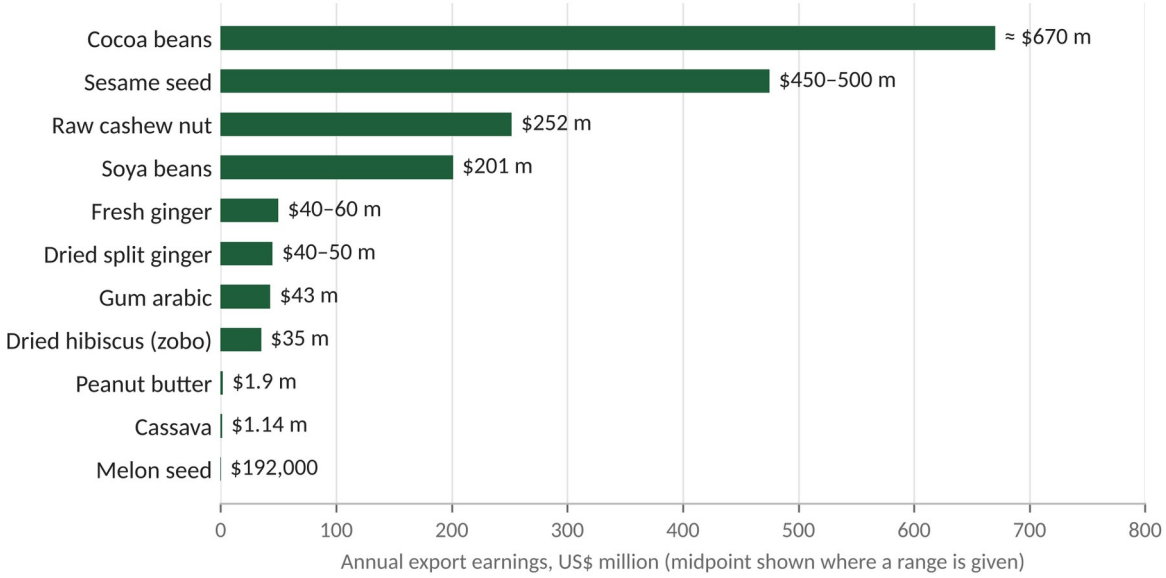


Figure 1.6 Reported annual earnings of the products in Table 1.3 that have a stated dollar figure. Palm produce (a potential rather than a reported figure) and the three high-potential products are left out.



Figure 1.7 Twelve of the top 15 products. Bitter kola, cocoa beans and melon seed are not pictured.

1.6 Locally Packaged Foodstuffs Exported from Nigeria

Raw commodities are not the only products that travel. A wide range of locally packaged foodstuffs is already shipped abroad, mainly to the shops and households described in Section 1.3. Processed and packaged goods tend to be easier to sell directly to consumers, and they show what a small business can achieve with good packaging and labelling.



Figure 1.8 Locally packaged foodstuffs exported out of Nigeria, and the container they travel in.

1.7 Products on the Nigerian and International Ban Lists

Not every agro product may be exported. Some are restricted by Nigeria, and some face restrictions in the countries that import them. Two examples are listed below:



Figure 1.9 Maize (corn) is on the Nigerian agro export ban list.

- **Maize (corn)** is on the Nigerian agro products export ban list.
- **Cassava** was previously banned, but the ban has been lifted and it can now be exported.

> **Always check before you buy**
>
> Export bans and import rules change from time to time. Before committing money to any product, confirm its **current** status with the Nigerian Export Promotion Council and the Nigeria Customs Service, and check the import requirements of the country you plan to sell to.

1.8 Who Can Export Foodstuffs and Agro Products?

The short answer is: everybody. Agro export is not reserved for large companies. The groups below can all take part.

Table 1.4 Who can export agro products

Group	Who they are
Individuals and interested persons	Farmers, civil servants, students, graduates, and any adult citizen of Nigeria
Businesses of different sizes	Micro, small and medium enterprises, as well as large businesses and multinationals
Co-operative societies and groups	Farmer co-operatives and other registered groups that pool produce
Government at different levels	Local, state and federal governments
Non-governmental organizations	NGOs and development organizations

> **In summary, everybody can export, and you definitely can.**
>
> Agro export offers a real opportunity to earn foreign currency, whatever your starting point. The chapters that follow show you how to begin.

Chapter Summary

- Agro export is the movement of foodstuffs and agro products from one country to another for industrial and domestic use.
- It is one of the oldest trades, open to individuals and businesses of every size, and a major source of foreign exchange.
- Crude oil and agro products are Nigeria's two major exports.
- Because you earn in foreign currency, margins are typically higher than in the local market.
- Demand comes from industries that need raw materials and from households and shops abroad that want Nigerian food.
- Products fall into seven categories, and some commodities, such as cocoa, sesame and cashew, earn far more than others.
- Some products are banned from export and rules change, so always verify before you plan to export a product.
- Everybody can export.

Actionable Points and To-Do List

1. **Check whether you qualify.** Read Section 1.8 and identify which group you belong to.
2. **Identify ten agro products** in or near your locality that could be exported, using the worksheet below.
3. **Note the seven major categories** of agro export products and which one each of your ten products falls into.

Table 1.5 Worksheet: ten export products from my locality

#	Product	Category (1 to 7)	Where I can source it
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			

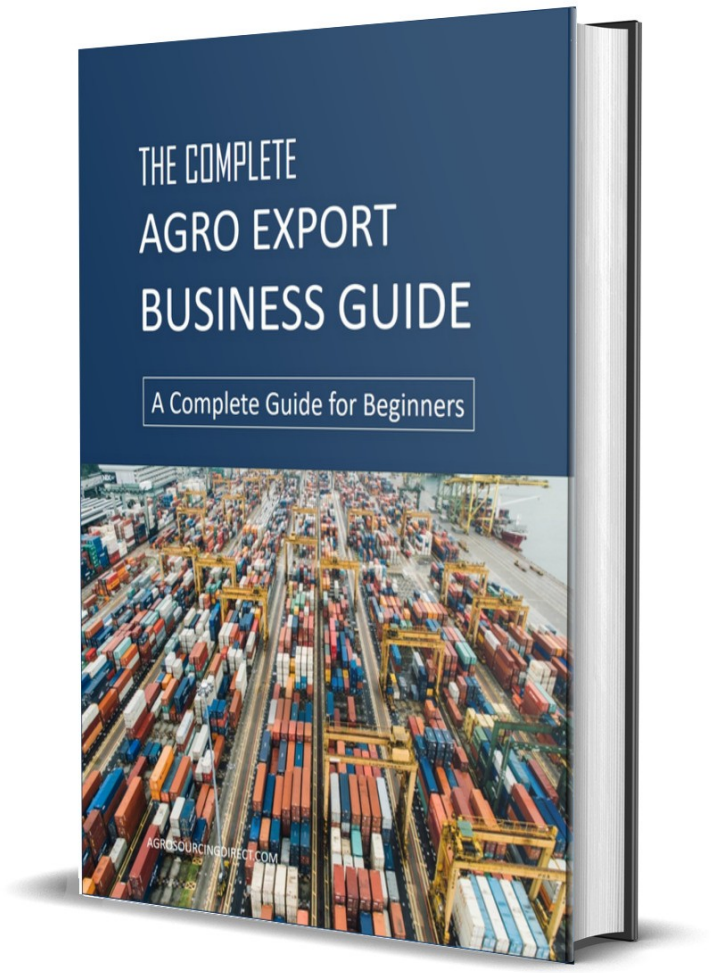
Review questions

1. In your own words, define agro export business.
2. Why does selling in foreign currency raise the exporter's earnings?
3. Name the two broad reasons why other countries buy Nigerian agro products.
4. List the seven categories of agro export products.
5. Which product is on the export ban list, and which product was removed from it?

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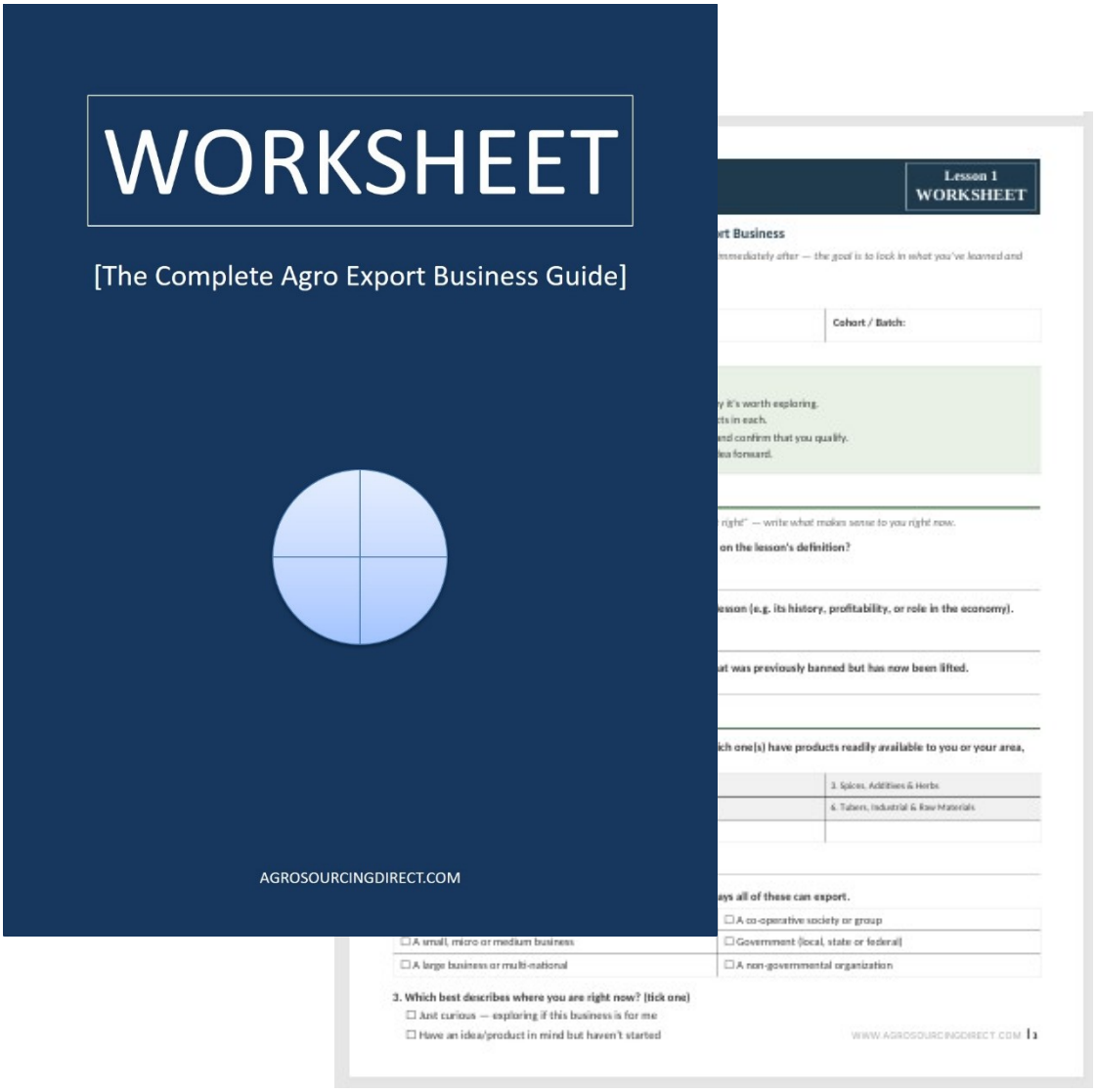
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