



Commercializing Smallholder Farming

Piggery farming - why are farmers silent !

In our first issue this year, we write about piggery production and the major challenges faced by subsistence farmers. We specifically focus on production and disease management, with a special emphasis on African swine fever which has affected most smallholder farmers in the past year.

Pig production as an enterprise, provides subsistence farmers with an opportunity to improve household income.

Most smallholder farmers who practice piggery farming keep 1 to 5 pigs tethered around the homestead. The main source of feed is

kitchen leftovers, remains of food and crop residues. There are a few small to medium scale commercial farmers with 10-20 pigs. Some farmers let their pigs free to move around in search for feed. This however, attracts complaints from neighbors and most often leads to penalties from the local village councils.

At the subsistence lower conversion level, productivity is poor, its mainly exhibited by; low reproductive performance, slow growth rates, high worm burden, and inbreeding.

Marketing of pigs is still not well organized. There are several slaughter slabs, some slaughter houses; and one so far known commercial abattoir located at Nalukolongo in Kampala.

All these sites offer their own prices to the farmer. In addition, economic losses due to death, often caused by the African swine fever and other diseases are high.



A sow with its piglets.

Focusing on pig production as a business

Subsistence farmers need to engage in pig production as a business with the aim of providing meat {pork} and other pig products to the consumer. The purpose therefore should be: **earning an income** from the sale of pigs / piglets, meat, compost and others.

To run a successful

piggery unit as a business, the subsistence farmer has to **increase the number of healthy piglets** weaned per sow per year and **minimize feed costs** while ensuring consistent adequate performance of the entire herd.

Good record keeping is inevitable. This

helps the farmer to know the financial position of the enterprise or how much investment is going into the business.

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Special points of interest:

- *Piggery farming is a business.*
- *Choose a piggery enterprise that interests you.*
- *Setbacks in a business are inevitable.*
- *Always research and innovate solutions.*
- *You will not find everything in one manual.*

Types of piggery enterprises

There are four common pig production enterprises a small scale farmer may choose from. These are:

1. **Farrow-to-finish:** The farmer keeps a Sow herd and produces his own growers for a finishing operation which he also owns.

2. **Farrow only:** The farmer keeps a Sow herd which produces weaners which are sold to other farmers.

3. **Finishing operation:** A farmer buys piglets either as weaners or growers and fattens them for the pork market.

4. **Breeding:** The production of the breeding stock is a very spe-



Pigs being raised for sell to start a piggery enterprise

cialized enterprise that is often reserved only for the experienced pig breeders. It requires heavy capital investment.

The choice of any of the above enterprises depends on the farmer's interest / motivation, the resources available and the mar-

ket.

The major issues to consider when choosing to start a piggery project are:

- ⇒ Capital.
- ⇒ Knowledge and skills.
- ⇒ Breeding stock.
- ⇒ Availability of Market.
- ⇒ Source of clean water.
- ⇒ Type of housing.
- ⇒ Availability of feeds.
- ⇒ Technology that will be used.

Adapted from: Africa Innovations Institute, Piggery Production Manual

Keeping pigs healthy and free from disease.

Diseases and parasites are a major cause of death and eventual loss to a pig farmer. An outbreak like the one we recently experienced with African swine fever can have very disastrous consequences. Therefore, a farmer should always regard disease as a potential economic threat.

To minimize this threat, the farmer should keenly monitor the pigs for any signs of disease, maintain close contact with the local veterinary personnel for advice and emergency cases,

and report suspected disease conditions early for quick diagnosis and treatment.

A healthy pig and a diseased pig will always show signs of good or ill health. To know whether a pig is sick, a farmer should always look out for the following signs:

Loss of appetite, difficult & abnormal breathing, dullness, defecation of excessively hard or watery feces, feces are

blood stained or contaminated with worms, high temperature & abnormal heart beat, rough hair coat or its loss, Coughing, lameness, diarrhea, nasal discharge, abortion & skin discoloration, rubbing against hard objects (signs of irritation or itching).

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Controlling diseases in pigs

A clean and disinfected environment provides the best prevention for internal and external parasites which can become a serious problem to the farmer. Confinement also prevents pigs from contaminated fields and dirty lots.

Some drugs e.g. wormicides, when properly used, aid in the elimination of parasites.

Antibiotics also protect pigs against disease proliferation and reduce disease outbreaks. They can also promote growth in pigs when given the recommended dose at each level. For diseases that can be prevented by vaccination, a Veterinarian should be con-



Piglets confined to prevent contact with other animals

tacted to provide such services routinely.

Running a farm exposes a farmer to set-backs that require creative thinking. Indeed, one has to come up with new ways to solve problems every time to make the farm run smoothly and more productive.



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The People & Views Commodity Supplies is found in Uganda. It was registered by the registrar of companies under the number 140974. The purpose of starting it was to enable people within their respective institutions and or communities realize that their views or ideas are a resource that can be turned into a commodity of trade. It therefore, supports them to overcome gaps in knowledge and skills to enable them live dignified, secure, productive and healthy lives through the promotion of their initiatives.

We are now located at Bulamu, on Mityana road in Mpigi district. In our last issue, we ran a campaign for a new website. We thank the anonymous well-wisher who contributed UGX 500,000= towards this cause. We still have a deficit of UGX 1,300,000= to set up a better website that will inform our networks and well-wishers about our activities.

Due to the increased work load this year, which is a result of the two Covid-19 lockdowns, we shall be publishing our bulletin quarterly. We are glad to report that our internet connectivity has also improved in the area. We lobbied one of the service providers, who eventually addressed our challenge. We certainly hope for the best this year.

African swine fever

There are three major viral diseases that often affect pigs, namely: African Swine Fever, Gastroenteritis, Foot and Mouth disease.

Of the three, the most fatal is the African swine fever. It is also the most contagious and deadly disease in Uganda today.

Its clinical signs are: Fever, dullness, loss of appetite, pigs huddle together, unco-ordination, coughing, discoloration of the skin to bluish, discharge of fluid in the eye and nose, vomiting and diarrhea.

It can cause up to 100% mortality within a very short time. The disease is spread by bush pigs and warthogs which are carriers of the virus, although they are themselves immune to the disease.

Infection occurs by contact with other sick pigs or through contaminated food or water. There is no effective vaccine as of now. A farmer can only attempt to control the spread of the virus.

When the outbreak has been con-



A transforming medium scale farmer disinfecting the pigsty

firmed in the herd, it is highly recommended to:

- * restrict movement of pigs or meat from the affected areas.
- * Slaughter all pigs on the affected farm followed by disinfection. The killed animals should properly be disposed off.

Successful farmers, and in particular smallholder farmers are expected to constantly research. They should always look for new information to improve their farming methods and practices. By doing this, it helps them to increase productivity on their farm and avoid such diseases. Continuous research or innovations ensure that you are always ahead with modern farming.