Okra production (otherwise known as: okro, vendakkai, bendakkai, lady's fingers, bhindi) is fast gaining popularity as an economically viable cash crop in many global markets...

Especially in the context of small acreage farming.

Both Okra's historical origin, as well as its culinary adoption, is typically rooted in Africa and South Asia.

Although other markets, like North America are now becoming leading global producers of this relative of the Mallow family plants.

Central American nations, in particular, like Mexico, contributing significantly to year round exports also.

Some Commercial Okra Production Facts

The following are some important metrics and Okra production facts which will help you calculate your Okra farm business budget:

Okra Production Yield Per Hectare/Acre

Okra tends yield approximately 1.6 tons of harvesting crop per hectare...

This works out to be about 4 tons per acre.
Okra Production Yield Or Pods Per Plant

Okra plants yield between **1-4 pods per plant**.

The pods are what you harvest...the fruit/vegetable of harvest.

**Okra Spacing & Planting**

According to a study taking place in **Obubra, Cross River State (Nigeria)**, "... Okra cultivated [with] plant population of 55,555, okra plants/hectare [gave] optimum growth and yield...

To achieve this population density of Okra plants within a single hectare of land, they estimated the following spacing requirements:

- 30 cm between plants within a row (intra)
- 60 cm between rows within the field (inter)

Okra seeds are to be planted at the rate of about 4-5 seeds per foot.

**Weight Of Okra Seeds Per Hectare/Acre**

Approximately 8,000 Okra seeds weigh a pound (lbs.)

You would need about 12-15 lbs (pounds) of Okra seeds to plant one acre, or...

4-5 lbs. (pounds) of Okra seeds to plant a hectare.

**Optimal Soil, Fertilisation & Seedbed Preparation For Okra Production**

Okra can get easily drowned from the root up.

In such occurrences, the crop yield is completely devastated.

So it is preferable to grow it on well-drained sandy loam soils.

A **slightly acid pH also is known to increase yield**, even in preference to adding more fertiliser.

It is recommended the addition of lime to high pH soil in anticipation for sowing Okra seeds.

The recommended fertiliser to use for Okra production is **10-20-10** which should be administered
before planting.

About 300 pounds per acre should be administered, or...

120 pounds of fertiliser per hectare.

**Okra Pollination**

Usually Okra is self-pollinating or pollinated by insects.

**Okra Flowering**

The flowering process is photo-sensitive in many varieties of Okra.

Day length in excess of 11 hours has been known to hinder flowering.

The *Clemson Spineless* variety of Okra plant is *not* photo sensitive when flowering and thus is adopted in climates with longer day periods.

**Okra Harvest Regularity**

Pick the okra every 1 to 2 days or yields will decrease:

"...get pods when they are tender and taste best. Don’t let mature pods stay on the plant; they will become stringy and bitter, and—like summer squash—the plant will stop producing." - Harvest To Table

**Irrigation & Okra Production**

It is recommended that you supply 1.5 inches of water to Okra plants every 10 days for optimal yield.

**Labour Hours Per Okra Harvest**

Approximately 17 hrs of manual labour was recorded in a study featuring okra producers in south Arkansas:

- 15 hrs picking
- 2 hrs grading
...this related to approximately, 330 pounds harvest.

**Storage During Okra Production**

During Okra production, harvested crop should be stored between 45 to 50°F & relative humidity 90 to 95 percent for best results and to avoid deterioration in marketable quality.

Perforated bags and 5 to 10 percent carbon dioxide can increase shelf-life 1 week.

**Calculating A Farming Budget For Okra Production: Costs, Sales Revenue & Profits**

The following are the results of a small scale commercial Okra production study called 'Economic Viability Of Okra (Abelmoschus esculentus) Production In Ika South And North East Local Government Areas Of Delta State, Nigeria':

![Table 2: Costs and return analysis for okra production per hectare](image-url)
The example above, although from Nigeria - the principal of proportional allocation of budget for a similar size of operation should apply anywhere, worldwide.

N.B. The mean farm size within the study was 2.03 hectares.

Although, there were a number of start-up and operational challenges which threatened yield and profitability, namely:

- capital start-up funding
- poor access to roads
- weeds, diseases and pests

...if these can be overcome, the comparative benefit cost ratio recorded was 2.99 - offering a highly favourable profit profile.

Here are some of the Okra production financial budget highlights:

- Annual sales revenue: N.235,642.16
- Variable costs of sales: N.69,105.41
- Gross margin: N.166,536.75 (166,536.75 /235,642.16 = 30%)
- Net margin: N.156,884.81 (23%)

Conclusion...

There we have it,

Okra production at a small commercial scale (with 2 hectares) is profitable once started...

Yielding over 25% net profit.

There is little capital cost is required to start other than of course:

- land
- seeds
- fertiliser
- pesticide
- labour
- transport
- irrigation & other equipment
The plant needs **little soil preparation** to get going and turns a **harvest some 60 days after sowing**.

They are relatively labour intensive to pick and pack, but profits are still healthy regardless.

Overall, a choice crop for the small scale vegetable farmer!

_Do you want to start Okra farming and need a little advice to get going?_

_Ask us_ here.

_Are you already Okra farming and have some pointers to add?_

Feel free to comment below.
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