

Commercial Cultivation of Edible Mushrooms in Nigeria

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Situated in the western part of Africa south of the Sahara, Nigeria has a climate that favors the natural growth of mushrooms. In the southern part of Nigeria, the rainfall is high, and this region is predominantly covered by the rainforest ecosystem, making it very favorable for mushrooms to thrive.

In many parts of Nigeria, almost every ethnic group has a traditional knowledge of mushrooms and harvesting them in the wild. However, due to past unpalatable experiences with poisonous mushrooms, people are skeptical about their safety. As a result, the consumption of wild mushrooms is now becoming unpopular except for a few species of *Pleurotus* and *Auricularia* that are so common that their identity cannot be mistaken.

Taking a census of opinions on the love/desire for mushrooms would reveal that Nigerians, indeed, yearn for the commercial production of edible mushrooms

so that they can eat them without fear of being poisoned. Several researchers have been working on the growth requirements of some edible species as well as the development of new desired strains. The major hindrance in this pursuit is lack of funds. Facilities for biotechnological studies are lacking, and the government does not seem interested in the cultivation of mushrooms as a good source of nutrients and as curative/preventive agents of many diseases for the ever-increasing population.

One way out of this problem is that researchers should seek collaboration from other countries in which the technology is advanced and well funded so as to speed up research on the cultivation in Nigeria. Government support is also solicited. The nutritive and medicinal values of mushrooms far outweigh any sacrifice for bringing their commercial production to fruition.