

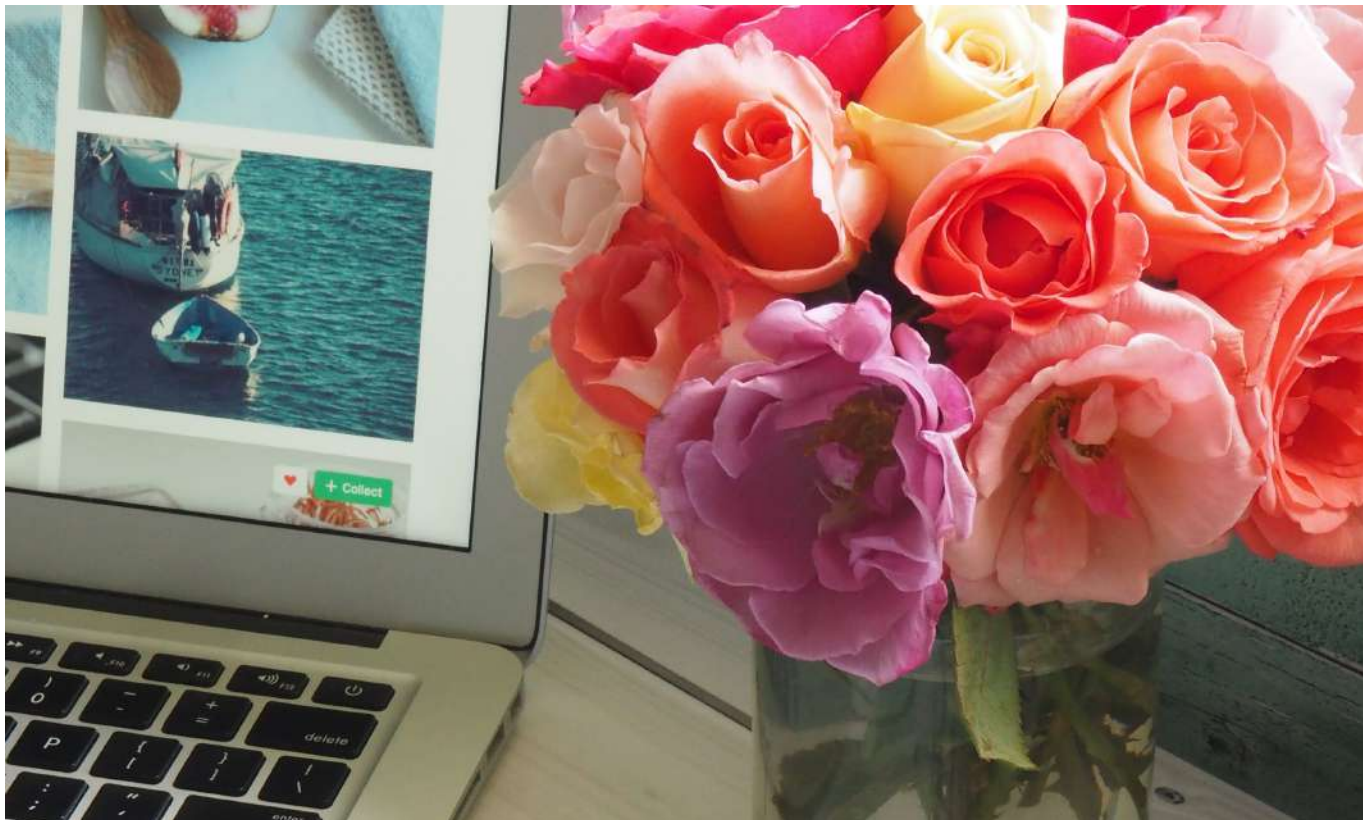
# 5 INCOME GENERATING CROPS TO FARM



**START YOUR FARMING JOURNEY**

When assessing the profitability of a project one of the main factors you need to consider is demand. A venture cannot be profitable without sufficient demand, which is required to make it sustainable. In Zimbabwe there is a vast array of products grown, with each having its own merits and challenges. In this guide we will look at 5 income generating crops you can start growing today.

## 1. Flowers



Often overlooked, although a high-value specialty crop with good returns. Growing flowers as a business has many opportunities from bulbs, cut flowers & dried flowers. One may think that flowers have no demand in Zimbabwe, there are many uses for them, which include corporate events, weddings, funerals, gifting, office decor and so on. Roses are the main flower type grown in Zimbabwe and they do well in controlled environment such as a greenhouse. Exporting them presents an exciting opportunity to countries where the climate is not ideal for flower growing. Exports can be either fresh or dried flowers. Dried flowers are used in producing dyes, scenting cleaning products, scented candles, cosmetics, decor and even in cooking. The vast opportunities definitely make them something worth looking into.

## 2. Tomatoes



What makes this particular crop appealing is the constant demand in the market. A tomato is a crucial ingredient in almost every meal, whether it's in the home or when making your favourite pizza. Domestically there is large market for tomatoes, although exporting may be another avenue to increase your profits. Producing organic tomatoes is the healthiest way to grow them, its good for the soil, the plants and our bodies. In addition, researchers have found growing them organically makes good economic sense, as using organic fertilizers can actually cost less in the long run. Tomatoes can be grown throughout the year even in winter if they are in a greenhouse or have some form of frost protection. Tomato prices are at their peak during winter due to decreased supply, so plan accordingly to maximise your returns.

### 3. Bell Peppers



In addition to flavouring meals, they are also a very powerful antioxidant. Antioxidants are compounds that fight cellular damage caused by unstable molecules in our body. Green and red peppers are the most popular types in Zimbabwe with red peppers being the sweeter of the two. Over the years the popularity of bell peppers has grown and more people view them as a necessity in the kitchen. In winter prices increase significantly as a result of low supply and knowledgeable farmers plan accordingly. At times imports are used to fill the gap in the market. Winter production offers a considerable price advantage for produce if the yield and quality of the fruit are maintained. The crop can be field grown but in winter it may present some challenges.

## 4. Onions




Much like its counterpart the tomato, onions present a perfect opportunity for profits due to their increasing demand. It's a close relative of garlic and is widely sought after throughout Zimbabwe and around the world as a basic food ingredient. It's a good crop and farmers should start small to get a feel of the farming process and the market before scaling up. Bulb onions are the most popular in Zimbabwe and usually take 21 -28 days to reach maturity. Short rains are great for bulb onions. They may also serve as an export crop since regional demand for onions is high. Whether you decide to service the local market or the region, if done properly you could have a good return on investment.

## 5. Mushrooms



The popularity of mushrooms is growing fast, as more people discover the great taste and health benefits. Button and Oyster mushrooms being the most prominent in Zimbabwe. Originally used in restaurants, mushrooms have found their way into households. Favoured by many new farmers due to ease, growing mushrooms can be undertaken part-time with a full time job when starting out. Mushrooms are a great high-value crop and can be grown quickly and relatively easily in a small space/room. Oyster mushrooms are the easiest to grow and should be a starting point before moving onto the more challenging ones.



As with all things, how you start determines how you finish. Safeguard your investment by getting good varieties from reputable suppliers to ensure a high quality product. An important factor to remember is that export crops need to meet specific quality requirements to fetch favourable prices and this means adopting the best farming practices. It would be best to receive guidance from industry experts or farmers already servicing this market.

Before you even put the seed in the ground do your research on what you need, if everything is readily available and do some conservative costing. Once you have a clear picture of everything, you are ready to go!