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# Pack 105, Item 3

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**Raising quail: An easy and profitable business for farmers in Cameroon**

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### Notes to broadcaster

Quail farming is quite recent in Cameroon compared to raising other poultry such as chickens. People are increasingly interested in raising quail mainly because they can get eggs, which are popular with consumers. Quail farming has many benefits. In addition to the eggs, farmers can also make a good income selling quail chicks and male birds to other quail farmers. They can also sell quail meat to consumers, and sell quail droppings to other farmers for fertilizer. To date, the Ministry of Animal Husbandry has not determined the exact number of quail farmers in Cameroon. But quail farmers are found in almost every part of the country.

You could use this script as inspiration to research and write a script on raising quails or a similar topic in your area. Or you might choose to produce this script on your station, using voice actors to represent the speakers. If so, please make sure to tell your audience at the beginning of the program that the voices are those of actors, not the original people involved in the interviews.

If you choose to use this script as inspiration for creating your own program, you could talk to farmers who raise quail or other, non-traditional kinds of poultry in your area, and the experts who advise them. You might ask them:

Is there a market for raising quail (or other types of birds) in this area?

How are the practices for raising quail (or other birds) different than those for raising chickens?

What information do I need before I start raising quail (or other birds)?

Estimated running time for the script: 20 minutes, with intro and outro music

SIGN TUNE GRADUALLY FADES UNDER THE VOICE OF THE HOST

**HOST:** Hello. Welcome to (program title) on (name of the station). Today, we will talk about raising quail. Quail are small birds about the size of a chick, which look a little bit like partridges. They were not very popular ten years ago, but raising quail has grown in popularity among Cameroonian farmers, who consider it a profitable business.

To get more information on raising quail, I visited Mrs. Emilienne Tchekam, a 63-year-old woman who lives in Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon. Mrs. Tchekam is one of the veterans of raising quail in this Central African country. She will explain how to raise quail.

**SFX:** DOOR OPENS, SOUNDS OF STEPS MOVING FORWARD

**HOST:** Good morning, Mrs. Emilienne Tchekam.

**Emilienne Tchekam:** Good morning. Welcome to my home.

**HOST:** You raise quail. It’s not every day we meet quail farmers.

**E. Tchekam:** (LAUGHS) Yes, indeed. Fewer people raise quail than other birds such as chickens.

**HOST:** How long have you raised quail?

**E. Tchekam:** I got into this venture in 2005. I was among the first people to test this kind of poultry farming in Cameroon.

**HOST:** Before 2005, did you know about quail? How did you get into raising the birds?

**E. Tchekam:** No. In 2005, I didn’t know about quail, but I was already raising chickens for meat. My business was declining because I had been sick for a while. I had sinusitis and couldn’t get rid of it, despite all the drugs I took.

One day, my vet visited me and asked why my chicken business was slowing down. I told him I had been sick for many months and that my condition prevented me from continuing to raise chickens. The vet told me about what he called the medicinal properties of quail eggs and suggested that I follow a 30-day treatment of drinking the eggs. That is how I first heard about quail.

**HOST:** So you agreed to follow the treatment?

**E. Tchekam:** Yes. I started drinking quail eggs. Before the end of the first month, I noticed a great improvement in my health, and I ended up being completely healed. That is when I told my vet I would like to raise quail.

**HOST:** How did you start? Did you get any training?

**E. Tchekam:** No, I learned on the job—and from my mistakes. I asked for advice from a farmer, who gave me breeders. My vet also gave me advice. I started with three females and one male for breeding.

**HOST:** Can I have a look at your farm?

**E. Tchekam:** Of course; let’s go.

**SFX:** SOUNDS OF STEPS, A METAL GATE OPENS

**HOST:** We are on Mrs. Emilienne Tchekam’s farm. It is a big brick building with piles of baskets in the corner of the room. The baskets are made of wooden slats and are closed with iron rods. We can see quail in the baskets. In another corner of the room, there are bowls and incubators and other equipment. Mrs. Tchekam, is it easy to raise quail?

**E. Tchekam:** Quail are picky animals. They won’t lay eggs if their water is dirty or their basket is dirty. But apart from this, they are easy to raise. They virtually never get sick.

Raising quail is a profitable business. Since they are small birds, the baskets take up little space. The baskets are two metres by 50 centimetres, and 45 centimetres or more high. You can have up to 50 quail in a single basket. I raise about 500 quail.

**HOST:** What does a day’s work look like for a quail farmer?

**E. Tchekam:** I always start my day by cleaning the baskets and the rest of the farm. After that, I change their water and prepare their feed, which I place inside the baskets. Then I collect the eggs and sort them. I place some eggs in the incubator, and arrange others on trays for sale. All of this takes about two hours. Afterwards, I can leave the quail alone and do other things. As I said, quail are easy to raise.

**HOST:** I see small stones at the edges of their water bowl.

**E. Tchekam:** Yes. I noticed that quail chicks used to fall into the water bowls when they wanted to drink. These bowls are meant for chickens and not adapted for the smaller quail chicks. So I had the idea of placing stones on the edges. Then, the quail chicks can lean on the stones when they need to drink, and avoid falling into the water.

**HOST:** There is a piece of equipment which looks like a chest of drawers in a corner of the farm. It is lit with a lamp, and contains several drawers where small white eggs with black spots are arranged. What is it?

**E. Tchekam:** It’s an incubator that we use to hatch quail eggs.

**HOST:** How does it work?

**E. Tchekam:** We put eggs in the incubator. We turn them over every morning and evening for 18 days until they hatch.

Female quail mature at 50 days and start laying. They lay at least one egg a day for three or four months. After three or four months, I slaughter the quail and sell the meat.

When I collect eggs, I put some of them in the incubator and I sell the others. I incubate a larger number of eggs when I plan to renew my flock or when I bring in new laying quail.

**HOST:** Why do you slaughter the quail for meat after three or four months?

**E. Tchekam:** After three or four months, quail stop laying for about one or two weeks before starting again. But when they start laying again, they lay fewer eggs. Personally, I prefer selling quail to people who eat their meat. Then, to replace them, I look for other, younger females. Some farmers choose other options in their business.

**HOST:** How do you feed quail? What do you give them?

**E. Tchekam:** Quail eat chicken feed, just like chickens. But I add some grated carrot. Sometimes, I also mix the feed with some crushed aloe leaves.

**HOST:** Why do you give them mixed feed?

**E. Tchekam:** I tested various organic feeding methods, and I chose this one because it gives me the best growth.

**HOST:** You spoke about chickens. What is the difference between raising chickens and raising quail?

**E. Tchekam:** Both are poultry. Quail are raised in baskets while chickens can be raised in the open air. Quail get sick less often than chickens.

Also, the lifespan of quail eggs is short. After five days, you must keep the eggs in incubators. If you don’t, the embryo dies. But chicken eggs can last up to eight days. Quail eggs must be eaten within two weeks after they are laid. You can keep quail eggs in the open air for five days, but then only in a fridge. Chicken eggs can be stored for a longer period.

**HOST:** What challenges do you face with quail farming?

**E. Tchekam:** As I said, quail are easy to raise. Based on my experience, it is the easiest bird to raise, especially because it eats everything you give it and it seldom gets sick. When their baskets are clean, quail lay continuously. This means that you must have a good distribution channel, because their eggs can’t be stored as long as chicken eggs. The advantage of continuous laying can become a disadvantage if you don’t have a good distribution channel.

**HOST:** What led you to raise quail?

**E. Tchekam:** First, as I explained, my health condition. After I discovered quail, I recovered my health. All my grandchildren eat quail eggs and are almost never sick.

And this business helped me diversify. You know, it is very important for a farmer to diversify his or her activities. There is a saying that one should not put all one’s eggs in one basket. I also raise chicken for meat and I grow crops. When one of these activities slows down, I can continue to live normally because I earn income from the other activities.

**SFX:** MUSIC BRIDGE. MUSIC GRADUALLY FADES UNDER THE HOST

**HOST:** Dear listeners, now we are going to meet Mrs. Merline Mondjowa. She raises quail and sells quail eggs. Good morning, madam.

**Merline Mondjowa:** Good morning.

**HOST:** People know you as one the major distributors of quail eggs in Yaoundé.

**Merline Mondjowa:** Yes, you are right. I raise quail and sell eggs to various vendors.

**HOST:** How do you distribute the eggs?

**Merline Mondjowa:** I have a distribution channel composed of shops, markets, and supermarkets. I also collect eggs from other farmers when I have a big order.

**HOST:** How much do you charge?

**Merline Mondjowa:** Four years ago, an egg used to sell for 300 CFA francs (US $0.60), and they were hard to find. Now, we buy an egg on the farm for 100 francs (US $0.20), and we resell it at 150 CFA francs (US $0.30). The price is quite high—by comparison, a chicken egg costs only 50 francs (US $0.10). Farmers can sell quail raised for meat for 1,500 francs (US $1.50), and they can buy breeders for 2,000 francs (US $2).

**HOST:** Are raising quail and selling eggs profitable activities that you can recommend to other people?

**Merline Mondjowa:** I sell more quail eggs than chicken eggs. The reason is that people eat chicken eggs simply as food, but they consider quail eggs as medicine.

As a distributor, I see a high demand for quail eggs. As I said, I sometimes need to go from one farm to another to collect eggs directly from farmers, then deliver them to customers. I see that there is a high demand. In a country like Cameroon where people know and appreciate quail eggs, every business related to this bird is profitable.

**HOST:** Why is the demand for quail eggs so high? What do buyers tell you?

**Merline Mondjowa:** Buyers say that consumers tell them about the good properties of quail eggs, the medicinal properties that contribute to good health. Many consumers drink eggs every morning on an empty stomach when they wake up, just like drinking a glass of water in the morning. What I hear is that eating quail eggs is a health practice. People eat the eggs raw, boiled, or fried, and even use them as an ingredient in skin or hair care.

**HOST:** So, have you found your niche in selling quail eggs?

**Merline Mondjowa:** Yes, I have no cause to complain. As far as I know, no-one in the quail value chain complains, neither farmers or sellers. It’s a profitable business. The animal is easy to raise and people eat the eggs a lot, so we sell them quickly. Gourmets also like quail meat.

**HOST:** What do you do with the income you receive from the quail?

**Merline Mondjowa:** (LAUGH). First, I pay for my daily needs: I buy food, medicine, and clothes for myself. My spouse and I share costs. I have no problem covering my expenses. I even succeed in saving a little money. Without going into details, I can say that I don’t have anything to complain about.

**HOST:** Dear listeners, let’s meet another expert now. He is a veterinarian who helps farmers daily, including quail farmers. Bertrand Lewoli has been visiting farms across the country for seven years to give advice to farmers. In the last few months, he resumed his work in an office and now works with the Ministry of Animal Husbandry. Good morning, Bertrand Lewoli.

**Bertrand Lewoli:** Good morning to you and all the listeners.

**host:** You are a veterinarian. Can you tell us the difference between raising chickens and raising quail?

**Bertrand Lewoli:** First, I will mention that there are meat chickens and there are laying hens. But whatever the type of chicken, there is a fundamental difference between raising chickens and raising quail. Raising chickens is a traditional, conventional, and standardized activity. Wherever chickens are raised, farmers follow the same technical process. But raising quail doesn’t conform to a universal technical process. In our jargon, we call it non-conventional farming. Raising quail is non-conventional animal farming just like raising hedgehogs is non-conventional farming.

**host:** What does the term “non-conventional” mean?

**Bertrand Lewoli:** It means that there are not yet common standards applied by all farmers in this sector. When you visit 10 different farms, you will certainly see at least five or six different ways of raising quail. What I learned in the field as a veterinarian is that each farmer tries to find a successful method, based on his or her experience. From one farm to another, there are big differences in the level of animal feed and care.

**HOST:** Can you explain?

**Bertrand Lewoli:** For example, concerning animal care, the stages are not the same for all quail farmers. With chickens, there are four distinct stages from hatching to slaughter, and each requires a certain number of weeks.

But among quail farmers, there is not a defined calendar. Instead, farmers simply respond to events and the growth of the flock.

**HOST:** Quail raising has significantly increased in Cameroon. Quail farmers say that it is a profitable business.

**Bertrand Lewoli:** Quail are more like laying hens than meat chickens. They are strong birds. They live about as long as laying hens, but they are more resistant to disease than chickens. Quail don’t need meticulous care like chickens because their resistance to disease is greater than other types of poultry.

**HOST:** People say that quail eggs have medicinal properties.

**Bertrand Lewoli:** There are many stories about the benefits of quail eggs. In theory, it could be true. I say “in theory” because the properties of the egg depend on the feed that the quail eat. If you feed them with toxic products, I doubt the eggs would be good quality. If you feed the quail with organic feed, obviously, its eggs will be good for health.

**HOST:** Thanks, Mr. Bertrand Lewoli, for speaking with us.

Dear listeners, we are getting to the end of today’s program on raising quail. We learned that quail are easy to raise and that they are more resistant to disease than chickens. Quail eggs, which are very appreciated by consumers, are three times as expensive as chicken eggs. Thus, raising quail is an activity from which you can make a good living.

Goodbye, and stay tuned for the next issue of (title of the program).

**SIGNATURE TUNE: CLOSING CREDITS**

## Acknowledgments

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**Sources of information:**

Emilienne Tchekam, August 30, 2016

Merline Mondjowa, August 31, 2016

Bertrand Lewoli, October 3, 2016

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