

South-South Series:

Empowering and Growing Women-led Business



BUSINESS PROFILE



THE NUT PLACE
NIGERIA
[WEBSITE](#)

ABOUT THE NUT PLACE

- **Company status:** Private limited liability company
- **Year of registration:** 2020.
- **Number of employees:** 9 employees.
- **Business sector :** Agribusiness.

Chigozie Bashua - Founder



Chigozie Bashua is a highly accomplished and visionary entrepreneur and Business Strategist with a remarkable 15 years' experience in diverse emerging markets across the spectrum of Information Technology and 8 years entrepreneurial experience. With a strong expertise in business analysis, service delivery management, business planning and strategy, Chigozie has consistently led impactful projects in these areas. Additionally, her proficiency extends to business continuity and risk assessment, where she has demonstrated exceptional acumen. She is the Founder of The Nut Place, a food innovation company creating gluten-free, nutrient-dense nut-based products that promote healthier lifestyles and sustainability.

She is deeply passionate about addressing global challenges, particularly in the realm of food security. Aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 2, she ardently advocates for the eradication of world hunger by 2030. Chigozie's commitment to sustainable development and entrepreneurship is further underscored by her notable affiliations. She is an esteemed alumna of the Tony Elumelu Foundation, The African Women Entrepreneurship Cooperative (AWEC), an initiative of the Center for Global Enterprise in the United States of America, AWP Network, Impact Hub Lagos and Women Entrepreneurship for Africa, implemented by SAFEEM of The Seedstars Group, Academy for Women Entrepreneurs (AWE), Google Hustle Academy and a 2023 Vital Voices Grow Fellow.



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CONTEXT

Background

The Nut Place was born out of a personal discovery. In 2012, while visiting the UK, Chigozie Bashua encountered gluten-free nut flours that inspired her to explore similar processing in Nigeria. She even visited a nut processor in Tottenham to gain hands-on knowledge. Returning home, she experimented in her mother's kitchen and by July 2016 began producing small batches of nut-based food products. What began as an informal kitchen-based venture grew into a structured business that formally incorporated as The Nut Place Limited in October 2020.

Position in the market

Today, The Nut Place positions itself in the Nigerian food market as a food-tech social enterprise that addresses nutrition gaps by offering gluten-free, lactose-free, and nutrient-dense alternatives. The

business has attracted recognition and support from organizations such as the Tony Elumelu Foundation and the World Bank Growth & Employment Scheme, further solidifying its place as a rising SME in Nigeria's food processing industry.

Relationships with smallholders

The Nut Place's relationships extend beyond consumers to include farmers, for whom it provides processing platforms that reduce post-harvest losses. This connection strengthens the agricultural value chain and ensures that more produce reaches the market in usable form. In line with circular economy principles, the company also collaborates with local artisans by repurposing by-products such as tamarind seeds and coconut shells into craft materials. Additionally, it distributes to retail outlets and supplies manufacturers of baked goods and ready-meal products.

PRODUCTS AND MARKET

Main products

The company's products are based primarily on locally grown edible nuts, which are processed into a variety of gluten- and lactose-free foods. Key items include tigernut flour and tigernut milk, coconut flour, desiccated coconut, coconut flakes, coconut milk, and

bambara nut flour. These are marketed both as ingredients for households and as inputs for food manufacturers. The focus on nut-based products addresses the dietary needs of health-conscious consumers as well as individuals with gluten intolerance or lactose sensitivity.

Main markets

The Nut Place serves primarily Nigerian consumers through retail outlets and direct distribution channels. Its products also reach manufacturers who use them

in baking and prepared meals. The company's long-term vision includes positioning itself as a leading provider of nut-based foods across Africa by 2030.



UNSWEETENED
COCONUT FLAKES



TIGERNUT FLOUR



TIGERNUTS



CASHEW NUTS

SWEETENED
COCONUT FLAKES

TIGERNUT MILK



BAMBARA FLOUR



COCONUT FLOUR

INNOVATIONS: MILESTONES AND EXPANSION PLANS

Chigozie Bashua and The Nut Place have consistently integrated innovation into the company's growth. One of the key achievements lies in its food tech-driven social impact initiatives: the business actively makes use of digital tools to deliver nutritional education to local communities and provide discounted access to its healthy nut-based products to underserved populations.

From its humble beginnings in a home kitchen, the company's product line has also evolved. It now includes a diverse range of products like gluten-free flours, snacks, crisps, and lactose-free beverages, in addition to tigernut and coconut-based goods.

Overcoming operational challenges has also been a key learning curve. One of the first hurdles was machine fabrication. The efforts were bumpy, the first fabrication didn't meet expectations, and the second attempt failed entirely, with neither the machine nor the money being returned. Another early obstacle was regulatory approval: NAFDAC registration took eight months, significantly delaying operations.

International exposure has been a major innovation milestone. Notably, The Nut Place participated in the 68th Summer Fancy Food Show in New York, one of North America's most esteemed food and beverage exhibitions, showcasing a range of products such as sugar-free sweetened and unsweetened coconut flakes, coconut candy made with natural honey, and tigernut flour. The booth drew considerable attention, with visitors expressing strong interest in incorporating these products into retail offerings or recipes.

Through these efforts, the company contributes to sustainability goals (SDGs), supports local sourcing to reduce import reliance, and builds healthier food ecosystems, all while advancing nutrition, women's empowerment, and responsible consumption.

Looking ahead, The Nut Place's vision is to become the leading producer and exporter of nut-based foods across Africa by 2030, emphasizing the importance of expanding production capacity, scaling operations, and enhancing market accessibility, all while staying true to foundational values of nutrition and social impact.

SUCCESS FACTORS AND LESSONS LEARNED

The Nut Place's success stems from a combination of strategic mentorship, resilience, and values-driven leadership. After initial struggles with business management and technical challenges, Chigozie was accepted into the Tony Elumelu Foundation program

in 2016, which she credits with bringing critical business skills, strategic frameworks, and access to a vital entrepreneurial network.

In addition to Tony Elumelu Foundation's support, the company received grants from both the World Bank's

Growth & Employment Scheme and the 2Scale crowdfunding initiative—enabling it to fund social impact outreach, including providing discounted healthy food to diabetic patients and raising awareness about proper dietary choices.

The brand's recognition and reach have grown as a result. In 2018, The Nut Place was featured among Nigeria's Top 100 Emerging SMEs by ConnectNigeria and Union Bank, a testament to its rising prominence in Nigeria's organic and healthy foods sector.

More recently, Chigozie's active role in the OECD/SWAC Public-Private Dialogue on intra-

regional food trade in West Africa further highlighted her influence beyond her company. As a member of the working group on access to information, she contributed to identifying key trade challenges and recommended practical solutions, such as the creation of a centralized ECOWAS-level information platform to foster transparency, trust, and smoother cross-border trade. This engagement underscores her commitment not only to The Nut Place's growth but also to strengthening the wider West African agribusiness ecosystem.



Chigozie Bashua at the OECD/SWAC Public-Private Dialogue



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