



18th February 2026

PRESS STATEMENT

Tragic Tomato Traders Killings Expose Ghana's Food Security Crisis: PFAG Demands Immediate Government Intervention to save the Ghanaian Farmer and secure Ghana's Future

The Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana (PFAG) is profoundly troubled and saddened by the recent tragic murder of Ghanaian tomato traders in Burkina Faso. While the immediate human tragedy is our foremost concern, this act exposes the extreme vulnerability of our food system. Currently, a significant portion of the tomatoes consumed in Ghana are imported from Burkina Faso and this tragic event will disrupt supply chains which will undoubtedly trigger a sharp hike in tomato prices, placing a basic nutritional staple in a highly precarious state for millions of Ghanaian families.

This is not merely a supply chain issue; it is a national security and economic sovereignty issue. While the catalyst is unfortunate, it serves as a stark and urgent wake-up call for the nation to fundamentally reassess our agricultural trajectory. We must seize this moment to implement transformative measures that guarantee self-sufficiency, not just in tomatoes, but across the entire vegetable value chain.

The numbers paint a damning picture of missed opportunity. Ghana is currently the 43rd largest importer of tomatoes in the world, having spent over \$22.3 million on tomato imports in 2024 alone, with more than 90% of these imports originating from Burkina Faso. Our national consumption demand hovers around 800,000 metric tonnes annually. Yet, our total domestic production languishes between 370,000 and 420,000 metric tonnes, leaving a deficit that imports must fill. This reliance persists despite Ghana possessing the climate, arable land, and human resource potential to not only be self-sufficient but to become a net exporter in the West African sub-region.

This chronic production shortfall is not an act of nature, but a failure of policy and prioritization. It is the result of several interconnected, systemic constraints:

- Climate-Dependent Farming: Our over-reliance on seasonal, rain-fed agriculture, due to grossly inadequate irrigation facilities, leaves production vulnerable to erratic rainfall patterns and climate change.
- The Productivity Gap: Average yields are stuck at a dismal 7.5 metric tonnes per hectare, a far cry from a potential of 20 metric tonnes per hectare. This is a direct consequence of farmers' limited access to high-quality, market-demanded seeds, the exorbitant cost of fertilizers, and the widespread adoption of poor agronomic practices.
- The Post-Harvest Catastrophe: The nation watches helplessly as 30-50% of the harvest is lost after cultivation. This post-harvest waste, resulting from poor storage, lack of processing facilities, and deplorable road networks, represents a crushing blow to farmers' incomes, traders' livelihoods, and national food security.

The Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana is deeply concerned that these persistent bottlenecks, if left unaddressed, will continue to cripple the efforts of our farmers as they will remain uncompetitive and trapped in a cycle of low productivity. This, in turn will fuel inflationary pressures, further bloat our national food import bill, and jeopardize the very foundation of our food security. The murder of our traders is a tragic exclamation point on a long-standing, unsustainable reality.

However, the PFAG believes that with decisive, well-funded, and properly sequenced interventions, Ghana can chart a new course. We are confident that we can drastically reduce our reliance on vegetable imports by 2030 and achieve complete self-sufficiency in tomato production by 2036. This is not just an aspiration; it is a necessity.



The Association therefore urgently calls upon the Government of Ghana to treat this as a matter of national emergency and prioritize the following:

1. **A Radical Shift in Irrigation Development:** The government must provide a specific, time-bound roadmap and dedicated budget for the completion of the "Irrigation for Wealth Programme." Furthermore, as a defining legacy project, the government must commence and complete the construction of the Pwalugu Multi-Purpose Dam within its tenure. To complement large-scale infrastructure, the government should immediately initiate a program for the construction of boreholes and facilitate access to subsidized solar-powered irrigation pumps for farmers across all major farming districts. This will enable all-year-round farming and insulate production from climate shocks.
2. **Establish Strategic Agricultural Enclaves:** The government should develop dedicated economic enclaves for the commercial cultivation of high-demand vegetables, including tomatoes and onions. These enclaves should be situated in selected agro-ecological zones with favourable climatic conditions and be equipped with essential infrastructure—water, power, and roads—to attract private sector investment and drive production.
3. **Reduce cost-of-Production:** The government must adequately resource our research institutions to develop and multiply high-quality, disease-resistant, and market-preferred seed varieties. Critically, the government must work as a matter of urgency to significantly reduce the cost of production. This requires a comprehensive review and engagement with companies in the pricing of fertilizers and other key inputs and services
4. **Declare War on Post-Harvest Losses:** A national strategy to tackle post-harvest losses must be instituted immediately. This multi-pronged approach should include: (a) a massive recruitment and deployment of extension agents to educate farmers on best harvesting and handling practices; (b) the rapid upgrading of feeder roads linking farming communities to major market centres; (c) the establishment of a network of storage and cold chain facilities at strategic locations; and (d) the urgent rehabilitation and establishment of tomato processing factories across major tomato-producing districts to absorb surpluses and stabilize market prices during glut seasons.

The Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana urges the government to view these interventions not as favours to farmers, but as critical investments in the nation's future. This urgency is magnified by the growing despair and low morale among Ghanaian farmers in recent times. Grain (rice, maize and soya) and tuber (yam and cassava) farmers are currently counting their staggering losses from the recent market glut. Despite repeated government promises and assurances, they feel abandoned and helpless as they watch their investments go to waste. The appetite to cultivate for the upcoming planting season is very low, as produce from last planting season still remains on the field, in warehouses or have completely destroyed. Their plight is a national emergency in its own right.

We implore the government to immediately activate all available avenues—from direct purchases to strategic storage—to provide immediate relief to these farmers as their resilience has been stretched to the breaking point.

We urge that the country builds a resilient agricultural system that ensures no Ghanaian farmer or consumer is left at the mercy of such precarious circumstances.

Let's save the Ghanaian farmer and secure Ghana's future.

Signed

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