



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**TOMATO IMPORT BAN BY BURKINA FASO IS A BLESSING IN DISGUISE: SUPPORT FARMERS TO DELIVER**

The Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana (PFAG) has taken notice of the directive by officials of Burkina Faso banning the trade of tomatoes from that country, and the subsequent response by the government of Ghana through the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Agribusiness. While the Association understands the government's decision to engage Burkinabe officials on this matter, it sees this as an opportunity for government to develop home-grown strategies and support farmers to increase production and ensure self-sufficiency. Failure to do so will result in an acute shortage of tomatoes, leading to drastic price hikes, increased inflationary pressures, and an escalation into a full-blown food security crisis.

Tomato production in Ghana has been characterized by a massive reliance on rain-fed agriculture, high input costs, and weak market linkages. This situation is further exacerbated by high post-harvest losses, which create a major disincentive for farmers during the major planting season. While these challenges are well known and documented, successive governments have failed to take a transformative and well-coordinated approach to address them, despite spending millions of cedis in the sector. Investments in irrigation development, inputs, storage, and processing facilities have failed to bring about significant change over the years, as we are still reeling from the inadequacy of these interventions.

This situation is happening at a time when geopolitical conflict is leading to higher costs of energy, fuel, and agricultural inputs, which will increase production costs for farmers. This is in addition to the unresolved market glut for other staples such as rice, maize, soya, cassava, and pepper, which has already caused stress and frustration for farmers. The overall effect is a massive disincentive for farmers to produce enough to meet the country's demand, which will have a significant effect on our food security. The agricultural sector is on the brink of a heightened food security crisis, and the sooner we act pragmatically, the better.

The PFAG therefore urges government to provide LEADERSHIP, DIRECTION, and a clear STRATEGY to permanently address this challenge in the short, medium, and long term.

1. In the short term, the PFAG urges the government of Ghana to, as a matter of urgency, extend support to tomato farmers at irrigation sites to increase their production. This should be in the form of provision of improved seeds, fertilizers, and mechanization services to enhance production. The tomato farmers within the Peasant Farmers Association of Ghana (PFAG) are ready and available to work with government in this regard. Within this period, government should quickly set up an emergency strategic response plan together with stakeholders to address the looming shortage of tomatoes, in the event that engagements with the Burkina Faso authorities prove futile.

2. In the medium term, government must establish more land banks, increase land availability at irrigation sites, and enroll and empower additional farmers for tomato production. Government should address market linkages by establishing storage facilities (cold store infrastructure) and facilitating an output market system with traders and transporters to ensure optimum and efficient delivery of produce.

3. In the long term, government must aim at expanding irrigation infrastructure by establishing at least one major irrigation dam in every region. We should aim at increasing our percentage of irrigable land from the current 10% to over 50% by 2028. Government must also expedite its plans to establish, rehabilitate, or revamp existing tomato processing facilities to enable them to process and operate at full capacity.

Current developments in the agricultural sector, both locally and externally, and their impact on food security, have shown that Ghana cannot continue to provide lump-sum and generalized support for staple foods, given their unique importance in the Ghanaian diet and their implications for food security. We need a strategic plan, direction, approach, and a special vehicle to unlock their respective potentials. The PFAG believes that government must set up specific programs with clear financing, monitoring, and accountability mechanisms for value chains such as rice, tomato, onion, cassava, and maize. This will provide targeted and dedicated support to these value chains and especially to farmers to enhance their productivity.

The Association assures government of its support and readiness to partner to enhance production and improve the food security situation within the country. We also urge government to play its part and leave a legacy of providing a permanent solution to the perennial challenges affecting effective food production by farmers.

We are heading toward a crisis, and the time to act is now.

Signed

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