

11th June 2020



Agency for Health and Food Security

Communiqué 2020

Systems Approach to Vegetable Value Chain Policy, Pandemic Response and AfCFTA Agreement

We, the representative of 60 vegetable value chain-associated institutions and networks, have assembled at the Conference Hall of the National Development Planning Commission on 11th June 2020 for a National Dialogue on vegetable value chain policy organized by the Agency for Health and Food Security (AHEFS) with support from BUSAC Fund and its partners DANIDA and USAID. We have discussed how a functional value chain policy for the vegetable sector can facilitate economic growth, improved livelihoods and income, improved nutrition, continental trade, improved environmental governance, enhanced industry performance and contribute to achieving food security for Africa's increasing population.

We are deeply concerned that currently more than 1.6 million people in Ghana are undernourished, 2.3 million people are severely food insecure, 18.8 % of children under five are stunted, and that 46.4 % of women of reproductive age (15-49 years) are anemic. We are also equally concerned that progress in Ghana's vegetable sector is constrained by fragmented value chain linkages and weak coordination between and among value chain actors, sectors, ministries, continental policies, standardization authorities and global trade institutions in which value chain actors appear to work in silos with limited application of information, communication and innovative technologies to enable system interactions. Approaches to soil management, transmitting and accessing seasonally-relevant meteorological information, accesses to locally-developed improved seeds and managing planting materials and inputs during production have been ineffective and unsustainable. Storage, processing and market systems for vegetable trade are largely undeveloped. Public perceptions and awareness of the importance of vegetables in nutrition and health is poor. Governance, M&E and funding arrangement across the phases of commodity value chains are not adequately documented and supported. Urgent action to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture within the vegetable sector is, therefore, extremely crucial.

We are also concerned that climate change and COVID-19 are resulting in yield losses and declines in vegetable production in many parts of the Ghana and across the globe and is already affecting national and global food security, extension service delivery, market systems, national, continental and global trade relations, farmers' incomes and are hitting the poor and vulnerable the hardest.

We understand that our natural resources which are fundamental to agricultural production and biodiversity are finite, under stress and deteriorating over time. Overapplication of inorganic fertilizers,

pesticides and weedicides are already exceeding planetary boundaries and have rendered many rich ecosystems unproductive and toxic to many species.

We underline that vegetable value chain policy hinged on coordinated food systems and healthy lifestyles must produce adequate quantities of safe, nutritious and affordable food and reduce loss and waste to fight hunger and malnutrition in all its forms. We express our firm conviction that a vegetable value chain policy and support systems can facilitate trade, improve health outcomes, promote food security and reduce poverty.

Against this background, we emphasize the positive contribution that a vegetable value chain policy can make to meet the increasing demand for adequate, safe, nutritious and affordable food for consumers in Ghana and beyond just as has been achieved by economies such as China's, Thailand's and others as espoused by the research report on vegetable value chain considered at the dialogue.

Call for Action

We, hereby, jointly adopt the following resolutions with the aim of promoting a vegetable value chain policy in ensuring agricultural sustainability, responsive food systems and a healthy eating behaviours for national and global food security, prevention of malnutrition in all its forms and inclusive development.

We believe that value chain policy should form part of a larger interactive, coordinated, integrated and coherent strategy towards improved sustainability of agriculture and food systems that are responsive to the needs of the of the various phases of vegetable commodity value chains.

In this regard, we are committed to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 13 and 17 of the UN Agenda 2030 and African Union Agenda 2063 on agricultural-based industrialization, improved nutrition, decent jobs, sustainable use of natural resources including control of biocide contamination and chemical pollution, climate change mitigation and adaptation and partnerships towards functional value chain systems.

We therefore call on Government to create and support a functional value chain policy that optimizes the use of land and water resources to guarantee continuous productivity, coordinate activities of small-holder farmers, input dealers, processors, certification bodies, aggregators, cold-chain / warehouse / packhouse operators, marketers, exporters, behavioural change agents including civil society organizations in agriculture and further provide varied funding mechanisms that are crop-specific and dedicated to particular phases of the value chain at competitive rates.

1. Fostering Local and Continental Demand for Horticultural Commodities

We underline that vegetable commodity value chains are increasingly integrated and interdependent across sectors, ministries, agencies and markets with many final and intermediary products and services from different geographical locations. We agree that local, continental and global trade are vital to generate demand and connect producers to consumers and that trade can facilitate the supply horticultural commodities to locally- and internationally-deficit markets supported by market intelligence, geographic information, food safety standards and communication technologies that enable seasonally-relevant market and meteorological information to be transmitted to organized producers after establishing the demand structure in terms of specific crop variety, quantity, grade, production method,

pricing, time needed, destination, etc for farm produce across Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies (MMDAs) and those for export.

We further agree that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTFA) presents opportunities and threats to local industries. To mitigate the threats to 'infant' local industries which are likely to collapse with the influx of cheaper commodities produced at low capital cost from all over the continent coupled with Ghana's poor fiscal and investment policy arrangements, we call on government to institute a horticultural support facility as part of a value chain policy to provide dedicated funding arrangement to help farmers meet both domestic and continental vegetable demands for a variety of vegetable commodities in which we have competitive and comparable advantage. Additionally, there should be budgetary arrangements for civil society organisations to sensitize and educate consumers on nutrition, food safety, organic commodities and green-labeled vegetables to drive demand and motivate producers and marketers to accept and supply safe and environmentally-friendly raw and processed horticultural commodities from only certified sources.

2. Coordinated supply-centered support system

We recognize the importance of conflict-free fertile lands and high-quality seed to vegetable production system in enhancing agricultural productivity, improving food security, promoting improved nutrition and improving livelihoods.

From the value chain research findings and dialogue deliberations, we maintain that access to land, poor quality seed and limited human resource capacity of Ghana's scientists to release more resilient horticultural varieties including testing and promoting available varieties from breeding lines are among the major constraints stifling vegetable production and supply systems in Ghana.

We therefore call on Government to resource the CSIR-Crop Research Institute and other research institutions with similar mandate to conduct research on vegetables to facilitate seed availability by releasing vegetable varieties which are adaptable, high yielding and resistant to biotic and abiotic stresses including setting up standard laboratory facilities to fully engage locally- and foreign-trained experts to generate appropriate technologies for small-holder farmers.

We also implore MMDA Departments of Agriculture to collaborate with traditional authorities to establish land banks and mechanization services and pilot centers to promote vegetable production. The training curriculum for extension workers should be reviewed to incorporate the principles of demand-driven and environmentally-friendly production systems underpinned by sound geographically-relevant meteorological information and communication technology to empower the youth for sustainable agriculture.

We further entreat the government to establish industrialized agri-parks and national agricultural technology development centers in each region to serve as the hub for local and exportable green-certified fresh and processed horticultural commodities.

We therefore accept to contribute to and promote training and certification of farmers, input dealers, processors, packhouse and warehouse operators, transport agents, exporters and market leaders with our varied expertise on demand creation, value chain mapping and adherence to the safety and green label certification standards for all horticultural commodities.

We will further support the coordination action initiated by the Agency for Health and Food Security and its member organizations to connect vegetable farmers to other value chain actors to facilitate information sharing, contract farming, input management, food safety compliance, technology extension, project financing and consumer behavioural change communication in collaboration with the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environment Science and Technology, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, World Trade Organization, Irrigation Development Authority, Ghana Standards Authority, Food and Drugs Authority, Ghana Meteorological Authority, the private sector, academia and civil society organisations.

We also call on Government to oblige all farmers, input dealers and all other vegetable value chain actors to form or join associations and networks for effective identification, tracking and support for targeted training, technology transfer, resource allocation, product/process certification, project implementation, trade arrangements and research.

On behalf of participants at the dialogue

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