

Pineapple production in Ghana: Is there any future for the sub-sector?

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Abstract: Ghana's pineapple agro-industry is well-developed and structured horticultural sector. Before the 2000s, a lot of farmers in Ghana were producing for the export market due to the appreciable returns they earned from their labour until setbacks occurred, as described in this paper. Since then, the industry has not been able to retain its place on the European market. From 2008 to date, production volume has been maintained, although export volume keeps declining. If the trend in export as against production continues, most farmers will venture into other crops, despite the fact that the sub-sector and the country are not adequately prepared to embrace this change.

Keywords: European Market, Export, Ghana, Pineapple, Production

1. Introduction

The introduction of pineapple (*Ananas comosus*) to Ghana is traceable to the arrival of the Portuguese on the west coast of Africa in 1548. In the account of Pinto (1990), it is revealed that pineapple production first began at Samsam, a suburb of the Greater Accra Region. The pineapple industries in most countries in sub-Saharan Africa were started and developed by renowned multinational companies, such as Compagnie Fruitière, Dole, Del Monte, but this was not the case of Ghana's pineapple industry, which was kick-started by small-scale local farmers (Danielou & Ravry, 2005), under the sponsorship of government developmental projects to diversify, dilate and augment the country's export portfolio, and ameliorate the livelihoods of farmers who lost their cocoa farms in the 1980s due to bushfires and blight.

From the late 1970s to the mid-1980s, there was a decline in Ghana's economic growth as a result of high inflation rates, high public debt and other factors (Aryeetey & Fosu, 2002). Consequently, employment, agricultural growth, exports, and production volumes were stifled, and this widened and entrenched the poverty gap of the country (Achaw, 2010). Whilst the prices of main export commodities such as cocoa and gold at the world market plunged, the then government implemented Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s. Thus, diversification programmes that introduced commodities like timber, aluminium, and non-traditional export (NTE) crops (ex.: pineapple and papaya) were incorporated into the export portfolio (ISSER, 2002). This led to rapid growth in the NTE products sub-sector from the mid-1980s, and during this period, pineapple production in Ghana intensified and retained a higher share in export to Europe.

In the diversification of Ghana's export portfolio to ensure that decline in economic performance is forestalled, other non-traditional crops such as citrus, mango and papaya were commercialized. However, the pineapple industry made an immense contribution to Ghana's economy through revenue generation from export and employment (Achaw, 2010). Ghana started exporting pineapple to Europe in the 1980s, and this gained further momentum after 2000. However, the sub-sector was affected when Costa Rica released the MD2 variety in 1996, and this was better than the dominant and widely grown Smooth Cayenne variety exported by Ghana. Thus, from 2004 to 2007, there was a decline in Ghana's export volumes which greatly affected small-scale farmers who primarily constituted the sub-sector. The Smooth Cayenne had no place on supermarket shelves in the European market due to the take-off by the MD2 variety which had extensive research support, strong marketing campaigns from multinational corporations, such as Dole and Del Monte.

Another dramatic moment for the Ghana pineapple industry was in 2001 when high levels of residual ethephon, far above the maximum acceptable EU residual levels were detected in some sampled pineapples exported from Ghana to Europe (Gogoe, 2004). Since then, Ghana has not been able to retain a considerable share of pineapple export to Europe. Furthermore, for producers who would like to export to Europe, a certification known as the GLOBALGAP has become necessary. Due to the high cost involved in Good Agricultural Practice (hereafter GAP) compliance, most farmers, according to Achaw (2010) were not certified. In 2008, the Ghana government, together with the World Bank, pumped an amount of US\$2 million into the industry for MD2 plantlets to be made available to farmers. The results of this intervention became evident when the country could export 42,000 tonnes of MD2 pineapple in the year 2008.

2. The trend in Production and Export

Figure 1 below shows the trend in Ghana's pineapple export volume from 2008 to 2018.

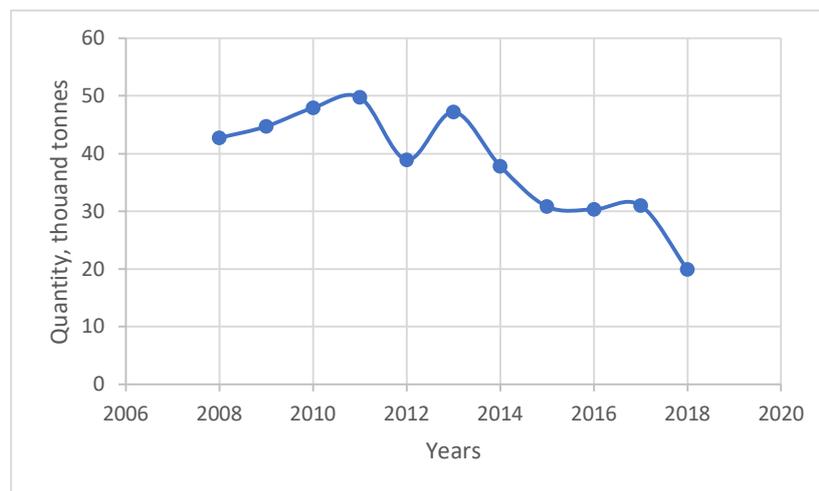


Figure 1: Trend in Ghana's Gross Pineapple Exports (Source: FAO, 2018 Data)

In Ghana, the pineapple production hotspots are the Greater Accra, Central, Eastern, and Volta Regions, where the subsector mainly constitutes smallholder farmers and a few private-owned large-scale farms who usually produce for export to Europe, and in most instances, contract small-holder farmers to produce per their specifications (Fold and Gough, 2008). However, most small-scale farmers could not have a smooth transition to new pineapple variety and associated practices as a result of the special attention the MD2 variety needed and the lack of extension services, thus, many of such smallholder farmers changed from pineapple to other crops.

Government intervention made a significant change in terms of production since 2008 (figure 2, series 1). The outcome was evident when Ghana exported 42,700 tonnes out of 70,000 tonnes produced. However, from 2009 to 2018 (per available data), gross production keeps increasing year by year, but export performance has not kept at par with the production.

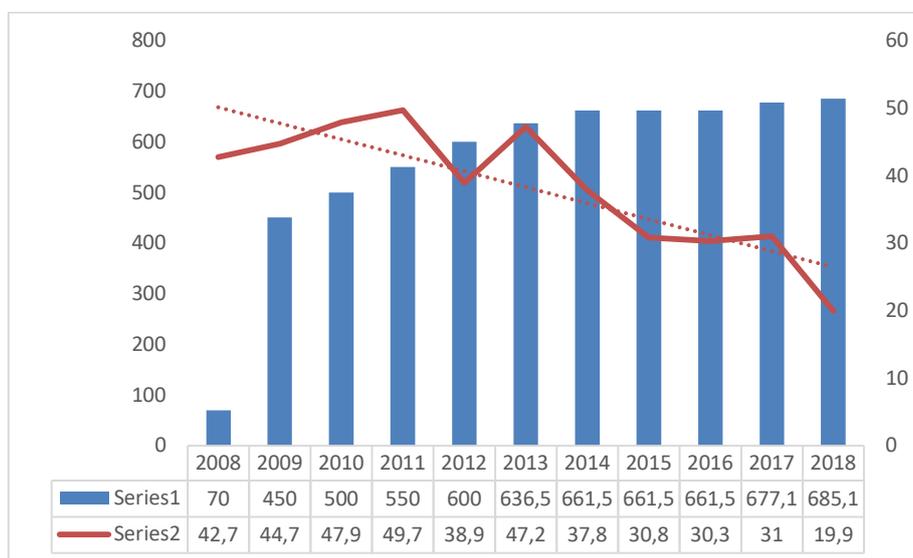


Figure 2: Production and export of pineapple from Ghana over time (Source: FAO, 2018, data modified)

Recently, in 2018 and 2019, pineapple export from Ghana to France was worth US\$ 2,105,398 and, US\$ 1,894,091 and US\$ 343,000 worth of pineapple were exported to Germany in 2018 and 2019, respectively. Pineapple export to Belgium and Italy was worth US\$ 3,414,594 and US\$ 2,007,534 and, US\$ 49,817 and US\$ 242,147 for 2018 and 2019 respectively (GEPA, 2019). However, in 2018, Ghana produced a total of 685,100 tonnes of pineapple and could only export 19,900 tonnes, generating revenue, as shown above. Several factors might have accounted for this trend in the subsector. Some of these factors are farmers' inability to meet GLOBALGAP standards, farmers producing as out-growers for processing industries, production of less preferable varieties, and others.

3. Recommendation

It is recommended that the Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA), together with key stakeholders empower small-scale farmers to meet the international trade specifications. Also, expansion projects should be carried out in pineapple processing industries in the country for increased production. Using these and similar strategies, industries can continue to buy from such farmers who will not be able to meet international trade standards.

4. Conclusion

If the trend in reduced pineapple export continues, without an increase and/or expansion in processing industries, it is expected that many farmers will switch to other crops, and thus, overall production of pineapple will drop drastically. For many large-scale companies, farmlands on which production goes on are stool lands, which could be reclaimed for real estate purposes at any time, subject to decisions of the traditional landowners. Thus, there is no future for the sector if the current trend in production and export continues. In addition, the sector is not prepared for a similar change in preference from MD2 to any new variety which may be attractive for the European market.

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