Scarcity of Tomato in Early Period of May: A Challenge to Sustainable Development in Nigeria

Adamu Ibrahim Kabuga (Ph.D)
Department of Geography, Federal College of Education, Kano – Nigeria

Abstract
The paper examined the scarcity of tomato in early period of May in Kano State and Nigeria. Materials used for the study were sourced from the secondary sources of information such as books, newspapers, conferences, internets and field observation. The paper also highlighted the causes of the scarcity and the implications for sustainable development in Nigeria. Recommendations were made such as setting up a special Trust Fund for assisting farmers whenever there is a disaster in the country. Develop a vaccine for treating the disease in the country.

Keywords: Tomato, Sustainable Development, Nigeria, Scarcity

Introduction
Tomato is a major crop in world vegetable trade. In 2005, five million metric tonnes of the commodity were traded globally at a value of over five billion US Dollars. In the same year, Nigeria imported 28,972 metric tonnes of canned tomato paste costing US $30 million in foreign exchange (FAO, 2006). From 2010 to date Nigeria annually imports 65,809 tonnes of processed tomato worth over ₦11.7 billion (Adamu, 2016). Tomato is used mainly in the preparation of soup and stew recipes. It is also used as salad vegetable or processed into paste and ketchup for the eating of pasta and chips. Tomato is also a rich source of essential vitamins, like Vitamin A, B, B6 and C, with a high acidic property that brings out other lycopene which is a natural anti-oxidant used in the treatment of high blood pressure and postate cancer (Hussaini, 2008). The seeds of tomato contain fat, which can be extracted and used as salad oil and in the manufacture of margarine and soap. After oil extraction the residual cake is used as livestock feed and manure. Tomato is produced in Kano State under two conditions, rainfed and irrigated. The irrigated aspect is also divided into two parts, namely, the informal on Fadama lands and the formal used in irrigation schemes.

Every year between Late May and early June, tomato became scarce in many parts of the country, as a result of rain fall. This year, the situation is alarming as a basket of the commodity which previously sold at ₦800 to ₦1,000 during the peak period is now sold at ₦23,000 to ₦26,000 (Rakiya, 2016; Chidimma, 2016).
Tomato Production Periods

Large scale tomato production in Nigeria is mainly under irrigation during the dry season (September to March) when temperatures are mild and humidity moderate. The rainfed crop (June to September) is also important due to continuous demand for fresh tomato, but generally limited by pests and diseases that are prevalent under such humid and warm condition (Rufa’i, 1999). The area of major production is the Northern Part of the country, between latitude 8° and 13°N, but the biggest market is mostly in the south and other neighbouring countries. The crop stays for up to three (3) months in the field and yields between 20 to 50 t/ha. It requires a well-drained, fertile soil, rich in organic matter and thrives best under a temperature range of 15 to 20°C for optimum growth and development (Hussaini, 2008). The period between the months of March to June is normally too hot for successful tomato production.

Peak and Slack Periods of Tomato Production

In March and early April, during the peak period of tomato, the prices of tomato is very low, and sometimes low than ₦400 per basket in March and ₦1,000 in April. During this period a lot of the product is available in the market and sometimes there would be no buyers of the product at all. During this period, farmers usually allow the tomato to perish in their farms without harvesting, so as to avoid additional expenditures. About 65% of the tomato produced in the state are harvested during this period, and a lot of loses are recorded by the tomato farmers. In May, the price of tomato appreciates quite reasonably, but as the slack period approaches (late May to June), the price of the commodity goes higher and higher (₦2,500 to ₦4,000) per basket.

Rationale for the Scarcity in Early May, 2016

As rainy season begins in Late May or early June, tomato product begin to scarce in Kano state and most part of Northern Nigeria. This is because as the rain drop on the flowering of irrigated tomato, the crop dries up. This has been the trend and practice of the production of the crop in the state over the years (Adamu, 2016). The rain fed production of the crop is usually June to September, but general limited by pests and diseases that are prevalent under such humid and warm condition (Rufa’i, 1999). Unfortunately, this year as a result of the effect of climate change, there was early heavy rainfall in Late April and early May. These heavy two rainfalls in the state greatly affected the production of the crop. As the rain drop on the flowering of the tomato, the crop dries up. The environment is humid and warm which is not favourable to the production of the crop. This condition resulted to the development of pests and diseases in the state and other part of Northern Nigeria where the crop is mostly produced. This situation resulted to the attack of tomato farms by the pest “Tuta absoluta”, popularly known as “tomato ebola”, which is responsible for massive destruction of tomato in the state and some other major producing areas in the Northern states (Chidima, 2016; Rakiya, 2016). This situation resulted to high price of the product, from the range of ₦1,000/₦1,500 to ₦23,000/₦26,000 per basket of tomato in the state. From field survey, the price of the commodity has never appreciated to this level for the past 20 years in the state. Farmers of the commodity record a high loses in the state and Nigeria in general.

The Challenges to Sustainable Development

Sustainable development refers to long-term development that improves basic standards of living without compromising future living standards. It involves management and
conservation of resources. It is the development that safeguards natural resources for future generations (Nagle, 2000).

- It aims at increasing standards of living without destroying the environment
- It aims to satisfy basic needs such as food supply and water rather than long-scale developments which may be inappropriate.
- It reduces waste.
- It increases efficiency and recycling.

The change in climate which resulted to the early rainfall in the state or regions where tomato is produced is a serious challenge to sustainable production of the crop in areas of production. The development of pests and diseases in the Northern Part of the country where tomato is produced is also a challenge to sustainable development of the crop in Nigeria. The attack of tomato farms by the “tula absoluta” diseases popularly known as “tomato ebola” is a threat to sustainable development in the country since it involves management and conservation of resources which entails:

- Increase in standards of living without destroying the environment
- Satisfy basic needs such as food supply such as tomatoes supply in the country.
- It reduces waste, such as the destruction and damaging of tomatoes in recent time in Nigeria.
- It increases efficiency and recycling, which is lacking because of the destruction and wastage of tomato in the farms in areas of production as a result of “tomato ebola” in the regions of production.

All these challenges need to be handled with care in the country so as to attain sustainable development in Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

The scarcity of tomato in early period of May in Kano state and other parts of production areas in Nigeria is attributed to two heavy rainfalls in April and early May. The heavy rainfall drops on the flowering of the irrigated tomato which led to the dries up of the crops in areas of production and subsequently led to the development of tomato diseases which is popularly known as tomato ebola in Nigeria and the scarcity of the commodity in the country.

**Recommendations**

The following measures are recommended:

- Agricultural Research Institutes in the country should conduct a special research to develop tomato species that can survive the transitional period between dry season and rainy season.
- The tomato disease “tula absoluta” should be quickly researched on and develop a vaccine.
- Government should set up a special Taskforce for quick respond to tomato farmers whenever the need arise.
- Government should set up a special Trust Fund for assisting farmers whenever there is a disaster in the country.
References


