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Thesis Prospectus
Dr. First
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When Life Gives You Tomatoes, Don't Import Them from Italy

Since the 1980s, many Ghanaian tomato farmers have found themselves priced out of their local markets which have been flooded with imported fresh tomatoes and preserved tomato options like tomato paste. Ghanaian leadership has contributed to this problem through disorganized planning and insufficient government investment in the tomato industry.¹ Under the conditions of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPAs) with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), legally imported African tomatoes cannot be taxed above the rate of 35% which allows neighboring countries to invade Ghanaian markets, and local traders aggravate the problem through illegal imports.² While much has been written about the Ghanaian government's failures and the influence of neighboring industries, Italy's influence on the situation has not been studied as comprehensively. That is why, while keeping outside determinants in mind, this thesis will focus more narrowly on the connection between Italy and Ghana's tomato industries. My research question will be as follows: How has the Italian tomato industry directly contributed to the decline of the Ghanaian tomato industry? I theorize that by utilizing past and present IMF and EU economic policy along with local-national Italian policy to create unnaturally low production and exportation costs, the Italian tomato industry has been

¹ Theresa A. A. Nyamekye, "Production Efficiency and Building Marketing Strategies for Smallholder Tomato Farmers in the Adaklu Anyigbe District of Ghana: Linear Programming and Parametric Linear Programming Approach," *Journal of Developments in Sustainable Agriculture* 6, no. 2 (2011): 231: <https://doi-org.umiss.idm.oclc.org/10.11178/jdsa.6.230>.

² European Commission, "Interim Economic Partnership Agreement between Ghana and the European Union - Factsheet," dist. by the European Commission, 2: https://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2017/february/tradoc_155314.pdf.

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very influential in diminishing the ability of Ghanaian farmers to compete in local or global markets.

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I will focus specifically on how the Italian tomato export industry benefited in the early 1980s from the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) structural adjustment plans (SAPs) that enforced the implementation of neoliberal economic policies which resulted in lower taxes on imported goods. Since the 1980s, imported Italian tomato paste has quickly gained popularity over local, fresh Ghanaian tomatoes, and similar to the ECOWAS tomato imports mentioned above, Italian tomato paste imports cannot be taxed above 35% because the EPA regulations apply to EU imports as well.³ This EPA trade agreement between ECOWAS and EU countries was introduced in the early 2000s around the time EU agricultural subsidies aimed at creating a surplus of tomatoes armed Italy with a surplus of tomatoes to use in tomato paste.⁴⁵ In recent years after being priced out of their own tomato markets, many Ghanaian farmers have been forced to migrate to find work. By some cruel coincidence, many of those migrants find themselves working on Italian tomato farms, participating directly in the industry that cost them their livelihoods.

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Literary Review:

The agricultural policy of developing nations has been a highly debated topic among scholars for decades. In the 1980s and 1990s, the debate was focused on the effects of IMF structural adjustment plans (SAPs). In return for loans, the IMF forced developing nations to implement policies that it posited would properly structure their economies for survival and

³ European Commission, "Factsheet," 2.

⁴ Roberto Forin, "The Tomato Conundrum," Mixed Migration Centre: <https://mixedmigration.org/articles/the-tomato-conundrum/> (last modified September 13, 2018).

⁵ Mathilde Auvillain and Stefano Liberti, "The Dark Side of the Italian Tomato," Aljazeera, accessed September 4, 2022: <https://webapps.aljazeera.net/aje/custom/2014/italiantomato/index.HTML>.

success. However, the success of those plans has been debated, and scholars that see IMF loans as failures agree on different reasons for that failure. As SAPs became unpopular in EU development plans, the EPA rose to prominence in development debates. The EPA included guidelines for regional market liberalization among ECOWAS nations as well as the market liberalization of their trade relationship with the EU. While some scholars argued that the EPA could be incredibly beneficial to developing nations in the long term, others argued that the revenue loss attributed to participation in the EPA would be dangerous for unstable developing nations.

In 1994, the World Bank published a report that called SAPs “an essential step to getting on a poverty-reducing growth path”.⁶ The report stated that the reforms were working, but they could not be the only contributing factor to the development and that their effective implementation must continue once they are instituted for the results to show. The reforms were meant to completely reform the state of the developing nation so that it could create the “necessary foundation for the resumption of growth”.⁷ Sustained reform on such a level is a difficult task, but it’s a necessary precursor for lasting change. Again, in another report in 2000, the World Bank maintained that “good economic management must be sustained for some time to have a substantial effect”.⁸ The report also said that positive results had been seen in countries that had met that requirement even though the problem was not yet completely solved. Another World Bank report written two years later by Luc Christiaensen, Lionel Demery, and Stefano Paternostro echoes these sentiments. However, it also included four main qualifiers that affect

⁶ World Bank, *Adjustment in Africa: reforms, results, and the road ahead (English)* (Washington, D.C.: Oxford University Press, 1994), 219.

⁷ World Bank, *Adjustment*, 219.

⁸ World Bank, *Can Africa Claim the 21st Century?* (Washington, DC.: The World Bank: 2000), 35.

the success of reforms: “the importance of economic reform and political stability for poverty reduction”, “the role of location and remoteness” in regards to distributions, “the significance of private endowments,” and “the need to account for shocks in understanding distributional outcomes and poverty changes over time”.⁹

As the results of SAPs began to show in the late 1980s and early 1990s, other scholars began to interpret the data in a different way. In their article, “What Explains the Success or Failure of Structural Adjustment Programmes?”, David Dollar and Jakob Svensson argue that the success of SAPs depends on the political economy of the developing country because their study found that the use of political economy indicators can “predict the outcome of an adjustment loan successfully 75% of the time.”¹⁰ However, they are not saying that blame for failure should be held solely by developing countries. Instead, they argue that “the quality of reform” solutions is the most important factor.¹¹ Rather than forcing economic and political reforms upon unwilling actors, investors should work with the existing framework to reach realistic goals. This differs from the first view mentioned in that Dollar and Svensson do not believe in the complete reformation of the state.

Franz Heidhues and Gideon Obare’s article “Lessons from Structural Adjustment Programmes and their Effects in Africa” concurs with Dollar and Svensson’s conclusions. Building on Dollar and Svensson’s belief in the importance of reform quality, Heidhues and Obare argue that an understanding of the workings of local institutions in developing countries is

⁹ Luc Christiaensen, Lionel Demery, and Stefano Paternostro, *Growth, Distribution, and Poverty in Africa: Messages from the 1990s* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank: 2002), 48.

¹⁰ David Dollar and Jakob Svensson, “What Explains the Success or Failure of Structural Adjustment Programmes,” *The Economic Journal* 110, no. 466 (2000): 911.

¹¹ Dollar, “Explains,” 913.

essential in formulating models for development.¹² Further, they argue that the neoliberal approach on which SAPs were founded was never going to work without sound governmental institutions already in place.¹³ Therefore, the goal of SAPs should have been to shape local governments into “facilitator[s] of, rather than [obstacles] to, development”.¹⁴ Again, this differs from the World Bank’s view on state overhaul as it emphasizes the importance of collaboration in reform structure.

In the early 2000s, the establishment of an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the EU and African states became one of the most popular topics of discussion among scholars in the study of African development. Previously, under the Lomé Conventions, African nations “enjoy[ed] protected markets” locally while also benefiting from special considerations in EU markets.¹⁵ Under the Cotonou Agreement formed in 2000, this would not be true anymore. The new agreement would force members to liberalize almost all trade barring a percentage of industries “on the basis of protecting local industries and agricultural production but also in order to mitigate fiscal revenue losses.”¹⁶ In theory, these agreements should allow for more regional and external trade that would make up for the loss in revenue caused by the lowering of tariffs.

In the article “Trade Liberalization and Poverty: The Evidence So Far,” L. Alan Winters, Neil McCulloch, and Andrew McKay argue that the relationship between trade liberalization and poverty is not straightforward. However, they state that economic theory and the results of their study show that the implementation of trade liberalization can realistically lead to long-term

¹² Franz Heidhues and Gideon A. Obare, “Lessons from Structural Adjustment Programmes and their Effects in Africa,” *Quarterly Journal of International Agriculture* 50, no. 1 (2011): 62.

¹³ Heidhues, “Lessons,” 61.

¹⁴ Heidhues, “Lessons,” 62.

¹⁵ Maria Persson, “EPA and Fiscal Transition in ECOWAS Countries” (Masters diss., Lund University, Sweden, 2009), 8.

¹⁶ Persson, “EPA and Fiscal Transition,” 19.

success and alleviation of poverty. While there may be other more personal solutions that would better address the issue, they say that trade liberalization policies like those in the EPA mentioned above could be “one of the most cost effective anti-poverty policies available to governments.”¹⁷ Another study by Simplicé G. Zouhoun-Bi and Lynge Nielsen found that there would be significant losses in revenue over tariff liberalization for some countries while others saw significant gains in revenues.¹⁸ However, considering factors such as “product exclusions” which refers to the percent of imported goods that can still be taxed by developing nations, slow policy implementation times, and domestic tax reform among other possible mitigating factors, that revenue loss would not be unmanageable given the right preparations.¹⁹

Other scholars, like Maria Persson, are not as confident in the viability of those options. In “EPA and Fiscal Transition in ECOWAS Countries,” Persson argues that it will be much more difficult for developing countries to “cop[e] with fiscal revenue losses and the restructuring of economies” than Zouhoun-Bi and Nielsen pose.²⁰ She argues that institutional changes must happen first, and since the EU had only offered support for lost revenue in terms of financial compensation instead of any institutional investments, “the evidence points to a significant negative impact for West African countries.”²¹ In regards to claims made by proponents of the EPA that developing countries would favor imports of regional partnerships which would boost regional integration, Persson refers to previous import rates that highly favored EU countries.²²

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¹⁷ Alan L. Winters, Neil McCulloch, and Andrew McKay, "Trade Liberalization and Poverty: The Evidence So Far," *Journal of Economic Literature* 42, no. 1 (March 2004): 108.

¹⁸ Simplicé G. Zouhoun-Bi Simplicé G. and Lynge Nielsen, "ECOWAS–Fiscal revenue implications of the prospective Economic partnership agreement with the EU," (working paper, World Bank Africa Region , April 2007), 20.

¹⁹ Zouhoun-Bi, “Fiscal revenue implications,” 16.

²⁰ Persson, “EPA and Fiscal Transition,” 46.

²¹ Persson, “EPA and Fiscal Transition,” 47.

²² Persson, “EPA and Fiscal Transition,” 22.

Methodology:

In order to test my hypothesis that by utilizing past and present EU economic policy along with local Italian policy to create unnaturally low production and exportation costs, the Italian tomato industry has been very influential in diminishing the ability of Ghanaian farmers to compete in local or global markets, I will use a mixed-method approach. I will use tomato import and export data from Ghana since the introduction of neoliberal reforms in the 1980s. The sources of this data will be the World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS) database, The Atlas of Economic Complexity by Harvard, and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations's (FAOSTAT) database. I will also use Italian tomato export data from the Department of Agriculture and rural development of the European Commission alongside the Ghanaian data to show the relationship between Italian imports and the decline of the Ghanaian tomato market. I will use additional data from a variety of TomatoNews articles, the TrendEconomy.com database, and any other data I am able to find that will best represent the data. I will use institutional policy implementations to show significant economic and agricultural policy changes which I will then analyze with the data mentioned above to understand the quantitative results with historical consideration. The documents I plan to use for the content analysis include Ghana's "Seven-Year Plan for National Reconstruction and Development" from 1964 and the World Trade Organization's "Trade Policy Review: Report By The Secretariat" on Ghana from the years 2001, 2007, 2008, 2014, and 2022. I'll also use plans for the "Economic Recovery Programme" of 1983 and the "Agriculture Sector Rehabilitation Programme" of 1987. I will use the "Interim Economic Partnership Agreement between Ghana and the European Union Factsheet," the updated full version of the EPA, and any other versions available to me. Hopefully, I will be able to find in-depth information from Italy separate from the EU regarding

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internal Italian tomato policy. The sources listed here will not encompass all of the material I will use, but they will be very similar in purpose.

To ensure that the study controls for the other factors relevant to the decline of the Ghanaian tomato market, I will do a separate content analysis of government documents pertaining to those issues. I will also use import data from Burkina Faso as well as any of Ghana's other neighboring countries that imported a significant amount of tomatoes into Ghana. I will acquire that data from the WITS database as well as the FAOSTAT database. The qualitative and quantitative results from those methods will be analyzed with the data mentioned above so that the effect of other factors can be fairly taken into account. The documents I will use for this part of the qualitative research will overlap those of the previous section. They will also include treaties such as the "ECOWAS Revised Treaty" of 2010 which directly references trade policy, the "ECOWAS Free Trade Agreement," and the "ECOWAS Trade Liberalization Scheme" of 2004. As I mentioned above, these are not the only documents I will use, but they are a good representation of what I hope to find.

Structure:

This thesis will be divided into three chapters. The introduction will detail a brief introduction to the subject of agricultural development policy agreements between the EU and developing nations. Any prevalent discussions in the literature will be introduced in this section as well. Next, I will introduce my case, the relationship between the Italian and Ghanaian tomato markets, and discuss the reasons behind its selection which have to do with how that relationship can be used as a lens to study and make inferences about the broader subject. The theoretical framework will be explained as a way to contextualize the topic, and the methodology will be outlined as well.

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The chapters will each focus on a different point of view of this relationship. The first chapter will provide a brief introduction to EU agricultural policy in the form of SAPs and then EPAs toward developing countries followed by a more specific overview of EU agricultural tomato policy, specifically towards Ghana. Debates within the existing literature will be touched upon as well. It will then, using data and content analysis, measure the influence of the Italian tomato industry on the Ghanaian tomato industry through EU agricultural economic policy. Data will be presented in this section to show the measured impact that the relationship had, and it will be interpreted alongside government policy initiatives to show the significance of the agreement and the resulting effects on Ghana.

The second chapter will detail the Ghanaian point of view of this case. There will be a brief introduction to Ghanaian policy on SAPs and then EPAs followed by a more specific analysis of the way those interacted with the tomato industry. There will be a brief introduction to debates surrounding EU agricultural policy from the point of view of a developing nation. This recap will include Ghanaian literature on the broader topics of aid and market liberalization as well as any existing literature focused specifically on Ghanaian relations with Italy and the tomato industry. Next, the chapter will introduce other factors that contributed to the decline of the tomato industry such as governmental ineffectiveness and the influence of African imports from neighboring countries like Burkina Faso. It will then use data analysis alongside content analysis to compare the effects of each of the different factors.

The final chapter will assess the situation from a wider point of view. It will synthesize the information from the previous two chapters to discuss the effects of the relationship from a nuanced point of view. In this chapter, the data from the first two chapters will be analyzed to decipher the effects of Italian imports while keeping the other factors mentioned and measured in

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chapter two in mind. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss the current status of the Ghanaian tomato market including debates as to what should be done regarding the agricultural policy of this case. It will consider those arguments with the results from the previous two chapters in mind. The thesis will end with a conclusion that ties the information together and restates the conclusions of the previous chapters.

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Commented [7]: really excellent prospectus. It's coming together really well, and I look forward to working on the thesis with you! Make sure the bib entries are all complete, including accessed on info for all the links.

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