



Vegetables

Summary of Key Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Vegetables Production

- ✓ Structural Supply Chain Features Contributing to Trafficking in Persons Vulnerability
 - Short Production Cycle
- ✓ Undesirable and Hazardous Work
- ✓ Vulnerable Workforce
 - Migrant Labor
 - Casual Labor
 - Gendered Dynamics of Production
- ✓ Associated Contextual Factors Contributing to TIP Vulnerability
 - Association with Large-Scale Land Acquisition/Displacement

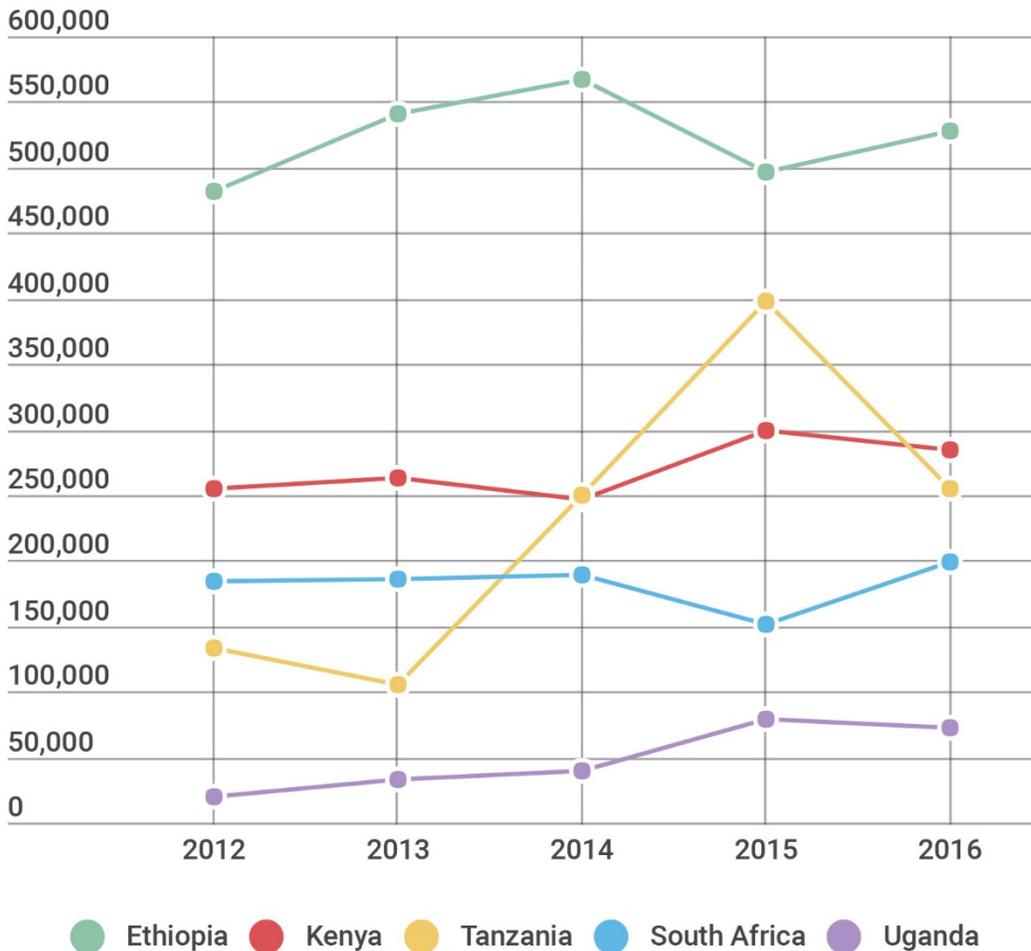
Overview of Vegetable Production in sub-Saharan Africa

The top exporting countries of vegetables from sub-Saharan Africa are Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, and Uganda.¹



Trade

Top Exporters of Vegetables (Value USD/Thousands)



The top importers of vegetables and tubers from Africa are France, India, the United Kingdom, Somalia and Saudi Arabia.²

Specific vegetables produced include green beans, peas, broccoli, cherry tomatoes, potatoes, cabbages, cauliflower, eggplant, cucumber, peppers, onions, okra, and asparagus.³ In Ethiopia, sub-Saharan Africa's top exporter of vegetables, green beans are the most significant exported vegetable product.



Features of Production and Supply Chain

Vegetable exports from Africa are considered a growth sector, particularly trade to Europe.⁴ Vegetables are considered a non-traditional export crop, as the export sector is relatively new for the region.⁵ Vegetable exports from Africa to the UK were expected to rise following the UK's vote to leave the European Union, as the EU had been the largest supplier of vegetables the UK⁶ Production of these non-traditional, high value export crops has been identified as a key aspect of livelihood strategies for African farmers. Sub-Saharan Africa's tropical climate allows countries to produce during Europe's off-season. Market analysts have also noted that labor costs are significantly lower.⁷

While Europe and the UK have been the traditional markets for exported vegetables from sub-Saharan Africa, China has also been investing significantly in agricultural development in the region – including in vegetable horticulture – with almost USD 300 million in agricultural investments by 2013.⁸

Vegetable production in sub-Saharan African countries continues to occur primarily on small-holder farms, although larger farms or plantations are also present, particularly in South Africa. In Kenya, for example, small-holders produce over half of exported vegetables.⁹ Ninety percent of farms in Ethiopia are under two hectares.¹⁰ However, production is trending toward using a smaller number of larger farms, as retailers work to consolidate their relationships with suppliers.¹¹ In part, this consolidation is due to the high standards of European retailers that may present challenges for smallholder vegetable farmers to meet.¹² Lack of transportation, infrastructure and adequate storage, particularly for highly perishable crops have been identified to market barriers for sub-Saharan African producers.¹³ As of 2011, private equity firms had allocated approximately USD 1.765 billion for development of the commercial farming sector in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁴

Although different crops have different features of production, most key African export crops require intensive labor. Green beans require hot, short growing seasons and plenty of water, often requiring irrigation. Fertilizers and pesticides are frequently used to increase yields and improve overall quality of the beans. In order to produce high yields and make a profit while growing green beans, a farmer must strategically plant throughout the growing season to ensure a continual harvest, timing harvests with skilled precision.¹⁵ Green beans are primarily hand harvested in sub-Saharan Africa. While tomato harvesting is mechanized in many developed countries, in African producing countries, most harvesting is manual, requiring a high degree of labor input.¹⁶

Like production features, value chains vary based on the specific crop and exporting country. Green beans from Kenya present a good case study to illustrate various levels of actors in a smallholder export vegetable supply chain. Smallholder farmers have contract arrangements with a local trader who provides transport from the farm. The trader then transports the beans to cooling houses where they are kept until export.^{17, 18}



Agricultural production systems include subsistence crops, smallholder farming, and larger scale commercial farms.¹⁹ Small-holder farms utilize both family labor and waged labor, while the larger scale commercial farms may use either permanent or temporary/casual workers.²⁰

The country has favorable climate conditions for several types of vegetables.²¹ That said, there is still a component of seasonality, with each crop having a limited harvest period.²² Exported vegetables are primarily irrigated crops harvested during the dry season between September and March.²³

In Ethiopia, sub-Saharan Africa's largest exporter of vegetables, the vegetable export sector is a priority for the government's economic development plans. In fact, the government dedicated over 15 percent of its national budget to development of the sector in 2015.²⁴ As a result, the sector has grown approximately seven percent annually in the subsequent years.²⁵

Key Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Vegetable Production

According to the U.S. Department of State *Trafficking in Persons Report*, "Forced labor is reportedly used in fruit and vegetable farms across South Africa" and boys in Cameroon are "exploited" on onion farms.²⁶

Undesirable and Hazardous Work

According to the ILO, agriculture is one of the most hazardous sectors in the world, accounting for approximately half of all fatal accidents. The ILO notes that rates of accidents have stayed relatively steady in agriculture, even as they have fallen in other fields. Further, because of the casual nature of much of the agricultural sector, actual rates are likely to be much higher due to a lack of monitoring and the fact that many accidents go unreported.²⁷ Although specific risks vary depending on the crop or sector, general risks include physically demanding work, exposure to extreme weather, carrying heavy loads, repetitive motions, use of dangerous tools and equipment, exposure to pesticides and agrochemicals, animal attacks, and working at heights. A study on pesticide use among Tanzanian vegetable farmers found high-rates of pesticide exposure leading to skin and neurological symptoms.²⁸ A similar study in Ethiopia found nearly 90 percent of farmers reported pesticide ingestion or inhalation, with over 40 percent of small-scale farmers reporting no usage of protective clothing.²⁹ Heatstroke is a leading cause of farmworker death. Farmworkers are at great risk for heatstroke and other heat-related illnesses because of the amount of time they spend in the direct sun, particularly during warmer months. Heavy clothing required for some jobs can exacerbate the problem. Further, many workers do not have access to potable water and are not afforded breaks or shade.³⁰



Vulnerable Workforce

Gendered Dynamics of Production

Both men and women work on vegetable farms, but tasks are segregated by gender, with women often more concentrated in “unskilled” positions. Women are reportedly more concentrated in “weeding, picking (harvesting) on the farm and cleaning, stringing, grading and labelling in the pack-houses” whereas men participate in spraying, soil cultivation and farm construction.³¹

Casual Labor

The peaks of labor intensity around harvest periods promote the use of seasonal, casual workers. Hired workers on vegetable farms may be hired on a daily basis, a seasonal basis, or a yearly contract. The majority of workers in Ethiopia are reportedly hired seasonally, either by the day or by the season.³² Interestingly, a study on farm workers in Kenya found that large farms had the highest percentage of temporary or casual workers, while small farms had a higher percentage of year-round workers as well as workers with longer tenure.³³ The same study found that casual and seasonal workers earned less income and experienced higher levels of marginalization, although they experienced fewer health problems.³⁴ A study of farm workers on large scale farms in South Africa found that about half had permanent contracts, while the other half had some form of casual or temporary arrangement.³⁵

In many cases, workers may work for multiple years for the same employer, but continue to be engaged as a temporary worker via a system of revolving contracts.³⁶ In one study, workers on fruit and vegetable farms were engaged for five years on revolving month-long (or several month-long) contracts.³⁷

Migrant Labor

Migrant workers from Zimbabwe have been noted on vegetable farms in South Africa.³⁸ In 2016, Zimbabwean migrants reported that their employers had confiscated their identity documents, preventing them from seeking alternate jobs and reported that they had been targeted for abusive working conditions due to their migration status.³⁹ Internal migrants from poorer, less fertile parts of the country were noted on fruit and vegetable farms in Uganda.⁴⁰ Similarly, internal seasonal migration of subsistence farmers to waged labor opportunities on irrigated farms has been noted in Sudan.⁴¹



Associated Contextual Factors Contributing to Trafficking in Persons Vulnerability

Association with Large-Scale Land Acquisition/Displacement

Qatar leased 20,000 hectares for fruit and vegetable cultivation in exchange for funding a USD 2.3 billion port in Kenya.⁴² Sudan has also been a prime target: Saudi Arabia leased 10,000 hectares for wheat, vegetables, and livestock; South Korea secured 690,000 hectares for wheat; and the UAE is investing in 378,000 hectares after already securing 30,000 for corn, alfalfa, and possibly wheat, potatoes and beans.⁴³

Human Rights Watch documented forced relocation of Ethiopians in areas where land was being leased by foreign investors for commercial agriculture.⁴⁴



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Endnotes

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