

The Role of Government and the international competitiveness of SMEs: Evidence from Ghanaian Non-Traditional Exports

Abstract

Purpose- *The nature of international markets and the challenges with respect to the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) makes it imperative to examine government support. The study aims to assess the role and effectiveness of government and the Export Promotion Agencies in supporting exports by non-traditional horticultural SMEs in Ghana.*

Design/methodology/approach -*The study employed a qualitative research design which involved semi-structured interviews with senior managers of six export facilitating institutions to gain understanding of the services offered to SMEs with respect to exports of non-traditional horticultural products.*

Findings – *The findings reveal inadequate cost-efficient sources of non-traditional horticultural export financing for SMEs. This is a hindrance to the international competitiveness of exporting SMEs in developing countries such as Ghana. In addition, effective and co-ordinated support from export promotion agencies was found to be critical.*

Originality/value- *The study highlights the importance of government's role in policymaking and implementation of export-led programmes for horticultural exporting firms in Ghana. Despite their strategic importance, this area of research has not attracted the attention of researchers, with little or no information on horticultural international competitiveness of non-traditional horticultural products.*

Keywords: *International competitiveness, non-traditional exports, horticulture SME exporters, and developing economies.*

Research type: *Research paper*

1. Introduction

Generally, exports are essential stimulus for economic growth and the creation of wealth in developing countries (Haddoud, *et al.*, 2018; Gebrewahid and Wald, 2017; Schuster and Maertens, 2015; Mmieh, *et al.*, 2012). Specifically, horticultural exports are important for several African countries (Chege, *et al.*, 2015; Maertens, 2009). The majority of firms in developing countries are small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Wilson, 2018; Mutalemwa, 2015). The internationalisation of SMEs through exports, for example, could potentially improve efficiency and competitiveness as well as generate enormous benefits such as employment generation, poverty reduction and foreign exchange earnings (Damoah, 2018; Babatunde, 2017; Dominguez, and Mayrhofer, 2017; Schuster and Maertens, 2015). However, in sub-Saharan Africa, there is limited research on factors which influence the commitment of SMEs to exports. In addition, there is a paucity of studies that reflect on the factors that could ensure that SMEs from developing countries are competitive in the international marketplace (Mmieh, *et al.*, 2015; Tenai, *et al.*, 2009). One of such factors could be the role of government and its export-related agencies in supporting SMEs in Africa. The existing research in this regard only focuses on the role of export promotion agencies in moderating export barriers (Haddoud, *et al.*, 2018; Tenai, *et al.*, 2009). Milanzi (2012) also examined export barriers in Africa from the perspective of firms in Tanzania. Elsewhere, Hopewell (2014) touched on the theory of dependent development to examine the state-private sector relationship in exports in Brazil and encouraged further studies in terms scope in other emerging and developing countries. We, therefore, extend the scope of existing research by examining the role of government and related agencies in supporting export competitiveness of SMEs, using evidence from Ghana's non-traditional export sector. This is pertinent since the existing literature has not given deserved attention to non-traditional exports. Competitiveness is defined as the degree to which, under free and fair market conditions, a country (through its SMEs for the purposes of this research) produces goods and services which meet the test of foreign competition (OECD, 1992, as cited in Bierut and Kuziemska-Pawlak, 2017). Extending the scope of research to cover an African country is timely as Africa is gradually increasing its importance in the global marketplace, and researchers have called for more business research on the continent (Damoah, 2018; Gomes *et al.*, 2018; Liou and Rao-Nicholson, 2017; You, *et al.*, 2018; Amankwah-Amoah, 2016). Increasing globalisation has made competitiveness essential for the survival of firms to encourage SMEs in their efforts to participate in the global marketplace (Coeurderoy, *et al.*, 2012; Richard and Sumner, 2008). According to Albaumb, *et*

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3 *al.*, (2011), the global marketplace presents both opportunities and challenges for firms in
4 developing countries. To be competitive exporting SMEs in developing economies, in
5 particular, would need to improve their capabilities (Tesfom and Lutz, 2006).
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10 According to Hinson (2011), the government of Ghana introduced interventionist processes
11 aimed at improving the competitiveness of non-traditional exports. The role of government
12 support programmes and related assistance in areas such as finance, innovation and export
13 facilitation have been crucial in assisting SMEs in their survival, export growth and
14 internationalisation (Awuah and Amal, 2011; Ali and Shamsuddoha, 2007). The majority of
15 existing research on exports from developing countries and Africa tend to focus more on the
16 traditional sectors. Traditional exports from Ghana, for example, include well-known raw
17 materials exploited over the years for foreign exchange such as gold, diamond, bauxite, timber
18 cocoa, etc. (Mmieh *et al* , 2012; Kyereboah-Coleman and Biekpe, 2006), and recently oil. All
19 other exports from Ghana, apart from those listed above, can be classified as non-traditional
20 exports (Kyereboah-Coleman and Biekpe, 2006); a similar definition was used in Hinson
21 (2011). Zaney (2019) in reference to the Export and Import Act, 1995 (Act 503) of Ghana also
22 describes non-traditional exports as all export products with the exception of cocoa beans,
23 lumber and logs, unprocessed gold and other minerals, and electricity. The pertinent issue of
24 how governments and their agencies in developing countries enhance the international
25 competitiveness of SMEs have been underexplored. To a large extent, the related issues within
26 the context of non-traditional horticultural exporters in sub-Saharan Africa have particularly
27 received little attention in the literature. This study aims to fill this gap, using evidence from
28 Ghana, as export promotion has been identified as a priority policy for the Ghanaian
29 government (MOTI, 2012). A competitive non-traditional sector could play a major role in
30 improving the revenue base of a developing country such as Ghana (Kyereboah-Coleman and
31 Biekpe, 2006). Whilst traditional exports contributed more than 80% to total export earnings,
32 non-traditional exports contributed about 17% (GEPA, 2013). There is an indication that the
33 non-traditional exports' contribution to the total export earnings can substantially be improved,
34 if SMEs were competitive in the international marketplace. It is hoped that non-traditional
35 exports could contribute about 30% of total export earnings in the near future (Zaney, 2019).
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56 Over the years, Export Promotion Agencies (EPAs) including the Federation of Associations
57 of Ghanaian Exporters (FAGE), Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA), Export
58 Development Investment Fund (EDIF), Exim Guaranty and other donor organisations have
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supported the non-traditional horticultural export (NTHE) sector to enhance export performance. Despite all the support, the sector has not performed as expected and has not been able to achieve its annual targets, as support to make the sector competitive has been inadequate, in spite of its strategic importance (GEPA, 2010; MOTI, 2012). To ensure the Ghanaian non-traditional exports (NTEs) sector becomes the real engine of export growth, SMEs would need to meet international standards to improve competitiveness. United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) (2007) posits that through competitiveness, export oriented SMEs could improve productivity, increase profitability as well as share of foreign market.

The objective of this research is therefore to examine the role and effectiveness of government and the EPAs in supporting SMEs in the non-traditional horticultural exports sector in Ghana. More specifically, this paper seeks to examine the following questions: (a) how do government policies enhance export competitiveness? (b) How do EPAs enhance the export competitiveness of SMEs? (c.) What inhibits the ability of EPAs to support SMEs in general and non-traditional horticultural exports (NTHEs) in particular? The rest of the paper is organised into seven sections: We review the literature in section 2, discuss the research methods in section 3, elaborate on the data analysis in section 4, present the findings in section 5. The discussion of findings is in section 6. We then conclude in section 7 with the contribution, theoretical and policy implications as well as the limitation and future research directions.

2. Literature Review

SMEs contribute significantly to employment creation and economic growth in Africa (Ayakwah, *et al.*, 2018; Damoah, 2018; Adams *et al.*, 2018). The internationalization of SMEs creates opportunities for increasing demand and business growth. In addition, although foreign firms have the potential to transfer knowledge to host country firms in Africa (Osabutey, Williams & Debrah, 2014), SMEs also have the opportunity to acquire knowledge through their active participation in the global marketplace (Love and Roper, 2014; Dewhurst *et al.*, 2012; Saixing, *et al.* 2009).

Damoah (2018) reviews two main streams of research on SMEs. The first stream refers to 'export intensity' which relates to an evaluation of what proportion of SMEs' total sales are

from exports. The second refers to ‘propensity to export’ which examines how SMEs are likely to export. In addition, he reviews other research themes which refer to entry modes, moderating factors and outcomes of the internationalisation of SMEs. Our research departs from the above streams by examining the roles governments could play to improve the competitiveness of SMEs from developing and emerging markets. Haddoud *et al.*, (2018) examined how institutions could contribute to managing export barriers. They applied the resource-based-view to explain how government institutions in North Africa could influence firms’ internationalisation. This study extends their work significantly by shifting the focus onto a Sub-Saharan African country. Furthermore, this study, uniquely, concentrates on non-traditional exports.

Saixing, *et al.* (2009) argue that internationalization of SMEs is a major feature of maximising business opportunities. Most studies on internationalization processes focus on franchising, exporting and foreign direct investments with exporting identified as the key approach for the internationalisation of SMEs (Westhead 2008). In a recent study, Love and Roper (2014) contend that firms that engage in exporting activities grow faster than non-exporters. Despite the increasing participation of SMEs in internationalisation, most studies focus on large firms. Thus, there is a need to pay much needed attention to internationalisation of SMEs with particular emphasis on their export capacities and how government institutions could improve the international competitiveness of SMEs (Awuah and Amal, 2011; Ali and Shamsuddoha, 2007). This is particularly important in developing countries in Africa where state action is expected to play a pivotal role in the economic progress of firms (Osabutey and Croucher, 2018).

There is a sustained policy focus on how to encourage SMEs to improve economic expansion and growth in the economies of developing countries (Naude, 2009; Rabiei, 2011). Non-traditional products have been described as agricultural products such as pineapple, yams, wood, cocoa, canned tuna, and oil palm (Mmieh, *et al.*, 2012). Owusu-Frimpong and Mmieh (2007) evaluated the marketing practices of non-traditional exporters in Ghana. However, their research focused on non-traditional exports in general without specific emphasis on horticulture. Besides, their data was from the perspective of the exporter. Research indicates that Ghana’s weak economic performance may be due to over-reliance on traditional exports with limited attention on the non-traditional sector (Mmieh, *et al.*, 2012; Debrah and Mmieh, 2009). You, *et al.*, (2018) evaluated the integration of African firms into the global value chain

through the experiences of Chinese and Finnish firms. Although they highlight how knowledge sharing would enhance competitiveness they did not pay attention to the non-traditional sector. The limited research on the potential and competitiveness of the non-traditional sector may have contributed to this obvious omission. Recent publications have attempted to highlight the increasing importance of horticulture to the Ghanaian economy. Ghana News Agency (2016) reported the Chief Executive Officer of Strategic Communications Africa as urging Ghana to pay attention to horticulture in the same way as oil and gold. A former Minister of Finance in Ghana re-echoed this view, by urging Ghanaians; especially the youth to take advantage of the opportunities horticulture presents (Ayamgha, 2016). Horticultural business centres have been set up to provide support for start-up SMEs (Laary, 2017). However, research on how such businesses internationalise and how they could be competitive in the international marketplace is limited. Existing research on horticulture has largely focused on either export success (Afari-Sefa, 2010; Agyei-Sasu and Egyir, 2010; Owusu-Frimpong and Mmieh, 2007) or food security (Van den Broeck and Maertens 2016; Afari-Sefa, 2010; 2007). Therefore, there is a significant research gap concerning the critical success factors of NTHes with views from government institutions virtually absent in the literature. This research is therefore timely, especially as various interest groups in Ghana begin to pay attention to the opportunities NTHes offer, evident in the setting up of dedicated incubators as well as increasing comments from government agencies and many other important stakeholders (Laary, 2017; Ghana News Agency, 2016). Competitiveness of horticultural products will enhance the contribution of the non-traditional exports to the GDP, which is believed to be increasing on annual basis (Mmieh, *et al.*, 2012; Afari-Sefa, 2010).

The competitiveness of SMEs in international markets has become an important topic. Di Gregorio *et al.* (2009), for example, investigated how offshore outsourcing could potentially reduce costs, extend relationships with foreign partners as well as improve access and capabilities to serve foreign customers more efficiently and thereby improve the overall competitiveness of SMEs. However, their research focused mainly on SMEs involved in manufacturing. Besides, they paid more attention to the capabilities of the SMEs rather than the assistance obtained from government or government agencies. The role of government and publicly funded services are important, even in developed countries, as for example, in the UK, survey indicates SMEs access to public funded services are on the rise (Business Link, 2012, cited in Hunter and Lean, 2014). Furthermore, it has been stated that government policies to provide financial and non-financial assistance improve the development of SMEs (Karaev, *et*

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3 *al.*, 2007). Similarly, using evidence from the medical industry, Rostek (2012) focused on the
4 capabilities of SMEs rather than on the role of government.
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9 The role of governments especially in developing and emerging markets is substantial
10 (Cavusgil, *et al.*, 2013), and their role in enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs is no
11 exception. The existing literature has explored the role of government in SMEs in general.
12 Bianchi and Noci (1998) examined the role of government only as part of the stakeholders
13 encouraging SMEs to be proactive rather than reactive in their environmental performance.
14 Though not solely focused on SMEs, Freixanet's (2012) research indicate that governments
15 have increased their budgets on export promotion programmes but there is limited research in
16 this area. Citing Brouthers and Wilkinson (2006) it was stated that sponsored trade fairs and
17 programs to identify agents and distributors relate positively to the satisfaction of SMEs and
18 their export success. Gebrewahid and Wald, (2017), in examining the footwear leather industry
19 in Ethiopia, observed that many SMEs from developing countries do not export due to several
20 challenges which include the level of competition in the international marketplace, and limited
21 marketing knowledge and capital. Chang and Webster (2018) also indicate that there is a
22 relationship between government clusters and the likelihood of SMEs' exports.
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34 This paper seeks to explore the impact of export facilitating institutions on SMEs in the export
35 of non-traditional horticultural products, highlighting the role of government in the exporters'
36 international competitiveness. There is a plethora of research on the role of government in
37 exports from emerging markets. These tend to, predominantly, focus on manufactured
38 products, traditional exports and the export activities of champion firms (Adams, *et al.*, 2018;
39 de Jonge, 2016; Chailan and Ille, 2015; Pradhan and Das, 2015; Malaver Copara, 2014). This
40 study departs from such stream of investigation, to make a unique contribution, by focusing on
41 the non-traditional exports. According to Buatsi (2003) non-traditional exports are all products
42 other than logs and lumber, cocoa beans, mining products, and unprocessed gold. The study
43 focuses on the following horticultural fresh produce: bananas, pineapples, mangoes, papaya
44 and vegetables. These crops are usually exported to international markets, especially EU
45 countries (Ibeh, *et al.*, 2012; Owusu-Frimpong and Mmieh, 2007), such as the UK and the
46 Netherlands (Osei, 2011). They can also be found in other West African countries. The main
47 question which remains to be answered is: how can government and government agencies
48 contribute in the competitiveness of NTHes in such markets? This is because the recipient EU
49 countries also receive similar products from other countries such as Brazil, Egypt and South
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Africa (Osei, 2011), and it is important that horticultural SMEs from Africa are able to compete favourably. Competitiveness of SMEs from Ghana is measured by their ability to increase their share of output and exports in the global marketplace (Owusu-Frimpong and Mmieh, 2007). At the moment firms appear not to have been able to meet their targets (GEPA, 2010).

The above question has not been fully explored. Mmieh *et al.*, (2012) examined the determinants of export marketing performance but focused on industry and firm perspectives. Ibeh, *et al.*, (2012) examined internationalisation of African firms in general, without paying attention to exports of non-traditional and horticultural products. Tenai *et al.*, (2009) also studied the competitiveness of SMEs operating in the horticultural sector in Kenya but investigated variables directly related to firm characteristics and capabilities such as size, sales value, attributes of the Chief Executive Officers, etc. without detailed emphasis on the role of government. Other studies discuss the role of network relationships in the internationalisation processes of SMEs (Zain and Ng, 2006) with specific focus on the Association of East Asian countries. Again, the emphasis was from firm perspectives. These gaps in the literature call for needed attention to other determinants of export performance of SMEs. Our focus on the role of the government and other bodies in contributing to competitiveness of SMEs depart from other research which rather seeks to reduce the role of government support (Richard and Sumner, 2008). It also provides significant response to calls on African governments and supranational institutions to provide the enabling environment to reduce transactional costs and ultimately improve the internationalisation of African firms (Ibeh, *et al.*, 2012).

In order to develop the constructs to answer the research question relating to the role of government and governmental institutions in improving competitiveness of SMEs involved in exports of horticultural products, existing literature on the role of government in supporting SMEs was examined. According to Mmieh *et al.*, (2012), governments in Sub-Saharan African countries, including Ghana, have taken initiatives to assist SMEs involved in exports. However, the nature and types of assistance have not been fully explored and evaluated. This research also seeks to fill these research gaps.

3. Research Methods

The main purpose of this study is to examine the role of government and the Export Promotion Agencies (EPAs) in the NTHEs sector in Ghana. Given the interpretivist nature of our research question, a qualitative approach was employed (Campaniaris *et al.*, 2011; Boyce, 2006). Given

the complexity and limited literature on the phenomenon being studied a semi-structured interview which enables participants to elaborate expansively on their realities was considered ideal (Gligor *et al.*, 2016). In doing so, we considered Welch and colleagues' (2011) critical realist approach which emphasises understanding the dynamics of a particular complex setting so as to generate contextual explanations that encompass both human intention and their position in the social structure. We followed Patton (2002), to select the interviewees using purposive sampling techniques in order to address the research questions and examine the context. In addition, to generate more generalizable findings, we selected six managers of six organisations which enabled replication logic (Yin 2009). For the purposes of our study, the data was collected from managers from the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI) and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA), and other quasi-government export supporting agencies (EPAs) including GEPA, EDIF, Exim Guaranty and FAGE. These organisations are considered to have a wide breadth of knowledge of all the activities, functions and operating environment of the SMEs in the exports sector (Frost *et al.*, 2002).

Interviews were conducted with six managers of six non-traditional export-facilitating institutions which play significant roles in non-traditional horticultural exports in Ghana. A semi-structured interview guide was sent to the interviewees ahead of the interview dates. The interviews were in two phases and took an average of 130 minutes, with the minimum taking 50 minutes and the maximum 180 minutes. The interviews were all digitally recorded and handwritten notes were also taken. Whilst the digital recorder enabled every detail of the interview conversation to be captured, the interviewer also took notes to capture additional information as well develop and note down probing questions.

Phase one of the interview was held with managers from MOTI and MOFA with a broad view to identify the extent of support government departments provided in terms of promoting the competitiveness of SMEs involved in horticultural exports from Ghana. The MOTI has a responsibility for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of Ghana's internal and external trade. This Ministry provides policy direction for Ghana's exports and industrial trade. MOFA, on the other hand, is responsible for formulating agricultural policies and providing support and training for SMEs to increase their production for exports and industrial processing. This investigation explored the role government institutions play regarding the

competitiveness of SMEs in international markets and assessed the nature and challenges involved in providing services, by MOTI and MOFA, to SMEs.

Phase two of the interviews involved four managers from the EPAs including GEPA, EDIF, Exim Guaranty and FAGE. Phase two explored the roles and services provided in the promotion of horticultural exports.

4. Data Analysis

The study adopts Braun and Clark (2006) approach of thematic analysis. The process of data analysis involved reading and re-assessing the transcripts several times. The procedure was to identify codes and categories and to obtain a sense of general themes. According to Braun and Clark (2006), the process of repeated reading and listening of recordings results in data immersion. In line with Strauss and Corbin (1998), and Miles and Huberman (1994), the transcribed data were coded, based on the research questions. The coding allows the condensation of the data into categories (Maxwell, 2005). The process enabled a clear and in-depth understanding of the operations of the export promotion agencies. Having grouped these codes into categories and into themes, the data was reviewed to ensure that all the initial codes were captured in the themes. A new folder was created for each theme and the coded data was 'copied and pasted' into its assigned folder. The data was now thematically 'arranged', while retaining their original context.

Furthermore, having arranged the data into categories and themes, the final stage was to re-read it in order to identify patterns and connections and then attempt to interpret its meaning. It is important to note, however, that 'interpretation of meaning' was also on-going from the early coding stage with reflections on ideas and reactions. A reflective stance was continuously maintained throughout the analyses. The thematic analysis helped to identify the key concepts. These concepts were essential in understanding the views from the participants. The data was analysed based on the six steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) for using thematic analysis. The following, adapted from Braun and Clark's (2006) model, describes the stages involved in the thematic analysis:

Stage I (Data familiarisation): Reading and re-reading transcripts carefully, to identify and formulate patterns. In addition, listening to the recordings enhanced familiarisation with the data before beginning formal data analysis.

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Stage II (Initial coding generation): Generating initial codes was influenced by the key elements of the research questions.

Stage III (Searching for themes): Transcripts were examined to identify themes which were reduced to four key categories

Stage IV (Review of the themes): All initial codes related to the research questions were combined into a theme at a second stage of coding using the data-led approach. The applicability of themes to the selected extracts and to the entire dataset was carefully checked.

Stage V (Theme definition and labelling): The process of developing sub-themes continued. The literature and data were revisited to be satisfied that the themes had been well-defined and labelled. Clear data patterns and data relationships emerged ready to be reported.

Stage XI (Report Writing): report writing is captured in the next section, where qualitative findings from government support institutions and EPAs based on the foregoing thematic analysis protocol had been reported.

Revealing responses were often quoted verbatim. The analysis unearthed themes with the categories within the data as shown in Tables 1 and Figure 1. The themes were identified through collating codes. The themes were then organised in a thematic analysis network (Attride-Stirling 2001; Braun and Clarke 2006), showing themes in a coherent manner, as presented in Figure 1.

Table 1 here

5. Presentation of Findings

In this section, we discuss the findings from the interview conducted at the two export facilitating government institutions (MOTI and MOFA) and the quasi-government agencies which play major roles in the horticultural exports industry. In presenting these findings, each section provides the emerging themes within the data and the related underpinning logic. Additional empirical evidence within the categories have been organised in a thematic analysis network (Attride-Stirling 2001; Braun and Clarke 2006) in Figure 1 below. Although some categories that overlap the key ones are considered for this study.

Figure 1 here

Phase 1: findings from MOTI and MOFA

The findings of the interviews with representatives from MOTI and MOFA are presented in the following sub-sections.

a) Performance of horticultural exporting sector

Horticultural products are doing well in international markets. In this regard even though, collectively, the general performance of horticultural exports remain good there are evident performance differences when evaluated on individual product basis. Pineapple, for instance, was facing major difficulties and respondents indicated the need for further interventions. The Coordinator of MOFA expressed this as:

‘The international market, as far as agricultural products are concerned... and we are quite competitive in many aspects and the time to market is in our advantage. However, we should be selective of what product to market at different periods of the year.’

In effect, to be competitive in the international market there is the need to, carefully, select the product/market to compete in. It is also important to select products that are supported by government and their agencies. On further examination of the current situation, it was observed that, the ministry, in collaboration with their agencies have already started some support and interventions towards the horticultural sector by addressing the needs of the pineapple farmers. As the Coordinator noted:

‘Strategically, these groups of farmers are able to cultivate relatively large tracks of lands and therefore would be beneficial to the farmers, if they are supported and

encouraged to diversify away from pineapples and into certain selected vegetables or possibly yam farming which have better prospect.'

The ministry further recommends that exporters/farmers should diversify into more profitable, sustainable and high value products such as melon. Exporters/farmers could diversify by using their current investments in pineapple to move horizontally into melon farming. This would guard them against fluctuations experienced in the pineapple market and enrich their cash flow because melon has a very short gestation period and could make two or more cycles annually, compared to pineapple which is harvested once or twice a year.

b) Knowledge of international competitiveness

Our data outlined that the agencies understand international competitiveness. The Co-ordinator of MOFA noted:

“The basic understanding of international competitiveness of horticultural SMEs, without recourse to technical or academic definitions, is the opportunity to be able to make your product attractive and available to the consumer; to demand and pick your products more than the other products...If you send your products to the international market and consumers are not picking, but rather demanding other products, then it means your products are not being competitive.”

The manager of MOTI is of the view that to be internationally competitive, there are many factors to consider. These include the availability of the quality products at the time when demand is high. Addressing these factors would ensure competitive advantage, provided the supplier and the buyer agree on acceptable price, quality consistency, time of delivery and quantity to be delivered.

c) International competitiveness benchmarks/standards

It was observed that the ministries do not have clearly defined measurements or benchmarks for international competitiveness. According to MOFA, the ministries have periodically commissioned studies for the purposes of benchmarking. In MOFA, for example, there have been benchmarks in terms of matching the cost structure of Ghana's pepper, okra and pineapple, to that of Costa Rica. Horticultural exporters in Costa Rica were mentioned as credible exporters who have gained global recognition in Europe in terms of good agricultural practices and could be used as a benchmark. It was further indicated that:

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'The measurements are based on how interviews are conducted with the farmers and how products are accepted on the international market. MOFA also look at statistics and compare to market shares that farmers/exporters have over the number of years. Are they losing out, are they gaining market shares, are our export volumes increasing or decreasing? These are the basic things we have been doing.'

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(d) Extended support for SMEs' international competitiveness

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Government plays a very significant role in the export sector. Based on the interviews with the officials at MOFA and MOTI, there is an indication that the government has put a number of strategies in place to support the competitiveness of the sector. These are particularly in the areas of finance, innovation and guaranteed related assistance. Firstly, the government will ensure that productivity improves by providing technical support to the exporters/farmers. Secondly, the government facilitates exporters to travel to participate in trade fairs to enable them observe the quality of their competitors' products, packaging and how they organise their businesses, whilst identifying the main barriers of competitiveness. Thirdly, the government has built 'pack house' storages at the seaports and airports which are available to exporters to store their produce immediately before export. Finally, the government has invested in regulatory agencies to ensure that they are able to perform their work appropriately.

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(e) Strategies adopted to improve the international competitiveness of horticultural products

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In order to understand the government's position on the support offered to SMEs who export horticultural products and to assess the extent to which the support helps to improve their international competitiveness, MOFA was required to identify specific strategies that would be adopted by the government to improve exporters' competitiveness. One such strategy was the training and building of local expertise that will support the producers and exporters with technical advice.

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In addition, the government used the Millennium Challenge Account Compact (MCAC) established by the Millennium Development Authority (MDA) for horticultural industry initiated projects such as post-harvest infrastructure initiatives, to support export marketing and quality awareness projects. The Millennium Challenge Account has supported major horticultural firms by providing assistance in the establishment of pack houses and cooling facilities. As part of the strategies the government established export development and agricultural investment fund to make available funding for those in the exports industry.

(f) Government's future plans for horticultural SMEs

MOFA indicated that in the agricultural investment plan of the food and agricultural policy, the horticultural and non-traditional sectors feature prominently. This is what the representative of MOFA said on the subject:

'If you look at the seven pillars of the policy, some of them are very relevant. We are talking about food security, nutritional security as well as quality and reliability in horticultural produce. The consumption of agricultural produce will go a long way to provide help to the nutritional quality of the food intake and health benefit and food security and income generation in horticultural produce and income generation of farmers.'

The above confirms the impact of government policy on horticulture and also highlights local consumption as well as income generation through exports.

(g) Major challenges facing non-traditional horticultural export sector

Although there are continuous governmental efforts to facilitate and increase production of non-traditional products for exports, the sector is still facing some challenges in the areas of finance, productivity, land acquisition and bureaucracy (long and complex processes and procedures).

i. Financial

The non-traditional export sector in Ghana continues to face difficulties in accessing export finance. It became evident during the interviews that lack of horticultural financing is a huge factor confronting the sector. It was revealed that the available source of finance is short-term horticultural financing. However, long-term horticultural financing that would meet the gestation period for their produce and, probably, cater for their farming equipment is difficult to obtain. EDIF and EximGuaranty are the two EPAs which have been identified by the government to provide financial support to the sector. Access to finance has been identified as a dominant constraint facing the Ghanaian SME sector. The procedures for accessing and obtaining available financing from the government-sanctioned financial providers for SMEs, are not clear to the NTHes. Hence the NTHes are unable to utilise channels available to the SME sector for financial support. EximGuaranty, which is now known as Exim Bank, were of the view that the sector was not performing to any appreciable standard due to difficulties in obtaining financial support. This affects their operations and growth. Financial institutions

have their own perceptions about agriculture, especially small-scale farming, which forms a large percentage of the sector. They see the sector as risky and are hesitant in making funding available to them.

The lack of awareness has contributed to the low user levels of the various financing initiatives among SMEs. Another concern is that not all SMEs are aware of other financial opportunities. There should be policy actions by the government players (MOFA and MOTI) in providing useful information regarding the various sources of finance. This could be in the form of campaigns to educate the SMEs on what is available, and how to apply and pursue the various financing opportunities. Eligibility criteria should be made more flexible to enable more SMEs to qualify for access to these funds. These policy directions would go a long way to improve Ghanaian SMEs' access to long-term financing to spur growth. The SMEs have always struggled to find working capital to start their businesses and this issue has affected the industry in general.

ii. Productivity

Facilities that improve productivity in order to increase output for exports do not usually exist in SMEs in the export sector. Global market access and international trade opportunities exist but producers in Ghana need to increase productivity as well as the quality and quantity of their outputs to meet international demand. The degree to which horticultural SME exporters can exploit these market opportunities depends on the facilities and conditions that exist in the sector.

iii. Land acquisition

To advance the export competitiveness of non-traditional horticultural SMEs, certain critical facilities are required, particularly agricultural land for production. Horticulture has special needs, and acquisition and tenure are problematic. As noted by MOFA, the land tenure system in Ghana is another factor confronting the non-traditional horticultural export sector:

'Acquiring land in Ghana is a big problem and you have to deal with multiple people when acquiring land for agricultural production in Ghana...Communities are willing to use their lands as equity rather than outright sale of the land because people are emotionally attached to their lands and become irrational when they feel they are losing it forever. They will rather see the land lying fallow than being 'taken away' from them.'
(MOFA official)

MOFA suggested that land boundaries have to be dealt with to encourage people with lands to register these lands through Ghana Investment Promotion Authority and MOFA. If that is done, then inventory of the lands could be taken to make acquisition of land easy.

iv. Exporters' collaboration

It was also revealed that most farmers operate in small fields and their farms are spread over a large stretch of land. This makes it very difficult to bring them together in a manner which would be efficient. It also reduces opportunities for networking. For instance, one farmer is located at a distance of about a kilometre of land and the next person is 2km away. The following was expressed by the MOFA official:

'Linking our small operators and integrating these small operators is a challenge. The small operators are unwilling to work together as a group and it therefore becomes difficult to introduce an irrigation system for the farmers.'

The government of Ghana has initiated projects in the non-traditional horticultural sector and has invested in an irrigation system. However, most farmers cannot access these irrigation systems because the farms are scattered and are distant from each other. This problem has prevented the government from introducing an irrigation system in most farming areas.

Finally, apart from the challenges above, MOFA further stated that the local market supply chains were under-developed. If the local market is properly developed, there would be proper storage facilities to store fruits under the right hygienic conditions and spoilage would be reduced.

Phase 2: findings from Export Promotion Agencies

This section presents the interviews held with four (4) EPAs namely, Ghana Export Promotion Authority, Federation of Associations of Ghanaian Exporters, Export Development Investment Fund and EximGuaranty.

(a) Current performance of the horticultural sector

Views from EPAs on the performance of horticultural exporting firms were investigated as supporters of horticultural exports. To start with, in evaluating the performance of horticultural exporting firms, the representatives from EPAs were interviewed about their views on SMEs international performance. The EPAs commended SMEs involved in horticultural exports for

their contributions towards the development of the Ghanaian economy since the introduction of non-traditional exports. Although SMEs were applauded for their contributions, it was observed that the performance of non-traditional horticultural exports could still be improved significantly.

It can be argued that the challenges facing the horticultural exporting sector are surmountable, with effective competitive strategies. It must be through the concerted effort of the government, EPAs and the exporters together, to make this happen. The SMEs also experience other forms of limitation (some of which are mentioned above) such as production capacity (to meet orders from external buyers), product quality and high operational costs due to currency exchange rates.

FAGE also agreed that the performance of SMEs is lacking in many areas. They observed an increase in orders from the international markets because of improving quality of products from some Ghanaian SMEs. Outputs from Ghana have the additional advantage of having a shorter flying distance to the EU market compared to some competitors from Asia and South America. However, The Ghanaian SMEs are sometimes unable to increase their production capacities to meet international demand. There are too many small-scale farmers and because they are not coordinated, they are unable to take advantage of the high demand for their products. FAGE further mentioned the issue of currency exchange rates as the Ghanaian Cedi is usually unstable.

(b) Challenges facing export promotion agencies

The following factors were revealed as some of the major issues confronting the horticultural export sector.

i. Finance

It became evident during the interviews that lack of financial resources was a major problem for the EPAs. It was observed that all the agencies lack finances as they depend entirely on the government's subvention for their operations. The government is the major source of financing to the agencies; occasionally donors would make contributions to the agencies. This may have contributed to the inadequate support given to the SMEs. Finance remains a big issue as captured below:

'Banks in Ghana charge a commercial rate, cumulatively, nothing less than 36 % per annum. Export development and industry, agricultural funds are also charging 2.5% on

loans which are acceptable, even if it is 5% or 7% I would accept, but they charge the commercial bank 2.5% and commercial bank charge us 12.5%. I do not understand this logic. It does not make sense to me. Who are they attempting to help, the banks or the farmers? It makes no sense. A commercial institute who is making money, and they have to pay 2.5% and me the farmer should pay 12.5%. I would give EDIF 5% than to give the bank 10% so that the fund can grow and more farmers can access' (NTHE).

FAGE in support noted that the banks offer loans for 12 months and factor in commercial interest rates. If the NTHes ship their first consignment, they would require the same amount of money to do the next shipment. The NTHes would rather need a business that could earn twice the interest they earn so that they can pay for their loan and still have enough financial resources to do the next export.

ii. Production capacity

EPAs revealed that many exporters lack capacity to meet demand from abroad.

GEPA suggested that lack of production capacity to meet demand can partly be attributed to the inability to secure land for farming. GEPA expressed worry about the situation where farm lands are used for estate development. GEPA further stated that in order to address this situation, there should be proper land policies.

EDIF also suggested that SMEs involved in exports should leverage on their production volume, otherwise they would not be sustained in the market, and should be seen to be working together rather than competing amongst themselves. The Ghana National Chamber of Commerce and Industry should be seen in the front line to help educate SMEs to find ways of working together to take advantages of the export market.

(c) Extent of EPA support for SME export competitiveness

EPAs were asked to indicate the type and extent of support they provide to horticultural exporting firms. GEPA outlined a catalogue of services it provides to exporters. These include provision of training and information about markets and production. Sometimes they do import seeds for the SMEs because some of the seeds are not found in Ghana. EDIF engages with the SMEs to develop their credit worthiness for access to finance and for infrastructural needs. Thus, as long as the exporter goes to the bank and is able to convince the institution that they do successful export business, EDIF would try to give grants to enable the association and government agencies to support the export businesses of SMEs. FAGE surprisingly stated:

'We know our problems and we have our solutions. But FAGE has its own challenges which are non-profit organisation so any other activity you outsource is not for free. If you want to bring in people as staff, it is not for free, but the law says FAGE is a non-profitable organisation so it is difficult to do what we want to do. We have now sourced finance for our operations. It makes it difficult for FAGE to do what we actually must do and to have an impact on our members.'

EPAs have the responsibility to develop the NTE horticulture sector, and to assist the exporters. Although they have made an impact on the NTE sector, EPAs have not effectively co-ordinated the SMEs to deliver competitive produce for exports. It can be said that the EPAs have not been effective in benchmarking with successful exporting countries to enable them improve on their performance and competitiveness. They need to cooperate with each other in terms of formulating policies that can stimulate the horticultural exporters into world-class exporters. It would be difficult to take the horticultural export sector forward if they cannot coordinate and operate as one body.

FAGE has a responsibility to advocate and to co-ordinate and improve the operations of horticultural exporters, but has not successfully achieved it. Similarly, the situation confirms the view of Hogan *et al.*, (1991) that trade promotion agencies in developing countries are ineffective because they have inadequate funding, are too bureaucratic, are not client-oriented, and usually have persistent government involvement. For improved export performance well-resourced, competent and dynamic EPAs are required.

(d) Future plans for SME competitiveness

The EPAs were asked to comment on the future plans for the exporting firms. EDIF expressed that it is in the process of developing a strategic plan, but for it to be effective there is the need for collaboration with players in the industry to achieve a holistic solution. Setting up incubators for horticulture farmers is a good start. However, this should be extended to SMEs exporting such products to enhance their competitiveness. GEPA indicated that they will be meeting to look at areas of improvement.

EximGuaranty has been working directly with the banks and sometimes meet with the SMEs to build their capacities. EximGuaranty would like to target the SMEs, provide them with the required financial information to support them in their decisions to take a loan from the bank. That is, they would prefer SMEs to meet with them first before they approach the banks for

any financial assistance. They are also ready to provide advice on management of SMEs' finances.

6. Discussion

This paper examined the role of government and the EPAs in the NTHE sector in Ghana. Our empirical results relating to performance of horticultural exporting sector show that, the two ministries (MOTI and MOFA) recognise the need to support the sector to perform in the highly competitive international business environment. Given the role the sector plays in the development of the economy, it is imperative that horticultural exporting firms are well resourced and effectively positioned to compete and survive in the international markets. The findings are broadly consistent with findings elsewhere (Mmieh *et al.* 2012; Awuah and Amal, 2011; Ali and Shamsuddoha, 2007).

Our findings suggest that the ministries have not been effective in benchmarking in line with successful exporting countries, to improve the operations of horticultural exporting firms. They seem to lack standard benchmark indicators for effective measurements (e.g. Global GAP certification). According to Nadvi (2008) global standards are considered as global benchmarks for best practice and thus inform the external stakeholders that the firm meets global standards. For instance, MOFA cited Costa Rica but appeared not to have adopted any policy from this country to improve on the competitiveness of Ghanaian SMEs. If Ghanaian horticultural exporting firms could effectively compete in the international arena, then robust models and practices of successful competitors such as Costa Rica must be adopted or adapted. The Ghanaian government would need to develop strategies to support the sector to enhance the international competitiveness of SMEs.

Firstly, the government and their agencies would need to ensure that productivity improves by providing technical support to the exporters/farmers. Where the sector lacks local expertise, the government should bring in external consultants who would need to interact with local experts to provide support to farmers for productivity enhancement.

Secondly, the government facilitates exporters to travel to participate in trade fairs to enable them observe the quality of their competitors' produce, packaging and how they organise their businesses, whilst identifying the main barriers of competitiveness (Awuah and Amal, 2011; Ali and Shamsuddoha, 2007).

Thirdly, continuous infrastructure development is required. For example, over the last decade, Ghana has invested in improving the road networks in the farming (growing) areas to help farmers reduce their production cost. The government has also built 'pack house' storages at the seaports and airports which are available to exporters to store their produce immediately before export. This storage helps maintain the quality of the produce before they are exported. For example, perishable products stored under the right temperature conditions in the pack house facilities will maintain the product quality before export. There is also a fruit terminal at the Tema port where fruits in transit can be stored under optimum temperature and condition to maintain good quality of produce.

Finally, the Government has invested in regulatory agencies to ensure that they are able to perform their work appropriately. All these are part of strategies government has put in place to support the competitiveness of the sector. According to Awuah and Amal (2011), the role of government programmes in countries like Bangladesh and India has been helpful in export growth and internationalisation. These are particularly in the areas of finance, innovation and guaranteed related assistance.

Although there is a continuous governmental effort to facilitate and increase production of non-traditional produce for exports, the sector is still facing some challenges in the areas of: Finance, productivity, land acquisition and bureaucracy (long processes and procedures). It became evident that lack of horticultural financing is a huge factor confronting the sector. The available source of finance is short-term horticultural financing, but long-term horticultural financing that would meet the gestation period for their produce and, probably, cater for their farming equipment is difficult to obtain. Access to finance has been identified as a dominant constraint facing the Ghanaian SME sector (Owusu-Frimpong and Mmieh, 2007; Van Biesebroeck, 2005). Another concern is that not all SMEs are aware of other financial opportunities outside the EPAs (Abor and Biekpe, 2006). There should be some policy actions by the government ministries (MOFA and MOTI) in providing useful information regarding the various sources of finance. These policy directions would go a long way to improve Ghanaian SMEs' access to long-term financing to spur growth (Mmieh, *et al.*, 2012, Owusu-Frimpong and Mmieh, 2007).

In addition, there is inadequate government support and, access to export financing and access to specific markets in the EU remained key problems to horticultural exporters as expressed by

EPAs. Addressing this, the government should support them more directly, with increased production and technical support as well as concessions as in other countries.

With regards to productivity and its relative importance to NTHE international competitiveness, we identify that facilities for productivity expansion to achieve output expansion in export production do not exist in the horticultural SME export sector. The extent to which horticultural SME exporters can exploit international market opportunities depend on the facilities and conditions that exist in the sector (Luo & Tung 2007).

The Coordinator of MOFA acknowledged that EPAs must not work in isolation, but in the interest of the whole body. EPAs are expected to be proactive and show professionalism. They should be autonomous rather than depending on donors because donors would dictate their agenda and this may not be in the interest of the SMEs. EPAs must be able to lobby the government and be equal partners in development than being technocrats. Because they are autonomous, they have very little influence on government policies. Though EPAs have made an impact on the horticultural export sector, they have not effectively co-ordinated to enhance the competitiveness of the SMEs. To ensure that the NTE sector becomes the real engine of growing Ghana's exports will require more dynamic and more competent EPAs in terms of delivering their services to the horticultural exporting firms.

7. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was to explore the role of government and their agencies in enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs involved in non-traditional horticultural exports. The study highlights lack of horticultural financing as a huge factor confronting the sector. The available source of finance is short term horticultural financing, but long term horticultural financing that would meet the gestation period for their produce and probably cater for their farming equipment are difficult to obtain. Though EPAs have made an impact on the horticultural export sector, they have not effectively co-ordinated to enhance the competitiveness of the SMEs.

The study makes several contributions to theory and practice. First, practically, NTHes need the support of government and EPAs to succeed. Government and their agencies can improve co-ordination and the NTHes' willingness to build and use trust-based networks and relationships, particularly with trade associations and other facilitators like foreign missions to enhance their ability to compete effectively in the international markets.

Second, the study also revealed that many exporters lack production capacity to meet orders from abroad. Lack of production capacity to meet demand can partly be attributed to the inability to secure land for farming. The government, through the land tenure system in Ghana, must ensure that acquisition of farm lands does not hinder the activities of the NTHes. Presently, the acquisition and tenure of agricultural land for production are problematic for the NTHes.

Third, most farmers cannot access the government-initiated irrigation systems because the farms are scattered and are distant from each other. As individual exporters, most NTHes do not have the resources to compete favourably in the international markets. It is therefore suggested that NTHes, who lack needed resources to succeed, should collaborate in groups to export their products to benefit from a united force.

Finally, there is the understanding that having policies for SME exporters will not address specific needs but knowledge of international markets would rather enhance the implementation of certain policies to support SME international competitiveness.

Overall, the study contributes to export knowledge and international business literature, and the overall performance of NTHE exports in Ghana, and this might be applied in other developing and emerging countries with caution. To advance the export competitiveness of non-traditional horticultural SMEs, certain critical facilities are required, particularly agricultural land for production. It is recommended that guidelines for acquisition of farm lands for cultivation of produce must be streamlined by the government. The government must give incentives or make it attractive for land owners to release their lands for purchase or lease to the NTHes for farming. Where necessary, the government should lease the land from the landowners and sublet to the NTHes. The government should also assist SMEs to secure long-term finances required for investments in export business.

It is also suggested that policy makers should be more proactive in developing export market niche strategies as well as develop robust export competitiveness benchmarks. Policy makers and practitioners who want to improve horticultural exporting firms' international competitiveness should develop more appropriate export led programmes to ensure competitiveness.

Limitations and future research

The first concern is the generalisation of the results. The study examines the determinants of Ghanaian NTHes which may not be applicable to other sectors. In addition, the study focused only on Ghana. More studies on other countries in sub-Saharan Africa such as Kenya, South Africa, and Cote d'Ivoire could provide opportunities to learn about how they have achieved sustained growth in their export earnings from non-traditional products. Since the perception and experiences of the exporters might be different, it would be useful to learn from other developing and economies so as to compare major variables. Future studies should test the key variables in other emerging or developed economies. Future research should extend the scope of this study by incorporating relevant export products such as handicrafts, cashew and other non-traditional products.

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Table 1 Thematic Analysis: Codes

	CODES		
PROJECT COORDINATORS	Positions	1. Productivity challenges 2. Agriculture expansion challenges 3. Financial challenges, 4. Expansion challenges 5. Unavailable horticultural financing 6. Land acquisition problem, 7. High interest rate	Challenges
Coordinate the activities of both the specialist and implementing agencies as well as our suppliers and contractors.	Job Role	1. Travel support 2. Infrastructure support 3. Regulatory agency support 4. Technical support 5. Storage support	Government Support
To manage and coordinate the project to ensure that the objectives are achieved and so I supervise the general specialist that oversee the implementation of the project	Key Functions	6. Credit guarantees > access funds> banks 7. Financial assistance> non-traditional export 8. Promotion> product + market development 9. Advocates	Job Roles
We have partners who work with us and who are also on the field; that assist farmers and operators to improve their productivity and enhance their income	External Partners	1. Road network investment 2. Funding strategies (Millennium challenge account) 3. Skilled development 4. Capacity building	Strategies
Feeder roads, Ghana Standards Authority, Horticultural Trade Associations, contractors' consultants.	External Agencies	1. Government food security policies (the seven pillars) 2. NTHE collaboration 3.	Future Plans

We provide and facilitate their travel to trade fairs and they are able to observe the quality of their competitors' produce, packaging and how they organize businesses,	Travel support	Feeder roads, Ghana Standards Authority, Horticultural Trade Associations, contractors' consultants.	External Agencies
The government has also built pack houses to enable our exporters have access to pack houses to enhance quality of their produce	Infrastructure support	Training about market and production, Training on agro chemicals	Training
Government has invested in regulatory agencies to ensure they are able to perform their work better.	Regulatory support		Export Investments
To ensure that their productivity improves therefore we provide technical support in the country and out of the country,	Technical support	African Development Bank, UNIDO World Bank	Donor support
Banana, pineapples, mangoes, papayas, oranges, Asian vegetable which includes chillis, okra, garden eggs and the various coconuts	Main Horticultural Export Produce	Banana, Pineapples, Mangoes, Papayas, Oranges, Asian vegetable	Main Horticultural Produce
We have a perishable centre so that the exporters can store their produce under the right condition. We have a fruit terminal at the Tema port where fruits in transit can be stored under optimum temperature and condition all to ensure quality is goods.	Storage support		
Technical supports- Bringing in expertise and building local expertise are strategies that government used,	Skill development		
Establishment of an export development investment fund which has now become an export development and agricultural investment fund.	Export development fund		
Millennium Challenge Account Compact was used to build those roads and post-harvest infrastructure,	Funding Strategies		
The African Development Bank, UNIDO provides training on technical and ISO standards so that their test would be accredited internationally	Donors		
Seven pillars of the policy food security, nutrition, security as good quality, reliability horticulture produce consumption of agricultural process	Government food security policies		
Productivity challenges that we are yet to cure, not very good at innovating,	Productivity Challenges		
Financing horticultural is still a problem because we do not have appropriate horticultural financing.	Unavailable horticultural financing		
have problem with land acquisition.	Land acquisition problem		
MARKETING MANAGERS	Position		
Provide credit guarantees to SMEs want to access funds from their banks	Provide a credit guarantee		
It is very difficult to expand because banks naturally have their own perception about anything agriculture, managers of thr farms or SME Managers may not have the requisite knowledge to manage their own businesses	Expansion challenges		
Provide capacity building, train them as to how to manage their businesses, how to keep records of orders	Capacity building		

Provide a holistic solution to the money problems they have.	Government Support		
Government agency providing financial assistance to non-traditional export.	Provide financial assistance		
They are doing very well just that I cannot put my hand on the figures. The greatest challenges were the problem that the pineapple sector faces because they were the main drivers.	SME Performance		
Our institution does not look at the back end. We look at your financial needs so long as you go to the bank.	Job role		
Market research can tell them the loop holes. Then they can use it to come out with a program to enhance export competitiveness.	Market research		
We are in the process of developing a strategic plan. need to be collaborating for players in the market for a holistic solution.	Future Strategies		
Go down to production volumes, equally all challenges that the three sectors are facing.	Production challenges		
Marketing Manager	Position		
Promotion of non-traditional export. Product development and market development	Job Role		
They have done a good job. Farmers of the small ones have helped by providing for export.	SME Performance		
Give them training about the market, production etc. Import seeds because some of the seeds are not found in Ghana .Some do not have the foreign exchange to import	Training about market and production		
Finance is a problem because getting a loan attracts a high interest rate, Also land for this is used for estates. There should be proper land policies.	High interest rate		
Project Coordinator	Position		
Policy arm of government. The trade ministry looks at the aspect of production all the way into the market. Also run a specific intervention program implemented through the various divisions	Job Role		
They are performing differently. Pineapple for instance is currently facing a lot of difficulties need a lot of intervention.	SME Performance		
To be internationally competitive there are many factors to address	Support for SME		
Train more and more farmers, particularly the small holders in the use of agro chemicals	Training on agro chemicals		
Need to deploy more irrigation facilities and infrastructure to be able to cultivate during the dry season, which is the off season in the major market so we can supply those markets.			
Knowledge capacity and skills of the operators in collaboration with the ministry of trade and agriculture and some NGOs, these would be accelerated during the export strategy implementation.	Future Strategies		
Medium to large scale processes will need a different set of intervention.. The ministry is working with them to address these problems. other problem is with the land especially within the pineapple belt	Challenges Facing the sector		
Need to build up capacity utilization in the existing factories because they produce under capacity, which has to do with raw materials available and working capital availability	Capacity Utilization		

Advocate case by case specific to various interest groups and certain things that concern the group activity and their interest would be taken care	Job Role		
It is not the best. Ghana has advantages like flying distances, but the production we are not able to meet them.	SME Performance		
In terms of financial and logistics it is best same interest would come together so would be able to leverage unity to compete.			
The government does not have money to support them to a point and they must have support in other for them to be competitive.	Financial Challenges		
Our research institutions are not focused and addressing our present horticultural challenge so we have a weak research support system.	Weak research support		
Ghana has invested in improving the road networks in the growing areas so that they can reduce transaction costs	Road network investment		
Small operators are unwilling to work together as a group. So that makes it very difficult to bring them together in a manner which is efficient and they are spread all over.			

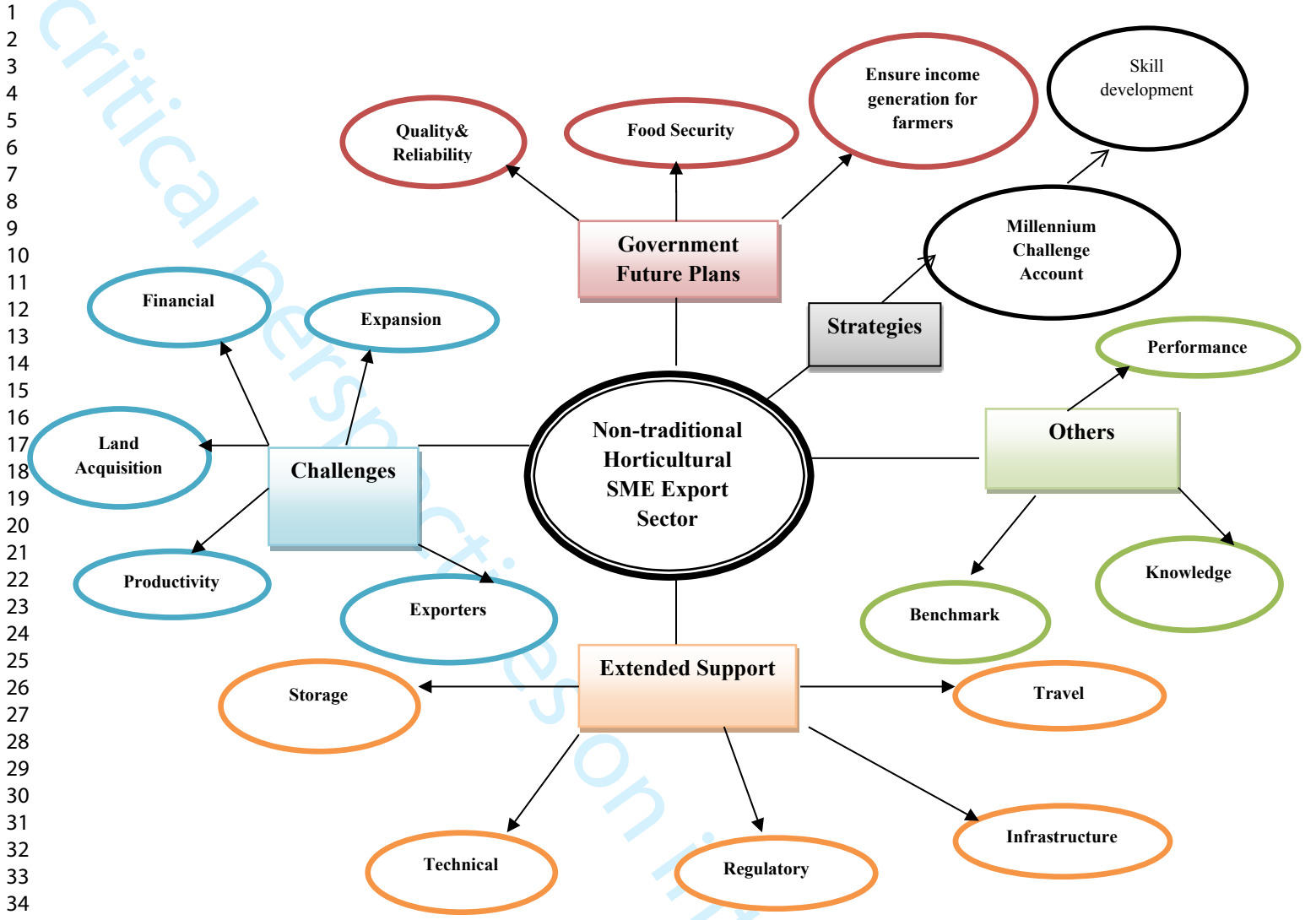


Figure: 1 Thematic Analysis Network- showing Categories Grouped into Clusters