

## Tomato: Association says increased production will attract foreign investments

The Tomatoes and Orchid Producers Association of Nigeria (TOPAN), on Monday advised the Federal Government to look into sensitisation of farmers on tomato farming to increase yield per hectare.

The association's president, Mr Job Oyeleke, told the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) in Lagos that by increasing yields, foreign investors would be attracted to the sector to develop tomato paste production.

Oyeleke made the assertion against the backdrop of the Federal Government's plan to totally ban importation of tomato products by 2021.

He said the ban would ensure that unwholesome tomato import into the country was reduced to the barest minimum and to promote food security and safety, describing as worrisome the qualities of imported products.

The "Federal Government's proposed ban of tomato products by 2021 is a good development for our tomato industry and it is also a good one for our tomato farmers.

"When you look at the importation of tomato paste, the quality is not developing the nation's food safety. The problem is that the country is not always concerned about the quality of what comes into the nation.

"The content of tomato in the paste brought into the country is just about two per cent, while others are chemicals, so Nigerians are not even consuming edible tomato paste.

"It is now very important for government to start farmers' advocacy on increased production of the commodity thereby increasing yields per hectare from between 15 and 25 tonnes to at least 60 tonnes," Oyeleke said.

He also called for a level playing field that would attract investors to invest in processing of tomato paste after government must have assured them of the production of raw materials.

"What government should do is to ensure a level playing field that will allow tomato paste processing to thrive. The tomato industry is huge and government should start looking at increased production.