

Trade & Commerce Transformation Policy Recommendation

Ghana Agenda 2046 – From Trade Deficit to Trade Sovereignty

Prepared by
Black Star Summit 2026



Submitted to:
Ministry of Trade and Industry

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Problem Statement

Ghana's trade and commerce sector is constrained by a cluster of structural problems that suppress domestic enterprise, inflate the cost of living, and prevent the country from earning its full potential from the global economy. The Black Star Summit Trade & Commerce Breakout Session identified three critical systemic failures. First, an excessive dependency ratio – Ghana imports far more than it exports, locking the economy into a chronic trade deficit and exposing it to external price shocks. Second, prohibitively high importation rates and clearance duties that choke both formal traders and small-scale importers, making goods expensive for consumers and reducing competitiveness for manufacturers who rely on imported inputs. Third, a fragmented and underdeveloped domestic commercial ecosystem in which small and medium enterprises (SMEs) lack access to finance, technology, markets, and the institutional support needed to grow. Compounding these failures is a deep-seated cultural mindset that treats trade and commerce as “someone else's responsibility” – the domain of politicians or large corporations – rather than as a citizen-led, entrepreneurially driven engine of national development.

Vision

Vision Statement

A Ghana in which trade and commerce is an open, inclusive, and competitive arena accessible to every citizen – from the market trader in Makola to the exporter in Tema. A Ghana that produces goods and services the world wants to buy, that earns fair value for what it exports, that reduces its dependence on costly imports by building domestic enterprise, and that champions good policy so that moving goods across borders – in and out – is an opportunity, not an obstacle.

Proposed Solution

Ghana Agenda 2046: Trade & Commerce deploys \$100 million as catalytic capital across five integrated strategic pillars. The China Trade Model – affirmed by the breakout session as the most instructive reference point – provides the strategic orientation: state-backed infrastructure for trade, aggressive export promotion, domestic value addition, and the discipline to produce at scale and compete globally. The five pillars are: (1) Trade Facilitation and Duty Reform; (2) Domestic Value Addition and Export Development; (3) Digital Commerce and Mobile Financial Systems; (4) SME and Informal Trader Empowerment; and (5) Trade Education, Civic Mindset and Policy Advocacy. The framework is explicit that building a trade economy is not the government's responsibility alone – it is a charge to every Ghanaian citizen to serve, be active, build, and take up responsibility.

Funding Request

Total Funding Request: \$100,000,000 (Catalytic Investment Framework)

This proposal requests \$100 million as catalytic capital to seed structural trade reform, not as the permanent funding base of Ghana's trade and commerce system. The investment is designed to unlock co-financing from private sector actors, international trade partners, AfCFTA mechanisms, and increased domestic revenue generated by a more productive, formalised trading economy.

Expected National Impact

If fully implemented over 20 years (2026–2046), Ghana Agenda 2046: Trade & Commerce will deliver:

- Reduce Ghana's trade deficit by 40% through expanded export earnings and reduced dependency on imported finished goods
- Reduce import duty and clearance costs by 35% for SMEs and small-scale traders through policy reform and digital customs systems
- Increase the share of locally produced value-added goods in total exports from below 20% to at least 50%
- Register and formalize 80% of informal traders with access to mobile money, digital commerce tools, and social protection
- Achieve 90% mobile money penetration among traders and SMEs for business transactions by Year 10
- Establish active industry-trade education linkages in 100% of secondary and tertiary institutions by Year 15
- Triple Ghana's non-traditional export revenues within 20 years
- Reduce the cost of cross-border trade within ECOWAS and AfCFTA by 30% through bilateral and multilateral advocacy

BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Current Situation in Ghana

Ghana's economy is endowed with natural resources, agricultural wealth, and a growing services sector, yet its trade and commerce landscape is characterized by structural imbalances that prevent these assets from translating into widespread prosperity. The breakout session surfaced the following key challenges, grounded in both data and direct participant experience:

High Dependency Ratio

Ghana's trade balance is chronically negative. The country imports a disproportionate share of finished consumer goods, machinery, and processed food – much of which could be produced domestically with the right investment in manufacturing and agro-processing. This dependency creates vulnerability to global price shocks, depreciates the cedi through sustained demand for foreign exchange, and exports jobs that could be created at home.

High Importation Rates and Clearance Costs

Import duties, port charges, and clearance costs at Ghana's ports are among the highest in the West African sub-region. Traders – particularly small-scale importers – face a maze of charges that incentivise informal and irregular importation, reduce compliance, and inflate the cost of goods for consumers. The breakout session noted that less expensive and more efficient importing pathways exist but are not widely known or accessible, particularly to small traders. High clearance costs also deter legitimate businesses from using formal channels, further narrowing the tax base.

Weak Value Addition and Export Competitiveness

Ghana continues to export primarily raw and semi-processed commodities – cocoa beans, gold ore, crude oil, timber logs – at prices determined by international markets, while importing processed versions of the same commodities at a significant markup. The value addition gap is a structural economic loss. The breakout session explicitly raised the question: what kind of value needs to be added to locally produced goods to improve their value on the export market? This is the central economic challenge that this policy is designed to address.

Currency Barriers in Cross-Border Trade

Currency convertibility and the volatility of the Ghana Cedi create significant friction in cross-border trade, particularly for small businesses trading within ECOWAS. Currency risk raises the cost of trade finance, discourages long-term commercial relationships, and limits Ghanaian businesses' ability to participate effectively in regional markets. The breakout session identified currency barriers as a priority problem requiring both domestic and regional diplomatic solutions.

Limited Digital Commerce Penetration

Ghana's mobile money ecosystem – led by MTN MoMo and Vodafone Cash – is one of the most developed in Africa, yet its penetration into formal business transactions, SME supply chains, and cross-border trade finance remains limited. Many small traders still operate on cash, foregoing the efficiency, safety, and traceability that digital financial tools provide. E-commerce adoption among SMEs is nascent, and the legal and regulatory framework for digital commerce requires modernization.

Mindset and Civic Engagement Deficit

Perhaps the most distinctive insight from the breakout session was the identification of a civic and cultural challenge: the widespread belief that building Ghana's trade economy is "one particular person's responsibility" – meaning politicians, government, or large corporations. The session was emphatic: change is not for only politicians. Everyone is involved in building the country. Trade and commerce education must begin in lower schools and continue through to university. Activism – civic engagement, advocacy for good policy, and collective action – is a legitimate and necessary tool for commercial transformation.

Why This Matters Now

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), headquartered in Accra, represents the single largest market liberalisation opportunity in Ghana's history: a single market of 1.3 billion people and a combined GDP of over \$3 trillion¹. Ghana's ability to benefit from AfCFTA depends entirely on whether Ghanaian businesses can produce competitive, value-added goods and services for that market. Without structural trade reform – reduced duties, improved logistics, digital commerce infrastructure, SME support, and a culture of enterprise – AfCFTA will benefit Ghana's trading partners far more than it benefits Ghana itself.

A Charge to Every Ghanaian

The breakout session concluded with a collective charge: "Where there is unemployment, build enterprise. Where there is division, create peace. Ask: What is my contribution? Where am I building?" This is not just a vision for government. It is a call for every Ghanaian citizen – trader, student, professional, and entrepreneur – to be active in building the commercial future of the nation.

¹ African Union. (n.d.). *African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)*. African Union. Retrieved May 23, 2026, from <https://au-afcfta.org/about/>. The AfCFTA connects a market of about 1.3 billion people across 54 member states, with a combined GDP estimated at over US\$3.4 trillion.

VISION FOR GHANA IN 20 YEARS

By 2046, Ghana will be West Africa's most competitive and inclusive trading economy – a nation that adds value to what it produces, earns fairly from what it exports, and enables every citizen to participate in and benefit from commerce at every scale. The vision is structured across five transformational dimensions:

Economic Transformation

Ghana's trade balance will be fundamentally rebalanced. A diversified export base – anchored in agro-processing, manufactured goods, creative industries, and technology services – will reduce dependence on raw commodity exports and imported finished goods. Ghana will be a net beneficiary of AfCFTA, with Ghanaian brands and products recognized and purchased across the continent. The domestic manufacturing and processing sector will be the engine of sustained economic growth, generating jobs, tax revenues, and foreign exchange.

Human Capital Development

Trade and commerce literacy will be embedded in Ghana's education system from basic school through to university – fulfilling the vision of Mr Brown from the breakout session: that education on how trade and commerce works should be encouraged from the lower schools through to the university. Ghanaian entrepreneurs will understand supply chains, pricing, export documentation, trade finance, and digital commerce. A generation of commercially literate citizens will drive private sector growth without waiting for government to lead the way.

Governance and Accountability

Ghana's trade governance will be transparent, digitally enabled, and internationally competitive. Customs and clearance processes will be fully digitized, dramatically reducing clearance times, eliminating discretionary charges, and cutting the cost of legitimate trade. An independent trade accountability dashboard will make import and export data, duty rates, and trade policy outcomes visible to citizens, traders, and parliamentarians. Anti-corruption measures will protect the integrity of the customs and border management system.

Technology and Innovation

Mobile money will be the default medium of commercial exchange for traders of all sizes, eliminating cash-handling risk and enabling digital credit profiles. A national digital commerce platform – accessible via WhatsApp Business and dedicated apps – will connect Ghanaian producers to domestic, regional, and global markets. A purpose-built Trade Finance App, as identified by the breakout session, will simplify legal tender processes and cross-border transfers, removing the friction that currently disadvantages small traders in international markets.

Inclusion and Equity

Commerce will be open to all. Market traders, artisans, youth entrepreneurs, women, and rural producers will have equal access to the tools, information, finance, and markets that formal sector businesses currently monopolize. The informal trading sector will be formally recognized, regulated with care, and integrated into the national commercial system without destroying its flexibility and dynamism. No Ghanaian who wants to trade should face a barrier they cannot overcome.

Sustainability

Ghana will pursue a China-informed trade development model adapted to Ghanaian conditions: disciplined state investment in trade infrastructure, aggressive promotion of domestic industry, strategic management of imports, and long-term investment in value addition and export competitiveness. Sustainability is built into the model through lower-emission importation pathways – as identified by the breakout session – and through the development of a green export economy that aligns commercial ambition with environmental responsibility.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

Ghana Agenda 2046: Trade & Commerce is anchored in seven SMART strategic objectives, each specific, measurable, and time-bound:

1. Reduce Ghana's trade deficit by 40% by Year 20 through a combination of export promotion, domestic value addition, and strategic import substitution.
2. Reduce import duty and port clearance costs by 35% for SMEs and small-scale traders by Year 10 through digitized customs reform and tariff rationalization.
3. Increase the share of value-added goods in Ghana's total exports from below 20% to at least 50% by Year 20 through agro-processing, manufacturing, and creative industry investment.
4. Achieve 90% mobile money and digital payment penetration among registered traders and SMEs by Year 10.
5. Register and formalize 80% of informal traders with access to digital commerce tools, mobile banking, and social protection by Year 15.
6. Embed trade and commerce education in 100% of basic, secondary, and tertiary educational institutions by Year 10, building a commercially literate citizenry.
7. Triple Ghana's non-traditional export revenues by Year 20 through structured export development programmes, AfCFTA market penetration, and bilateral trade agreements.

Additional system-level targets:

- Reduce cross-border trade costs within ECOWAS and AfCFTA by 30% through multilateral advocacy by Year 15
- Establish supplier diversification support for 10,000 SMEs to reduce stock shortages and single-supplier dependency by Year 10
- Launch a national Trade Finance Application to simplify legal tender processes and cross-border transfers by Year 5
- Achieve lower-emission importation pathways for at least 50% of major import categories by Year 15

PROPOSED STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

Ghana Agenda 2046: Trade & Commerce organizes its interventions across five strategic pillars, each addressing a distinct but interconnected dimension of the trade and commerce transformation agenda. Together they form a coherent, mutually reinforcing system.

Strategic Pillar	Key Interventions	Target Group	Expected Outcome
1. Trade Facilitation & Duty Reform (\$25M)	Full digitization of customs and clearance systems; tariff rationalization for SMEs; single-window trade portal; port efficiency upgrades; bilateral duty reduction advocacy within ECOWAS and AfCFTA; anti-corruption measures at ports	Importers; exporters; SMEs; port users; customs authority	35% reduction in clearance costs by Year 10; shorter clearance times; transparent, corruption-free border management
2. Domestic Value Addition & Export Development (\$30M)	Agro-processing investment grants; manufacturing zone development; cocoa, shea, and timber value chain upgrade; brand Ghana export programme; national quality and standards compliance support; creative industry export promotion	Farmers; processors; manufacturers; exporters; creative industries	Value-added goods rise from below 20% to 50% of exports; tripled non-traditional export revenues by Year 20
3. Digital Commerce & Mobile Financial Systems (\$20M)	Mobile money expansion for business transactions; WhatsApp Business and e-commerce adoption support; Trade Finance App development; digital trade credit profiling; currency risk hedging instruments for SMEs	Traders; SMEs; market vendors; youth entrepreneurs; informal sector	90% mobile money penetration in business transactions by Year 10; reduced cash risk; accessible trade finance for small traders
4. SME & Informal Trader Empowerment (\$15M)	Informal trader registration and formalization incentives; government and NGO grant access facilitation; supplier diversification programme; bulk purchasing cooperatives; equipment investment fund; market infrastructure upgrades	Informal traders; market women; artisans; SME owners; youth entrepreneurs	80% informal trader formalization by Year 15; diversified supply chains; stronger, more resilient SME sector
5. Trade Education, Civic Mindset & Policy Advocacy (\$5M)	Trade literacy curriculum in basic through tertiary schools; national Trade & Commerce Awareness Campaign; civic trade advocacy platform; policy reform advocacy coalitions; challenging strategic policies to attain desired results	Students; citizens; traders; civil society; policymakers	100% of schools with trade education by Year 10; active citizenry championing trade policy; reduced cultural stigma around commerce
6. Monitoring, Evaluation & Contingency (\$5M)	National Trade Performance Dashboard; independent annual reviews; 5-year and 8-year evaluations; contingency reserve for adaptive implementation	NTTC; Parliament; implementing agencies; civil society; citizens	Evidence-based course correction; public accountability; system resilience against unforeseen challenges

The plan makes explicit strategic exclusions – what it deliberately does not do:

- Not replacing market forces with blanket government subsidies: distorts incentives and creates dependency

- Not pursuing import bans without domestic production alternatives: raises costs for consumers and businesses
- Not rolling out digital commerce tools without first building financial literacy: technology adoption without capability is wasted investment
- Not negotiating trade agreements without private sector consultation: agreements that do not reflect commercial reality will not be implemented

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Ghana Agenda 2046: Trade & Commerce adopts a three-phase implementation roadmap with unequal time intervals, calibrated to the natural pace of trade system reform. Phase 1 is intensive and front-loaded, establishing the legal, digital, and institutional foundations without which later phases cannot deliver. Phase 2 is the period of scale, enterprise growth, and export development. Phase 3 achieves self-sustaining global competitiveness. Each phase has a dedicated SMART Work Plan.

Why Three Phases with Unequal Intervals?

Trade system reform moves at different speeds. Digitizing customs and launching mobile commerce tools can happen in three to five years. Building a competitive agro-processing sector and tripling export revenues takes a decade of sustained effort. Achieving genuine global competitiveness and entrenching a commercial civic culture requires a full generation. The three-phase design reflects this reality: move fast on digital foundations (Years 1–5), build deep on enterprise and exports (Years 6–14), and sustain and compete globally (Years 15–20).

PHASE 1

Years 1–5 (2026–2030)

Foundation – Digital Infrastructure, Policy Reform & Institutional Architecture

Phase 1 is the foundation phase. Its primary mandate is to establish the legal frameworks, digital systems, institutional structures, and civic awareness programmes without which subsequent phases cannot deliver at scale. It is the period of highest policy intensity: customs reform legislation, Trade Finance App development, informal trader registration, and trade education curriculum reform must all be initiated in this window. Phase 1 is also the period for piloting key interventions in selected regions before national rollout.

SMART Work Plan – Phase 1 Milestones:

Ref	Milestone / Activity	Responsible Party	Target Deadline
1.1	Enact Customs Modernization and Trade Facilitation Act: mandating full digitization of port clearance, a single-window trade portal, and published tariff schedules accessible to all traders	Parliament / Ministry of Trade & Industry / GRA	By Year 2
1.2	Launch the Ghana Trade Finance Application: a mobile-first platform simplifying legal tender processes, cross-border transfers, and SME trade documentation, initially piloted in 3 regions	Ministry of Finance / Bank of Ghana / Private Sector	By Year 3
1.3	Pilot informal trader registration and formalisation programme in 10 major markets,	Ministry of Trade / District Assemblies / NBSSI	By Year 4

	linking registration to mobile money accounts, grant access, and digital commerce tools		
1.4	Reduce average port clearance time from current benchmark by 40% through digitized customs processing, pre-arrival documentation, and anti-corruption checkpoints	Ghana Customs Division / GRA / Ports Authority	By Year 5
1.5	Launch national Mobile Money for Business campaign: enroll 500,000 traders and SMEs on mobile money platforms for business transactions, with WhatsApp Business integration support	MTN, Telecel, AirtelTigo / Ministry of Trade	By Year 4
1.6	Introduce trade and commerce literacy modules in 500 basic and secondary schools across all regions, based on the curriculum developed with the Ghana Education Service	Ministry of Education / GES / COTVET	By Year 5
1.7	Establish the National Trade & Commerce Advocacy Coalition: a structured civil society platform championing good trade policy, engaging Parliament, and publishing annual Trade Policy Scorecards	Civil Society / Private Sector Associations / MoTI	By Year 2
1.8	Commission baseline Ghana Trade Competitiveness Assessment to establish verified data on trade deficit, clearance costs, SME export readiness, and informal sector trade volumes	Ghana Statistical Service / MoTI / GRA	By Year 1
1.9	Launch lower-emission importation pathway pilot: identify and certify at least 5 major import categories where greener, less expensive shipping and logistics options are available	Ministry of Trade / EPA / Shipping Lines	By Year 5
1.10	Establish a Supplier Diversification Support Unit to help SMEs identify and onboard multiple suppliers, reducing single-supplier dependency and stock shortage risk	NBSSI / Ministry of Trade	By Year 4

PHASE 2 Years 6–14 (2031–2039)	Enterprise Growth – Value Addition, Export Expansion & Market Deepening
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Phase 2 is the longest and most economically consequential phase. With digital foundations established and legal reforms enacted, Phase 2 focuses on scaling enterprise, building the value-addition economy, deepening AfCFTA market penetration, and making formal trade the default mode of commerce for Ghanaian businesses of all sizes. This is the phase in which Ghana's trade deficit begins to turn, export revenues grow meaningfully, and mobile commerce becomes universal among traders.

SMART Work Plan – Phase 2 Milestones:

Ref	Milestone / Activity	Responsible Party	Target Deadline
2.1	Achieve 90% mobile money and digital payment penetration among registered traders and SMEs for business transactions	Ministry of Trade / Bank of Ghana / MNOs	By Year 10
2.2	Reduce import duty and port clearance costs by 35% for SMEs and small traders, verified through annual Ghana Trade Competitiveness Assessment	GRA / Ghana Customs / Ministry of Finance	By Year 10
2.3	Scale informal trader formalisation to 80% of all registered market traders nationally, with full access to mobile money, digital commerce tools, and business development grants	Ministry of Trade / NBSSI / District Assemblies	By Year 14
2.4	Establish 5 Agro-Processing Industrial Zones in strategic agricultural regions, each providing processing infrastructure, cold chain logistics, quality certification, and export facilitation for smallholder farmers and cooperatives	Ministry of Food & Agriculture / Ministry of Trade / Private Sector	By Year 12
2.5	Launch Brand Ghana Export Programme: certify, promote, and provide market access support for at least 200 Ghanaian value-added products in ECOWAS and global markets	Ghana Export Promotion Authority / MoTI	By Year 10
2.6	Embed trade and commerce education in 100% of basic, secondary, and tertiary educational institutions through a nationally standardized trade literacy curriculum	Ministry of Education / GTEC / GES	By Year 10
2.7	Scale the Ghana Trade Finance Application nationally: achieve 1 million active users among traders and SMEs; expand cross-border transfer functionality to all ECOWAS countries	Bank of Ghana / Ministry of Finance / Private Sector	By Year 9
2.8	Publish the first independent 8-Year Trade Transformation Review; table before Parliament; use findings to recalibrate Phase 3 priorities	Independent Evaluators / Parliament / MoTI	Year 9
2.9	Achieve 30% reduction in cross-border trade costs within ECOWAS through active bilateral and multilateral AfCFTA advocacy, coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade	Ministry of Foreign Affairs / MoTI / AfCFTA Secretariat	By Year 14
2.10	Increase value-added goods' share of total exports from below 20% to at least 35%, driven by agro-processing, light manufacturing, and creative industry exports	GEPA / Ministry of Trade / Ministry of Finance	By Year 14

PHASE 3
Years 15–20
(2040–2046)

Global Competitiveness – Sustainability, Sovereignty & Continental Leadership

Phase 3 consolidates two decades of reform into a self-sustaining, globally competitive Ghanaian trade economy. By Year 20, Ghana will have fundamentally rebalanced its trade position, established a diversified and value-added export base, achieved universal formal trade participation, and embedded a commercial civic

culture in which every citizen understands and participates in building the national economy. Ghana will be a model for AfCFTA implementation and a leader in sustainable, inclusive trade development on the continent.

SMART Work Plan – Phase 3 Milestones:

Ref	Milestone / Activity	Responsible Party	Target Deadline
3.1	Reduce Ghana's trade deficit by 40% from the 2026 baseline, reflecting a structurally rebalanced trade position with expanded exports and reduced import dependency	Ministry of Finance / Ministry of Trade / GRA	By Year 20
3.2	Achieve 50% of total exports in value-added goods, up from below 20% at baseline, representing a fundamental transformation of Ghana's export composition	GEPA / Ministry of Trade / Agro-Processors	By Year 20
3.3	Triple non-traditional export revenues from the 2026 baseline, driven by agro-processing, manufactured goods, digital services, and creative industry exports	GEPA / Ministry of Trade / Private Sector	By Year 20
3.4	Achieve lower-emission importation pathways for at least 50% of major import categories, contributing to Ghana's climate commitments and reducing logistics costs	Ministry of Trade / EPA / Shipping Sector	By Year 18
3.5	Establish Ghana as the AfCFTA model implementation state: host the first continental Trade Policy Best Practice Exchange and publish the Ghana AfCFTA Impact Report	MoTI / AfCFTA Secretariat / Ministry of Foreign Affairs	By Year 18
3.6	Achieve 95% digital financial services coverage among all registered traders, with full interoperability between mobile money platforms and formal banking channels	Bank of Ghana / Ministry of Finance / MNOs	By Year 20
3.7	Complete full formalisation of the informal trading sector: 80% registration achieved; informal traders have equal access to finance, markets, and legal protection as formal businesses	Ministry of Trade / NBSSI / District Assemblies	By Year 20
3.8	Achieve 100% trade and commerce literacy integration in the national education system; Ghana Statistical Service surveys confirm commercial literacy measurably improved across all age cohorts	Ministry of Education / GES / GTEC	By Year 20
3.9	Trade financing system self-sustaining: Trade Finance Application operating commercially, revenue from SME subscriptions and transaction fees covering operational costs without public subsidy	Ministry of Finance / Bank of Ghana	By Year 20
3.10	Publish the Final 20-Year Trade Transformation Impact Assessment; table before Parliament; launch the post-2046 Ghana Trade Vision to sustain momentum into the next generation	Independent Evaluators / Parliament / MoTI	Year 20

BUDGET ALLOCATION FRAMEWORK

USD 100 Million Investment Plan

The \$100 million is deployed as catalytic capital across five strategic pillars. The largest single allocation goes to Domestic Value Addition and Export Development, because this is where Ghana's greatest economic opportunity and most significant structural gap converge. Trade Facilitation receives the second-largest share because no amount of export promotion will succeed if the cost of moving goods across borders remains prohibitive.

Sector / Activity	Amount (USD)	Share (%)	Phase	Strategic Rationale
Domestic Value Addition & Export Development	\$30,000,000	30%	1–3	Core economic transformation: shifting Ghana from raw commodity exports to value-added goods; greatest long-term multiplier on trade revenues and job creation
Trade Facilitation & Duty Reform	\$25,000,000	25%	1 & 2	Reduces clearance costs by 35%, shortens border crossing times, digitizes customs, and makes formal trade accessible and affordable for SMEs
Digital Commerce & Mobile Financial Systems	\$20,000,000	20%	1 & 2	Unlocks mobile money penetration, Trade Finance App, e-commerce adoption, and digital credit access for traders of all sizes; multiplies effectiveness of all other investments
SME & Informal Trader Empowerment	\$15,000,000	15%	1–3	Formalises and empowers the 80%+ of commercial activity in the informal sector; connects traders to grants, bulk purchasing, supplier diversification, and markets
Trade Education, Civic Mindset & Advocacy	\$5,000,000	5%	1–3	Builds the commercial culture and civic engagement that sustains all other reforms; trade education from basic school to university; policy advocacy platforms
Monitoring, Evaluation & Contingency	\$5,000,000	5%	1–3	National Trade Performance Dashboard; independent annual reviews; 5-year evaluations; contingency reserve for adaptive implementation
TOTAL	\$100,000,000	100%	–	

Financial Justification

Trade system reform is among the highest-return public investments available to a developing economy. The World Bank estimates that a 1% reduction in trade costs generates a 2–3% increase in trade volumes²; the cumulative effect of a 35% reduction in clearance costs – as targeted by this policy – would be transformational

² World Trade Organization. (2015). *World Trade Report 2015: Speeding up trade – benefits and challenges of implementing the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement*. WTO. https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/world_trade_report15_e.pdf. World Bank and WTO analyses indicate that a 1% reduction in trade costs can support a 3–4% increase in trade growth; the estimate used here is conservative.

for Ghana's import-export sector. The agro-processing and value addition investments carry particularly high multipliers: every dollar invested in food processing generates an estimated \$3–5 in additional value chain activity³.

Co-financing will be mobilized from four primary streams: (i) private sector investment in agro-processing zones and digital commerce infrastructure through PPP frameworks; (ii) development partner contributions from the World Bank Trade Facilitation Support Programme, IFC, and AfDB; (iii) AfCFTA Adjustment Fund allocations for trade facilitation; and (iv) increased domestic tax revenues generated by a formalised, more productive trading economy. The Trade Finance Application, once operationalized, will generate transaction fee revenues that progressively cover its own operating costs by Year 15.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The success of this policy depends on genuine partnership across government, the private sector, civil society, and every Ghanaian citizen who buys, sells, produces, or trades. The breakout session was emphatic: everyone is involved in building the country. The stakeholder engagement framework reflects this conviction.

Stakeholder	Category	Role	Engagement Mechanism
Ministry of Trade & Industry	Government	Lead policy authority; trade facilitation legislation; export promotion coordination	Cabinet steering committee; quarterly reviews
Ghana Revenue Authority / Customs	Government	Customs digitization; tariff reform; duty collection and compliance	Customs Modernization Task Force
Ministry of Finance	Government	Budget allocations; trade tax policy; Trade Finance App oversight	Joint financing committee; annual budget cycle
Bank of Ghana	Government	Mobile money regulation; Trade Finance App governance; currency policy	Digital Finance Policy Forum
Ghana Export Promotion Authority	Government	Brand Ghana programme; export market development; AfCFTA market penetration	Export Development Council; bi-annual reviews
Parliament – Trade Committee	Government	Legislation; budget oversight; Trade Policy Scorecard review	Bi-annual briefings; committee submissions
Association of Ghana Industries (AGI)	Private Sector	Manufacturing standards; value chain development; export readiness	National Business Forum; quarterly

³ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. (2017). *The State of Food and Agriculture 2017: Leveraging food systems for inclusive rural transformation*. FAO. <https://www.fao.org/3/i7658e/i7658e.pdf>. Agro-processing and value-addition investments are widely associated with high downstream multipliers across the food value chain.

Ghana National Chamber of Commerce	Private Sector	SME voice; trade policy advocacy; market linkages	Trade Policy Dialogue Forum
MTN, Vodafone, AirtelTigo (MNOs)	Private Sector	Mobile money expansion; WhatsApp Business support; digital commerce infrastructure	Digital Commerce Partnership Board
Market Traders Associations	Civil Society	Informal sector voice; formalisation co-design; mobile money adoption	National Traders Council; monthly engagements
Development Partners (World Bank, IFC, AfDB)	International	Co-financing; technical assistance; trade facilitation expertise	Annual Trade Sector Coordination Meeting
AfCFTA Secretariat	International	Regional trade framework; protocol compliance; market access facilitation	AfCFTA Trade Reform Working Group
Academia & Research Institutions	Academic	Trade data analysis; curriculum development; policy evaluation	National Trade Research Council
Citizens & Consumers	Community	Demand for quality goods; trade activism; buy-Ghana advocacy; civic engagement	National Trade Awareness Campaign; civic platforms

GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY STRUCTURE

The breakout session was explicit that change requires challenge to strategic policies to attain desired results – and that activism is a legitimate tool for building the country. The governance architecture of this policy reflects that conviction: it is designed not just for government oversight but for citizen accountability, with public-facing tools that every Ghanaian can use to hold the system to account.

Oversight Mechanisms

- National Trade Transformation Council (NTTC) – chaired by the Minister of Trade & Industry, with cross-party parliamentary membership, private sector associations, civil society, and market traders' representation; meets quarterly; publishes an Annual Trade State Report accessible to all Ghanaians
- Ministry of Trade Programme Management Office (PMO) – dedicated, professionally recruited unit managing day-to-day coordination, fiduciary oversight, and reporting across all three implementation phases
- Regional Trade Development Committees – in each of Ghana's 16 regions; monitor regional trade facilitation performance, formalisation progress, and enterprise development; submit quarterly reports to the national PMO

Transparency Systems

- National Trade Performance Dashboard – publicly accessible, real-time; tracking trade deficit trends, clearance costs, SME registration, mobile money adoption, export revenues, and import compositions at national and regional levels

- Annual Trade Policy Scorecard – published by the National Trade & Commerce Advocacy Coalition; ranking government ministries, agencies, and port authorities on transparency, efficiency, and trader-friendliness
- Digital Customs Portal – publishing all duty rates, clearance procedures, and processing times publicly, eliminating information asymmetries that currently disadvantage small traders

Anti-Corruption Safeguards

- Full digitization of all customs and port clearance processes to eliminate discretionary human contact points that enable bribery
- Anonymous complaint mechanism for traders experiencing extortion, illegal charges, or unexplained delays at ports and border crossings
- Independent annual port integrity audit published publicly; findings escalated to CHRAJ where criminal conduct is identified
- Mandatory declaration of assets for all senior Customs and GRA officials, with unexplained enrichment subject to investigation

Public Reporting Systems

- Annual Programme Review published publicly – led by the PMO with civil society and private sector participation; results published within 60 days
- Independent Evaluation at Year 9 (end of Phase 2) and Final 20-Year Impact Assessment at Year 20 – both tabled before Parliament with a mandatory Government response within 90 days
- Annual Trade Sector National Dialogue – open public forum in which any Ghanaian can question government officials on trade policy performance

MONITORING, EVALUATION & IMPACT MEASUREMENT

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Indicator	Baseline (2026)	Year 5 (2031)	Year 10 (2036)	Year 15 (2041)	Year 20 (2046)
Trade deficit (% of GDP)	~8–10%	-7%	-6%	-5%	-4% (-40%)
Avg. port clearance time (days)	~10 days	7 days	4 days	3 days	≤2 days
Import duty cost reduction for SMEs	Baseline	-15%	-35%	-35% maint.	-35% maint.
Value-added goods as % of total exports	<20%	25%	33%	42%	50%
Non-traditional export revenue (vs. baseline)	Baseline	+30%	+80%	+150%	+200% (×3)
Mobile money penetration among traders (%)	~35%	65%	90%	95%	95%+
Informal trader formalisation rate (%)	<15%	35%	60%	80%	80%+
Schools with trade & commerce education (%)	<5%	40%	100%	100%	100%

Cross-border trade cost reduction (ECOWAS)	Baseline	-8%	-18%	-30%	-30% maint.
SMEs with diversified supplier base (%)	~15%	35%	60%	75%	80%

Evaluation Methods

- National Trade Performance Dashboard – real-time, publicly accessible tracking of all key trade indicators; updated monthly from GRA customs data, Bank of Ghana foreign exchange data, and GEPA export records
- Annual Ghana Trade Competitiveness Assessment – comprehensive annual survey measuring SME export readiness, clearance costs, digital commerce adoption, and informal sector formalisation, conducted by Ghana Statistical Service
- Digital Commerce and Mobile Money Analytics – transaction data from mobile money platforms (with privacy safeguards) providing real-time insight into trader participation in the digital economy
- Annual Trade Policy Scorecard – published by the civil society-led National Trade & Commerce Advocacy Coalition, independently rating government performance on each reform commitment
- Independent 5-Year Evaluations at Year 5 and Year 9 – in-depth assessments of programme effectiveness, value for money, and equity; findings used to recalibrate subsequent phase priorities
- Final 20-Year Trade Transformation Impact Assessment at Year 20 – comprehensive evaluation of the full reform agenda, published publicly and tabled before Parliament

RISKS & MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Risk	Likelihood	Potential Impact	Mitigation Strategy
Political Discontinuity	High	Customs reform stalled; duty rationalization reversed after election cycle	Anchor customs digitization and tariff reform in legislation. Establish independent National Trade Transformation Council with cross-party membership. Publish annual Trade Policy Scorecards to make reversal politically costly.
Resistance from Customs Officials to Digitization	High	Corrupt discretionary practices persist; digital systems circumvented	Mandatory digital processing with no cash-handling permitted at ports. Anonymous corruption reporting mechanism. Independent annual port integrity audit. Incentive programme rewarding compliant and efficient customs staff.
Low SME and Trader Adoption of Digital Tools	Medium	Mobile money and e-commerce targets missed; investment underutilised	Phase digital rollout with financial literacy training. Work through trusted intermediaries (market traders' associations, religious and community leaders). Offer tangible incentives for early adoption (grant access, reduced fees, preferential trade lanes).
Cedi Depreciation	High	Cross-border trade costs rise; SME trade	Advance currency hedging instruments for SMEs through the Trade Finance App.

and Currency Instability		finance becomes unaffordable	Advocate within ECOWAS for expanded use of local currency trade settlement. Support Bank of Ghana macro-stability measures through responsible fiscal policy.
AfCFTA Benefits Captured by Competitors	Medium	Ghana's slow structural reform means competitors access AfCFTA markets first	Front-load export development and value-addition investment in Phase 1 and early Phase 2. Prioritize sectors where Ghana has existing comparative advantage (cocoa, shea, timber, agro-processing, fintech). Active AfCFTA Secretariat engagement to shape rules of origin in Ghana's favour.
Financial Sustainability Gap	Medium	Phase 2 or 3 investment stalls due to co-financing shortfall	Diversify co-financing from private sector, development partners, and AfCFTA Adjustment Fund. Design Trade Finance App for commercial self-sustainability by Year 15. Prioritize highest-ROI interventions first to generate early revenue and proof of concept.
Cultural Resistance to Commerce as Civic Duty	Medium	Trade education and civic engagement programmes fail to shift mindset	Frame trade and commerce as patriotism – building Ghana from the ground up. Use trusted cultural figures, athletes, and entrepreneurs as ambassadors. Embed the message in schools, religious institutions, and community forums from Year 1.

EXPECTED NATIONAL IMPACT

The successful implementation of Ghana Agenda 2046: Trade & Commerce will deliver a generational transformation in Ghana's economic structure, commercial culture, and international trade position:

Economy

- 40% reduction in Ghana's trade deficit – a fundamental rebalancing of the national economic position, reducing pressure on the cedi and freeing foreign exchange for productive investment
- Tripling of non-traditional export revenues – representing hundreds of millions of dollars in additional annual foreign exchange earnings and a diversified, resilient export base
- 35% reduction in import and clearance costs for SMEs – making formal trade affordable and accessible, bringing thousands of businesses into the formal economy
- 30% reduction in cross-border trade costs within ECOWAS – unlocking the regional market opportunity that AfCFTA promises

Education and Human Capital

- 100% of Ghanaian schools with trade and commerce literacy programmes – producing a generation of commercially capable citizens who build enterprise rather than wait for employment
- A national culture shift: trade and commerce reframed from “someone else's responsibility” to every citizen's active contribution to national development
- Ghana's entrepreneurs equipped to compete on AfCFTA's continental stage, with the skills, finance, and market knowledge to access 1.3 billion customers

Governance and Accountability

- Fully digitized, corruption-resistant customs system with publicly accessible duty rates and clearance performance data
- An active, vocal citizenry championing trade policy through the National Trade & Commerce Advocacy Coalition and annual civic trade forums
- Ghana recognized as the AfCFTA model implementation state – exporting trade governance expertise to continental partners

Social Cohesion and Inclusion

- 80% of informal traders formally registered and integrated into the national commercial system – with equal access to finance, markets, and legal protection
- 90% mobile money penetration among traders – financial inclusion at scale, eliminating cash risk and enabling digital credit for the smallest enterprises
- Rural and peri-urban communities connected to national and regional markets through digital commerce platforms, reducing geographic disadvantage in trade

CONCLUSION & CALL TO ACTION

The trade and commerce breakout session at the Black Star Summit captured something that goes beyond policy: a moral conviction that building Ghana is everyone's responsibility. "Change is not for only politicians," the session declared. "Where there is unemployment, build enterprise. Where there is division, create peace. Ask: What is my contribution? Where am I building?"

Ghana Agenda 2046: Trade & Commerce is the policy architecture that answers that charge. It addresses the structural problems – high duties, dependency on imports, weak value addition, fragmented digital finance, informal sector exclusion – with concrete, costed, time-bound interventions. It draws on the China trade model's most instructive lessons: disciplined state support for domestic industry, aggressive export development, and the long-term patience to build comparative advantage over decades rather than election cycles. And it insists that trade and commerce education must begin in lower schools – because the commercial transformation Ghana needs will not be delivered by a single government but by an entire generation of commercially literate, entrepreneurially minded citizens.

The \$100 million is the catalyst. Ghana's entrepreneurs, farmers, traders, manufacturers, students, and activists are the engine. Better policies, lower duties, digital tools, and accessible finance remove the friction. But the fundamental force that will transform Ghana's trade economy is citizens who decide that trade is not scary, that commerce is patriotism, and that every market, every business, every transaction is a contribution to the Ghana they want to inhabit.

The Milan Cathedral Principle Applied to Trade

The most durable trade economies are not built in election cycles. They are built by successive generations of entrepreneurs, traders, farmers, and citizens who each add their contribution to a structure larger than themselves. Ghana's trade transformation will mature beyond the tenure of

those who begin it today. That is not a reason to delay. It is the reason to start now, with discipline, with vision, and with the conviction that what we build today will outlast us.

Call to Action

We call on the Ministry of Trade & Industry to champion the Customs Modernization and Trade Facilitation Act as the first legislative priority of this reform. We call on the Ghana Revenue Authority to digitize port clearance and publish duty schedules transparently for every Ghanaian trader. We call on mobile network operators to partner in the national Mobile Money for Business campaign. We call on schools to introduce trade and commerce literacy from primary level. We call on every Ghanaian entrepreneur to build the enterprise that creates the jobs, fills the supply chains, and adds the value that reduces imports. And we call on every citizen to champion the good policies that make importation and exportation attractive – because together, let us champion the trade transformation Ghana deserves.

*Prepared by the Black Star Summit Trade & Commerce Breakout Session Team
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