Tomato wilt or kiwotoka

Recognize the problem
This is a disease called kiwotoka in Luganda. It is a common problem in tomatoes. The tomato plant wilts suddenly, even if the weather has been favourable, and even if the soil has plenty of manure. The plant stops growing and dries up and dies.

If the tomatoes wilt, even though they have had plenty of water, they probably have kiwotoka caused by bacteria.

Background
Kiwotoka is caused by bacteria, which are very small living things. The bacteria are too small to see, but they live in the soil. The bacteria attack the roots of the tomato plant and prevent water from moving up the stem. This causes the plant to wilt and dry up.

When one plants tomatoes in the same land, for year after year, it allows the bacteria to multiply and to grow in the soil. The disease can also be spread on infected tools such as hoes and pangas.

Management
Some varieties of tomato may be resistant to the disease. Try planting several kinds of tomatoes to see if some of them stay healthier than others.

- Rotate your crops. That is, instead of planting tomatoes every year, plant maize, beans, sweet potatoes or some other crops for several years. This way the bacteria that attack tomato will not be able to multiply.
- Plant tomatoes in a different place every year, and do not plant tomatoes in the same land until several years have passed.
- When you see a wilting tomato plant in your field, pull it up. If possible, burn it. This will help to keep your soil healthy, and will help prevent the disease from spreading to healthy plant.