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COMMITTEE ON THE RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
OF THE TRUST TERRITORIES

LAND UTILIZATION IN SOMALILAND UNDER
ITALIAN ADMINISTRATION

Memorandum submitted by the Italian Government

Note by the Secretariat: The following letter was communicated to the Secretariat on 2 May by the Italian Representative to the United Nations in reply to a letter of the Secretary-General of 14 August 1951, concerning a request of the Committee for information on land utilization and land tenure in the Trust Territory of Somaliland under Italian Administration.

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LAND UTILIZATION IN SOMALILAND

The following notes have been drawn up in reply to the United Nations Department of Trusteeship's letter TRI/130/03 (1) of 14 August 1951 to supplement the information already furnished by this Administration and contained in United Nations document T/AC.36/42 of 6 March 1952.

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1. LAND TENURE

(a) Information on the alienation of land to non-indigenous inhabitants and to members of other tribes.

The total area of land alienated to non-indigenous inhabitants (74,347 hectares) is distributed as follows:

Europeans	72,842 hectares
Arabs	1,500 "
Indians	<u>5</u> "
	<u>74,347</u> hectares

Individual land ownership, where it exists, may be the subject of individual negotiations among the indigenous inhabitants, provided the transaction is approved by the chief of the tribe.

Collective land ownership by the tribe, which is the most widespread form of ownership, cannot be the subject of negotiation. Historically such land have been the subject only of transactions limited to the right to use the land, to which the name "arifato" was applied. Under this system, a member or group of one tribe went to the responsible chiefs of another tribe and, after offering a number of head of cattle as a gift to celebrate the occasion, asked to be affiliated to the tribe. If the scir of the tribe decided to grant the request, the new members were assigned a share of the tribal lands, with the right to cultivate it and to transmit it to their descendants. It was a type of possession that could not be transformed into ownership by positive prescription. Remnants of groups of arifa inhabitants are still to be found among the Dighil and the Mirifle tribes of the Upper Juba.

(b) Information concerning alienated land

1. Alienated land is used solely for the cultivation of annual crops such as cotton, groundnuts, maize, sugar cane and sesame and for growing bananas and citrus fruit. It is not used for the cultivation of fodder or for forestry.

The percentages of the land used for the various crops are approximately as follows:

bananas	7	per cent
citrus fruit	0.3	"
sugar cane	5	"
groundnuts	8	"
cotton	12	"
maize	10	"
sesame	3	"
crops for ploughing in	7	"

The remainder of the area is left fallow or available to the indigenous inhabitants employed on the estates to grow foodstuffs for themselves.

2. The production of alienated lands, as compared, both in quantity and value, with the production of indigenous farms and total production, is given in annex 1. It will be seen that the production of indigenous farms increased by about So.30,000,000 in 1951 as compared with 1950 while there was an increase of approximately So.6,000,000 in the production of alienated lands.

3. The alienation of lands has not given rise to any difficulties, since there is a great deal more land available than is required for the present and future needs of the indigenous population. The indigenous inhabitants have benefitted economically and socially from the employment opportunities offered, either as paid labourers or on a "co-participation" basis, the hygienic and social assistance afforded by the European farms and the technical knowledge that is gained from contact with a progressive agricultural economy.

(c) Absenteeism

The fact that the Somali does not find agricultural work congenial hinders the progress of the indigenous inhabitants and is an obstacle to the development of intensive cultivation.

The example of progressive agricultural enterprise is, however, arousing a certain interest among the Somalis, who show signs of understanding the value and advantage of the application of improved techniques to their methods of cultivation.

(d) Relation between land tenure and land utilization

1. No serious difficulties have arisen as a result of the system of succession, either with regard to land utilization or to the danger of the fragmentation of holdings. The large area of cultivable land available in relation to the size of the agricultural population is sufficient to satisfy any needs created by population growth and the possible wishes of individuals to increase their holdings.

2. In the plains and river valleys the typical indigenous farm family usually cultivates an area of between 1 and 2 hectares; in the Baidoa area holdings are in some cases twice this size. The farms produce enough to satisfy the needs of the peasant families and could be the means of ensuring a considerable improvement in the standard of living, were it not for the fact that, after a favourable year producing a good harvest, the Somali usually slackens his efforts. His tendency is to enjoy the fruits of his labour until they are almost exhausted before he undertakes any fresh work.

II. LAND UTILIZATION

A. Description of land not in use

1. The totally unusable land in the Territory comprises the shifting sand dunes on the coast, the stony tracts of the Migiurtinia and the Mudugh and the salt lands and marshes of the Uebi Scebeli, a total area of about 1,681,000 hectares. Some 18,319,000 hectares are made up of impervious areas with scanty rainfall, which are either uncultivable or inhabited intermittently by nomads practising the poorest forms of nomadic grazing (goats).

2. Some 25,000,000 hectares can be used for pastureland and simple forms of seasonal agriculture.

3. There is an area of some 5,000,000 hectares of cultivated land with reasonable agricultural possibilities.

40 per cent of the total area of the Territory is practically uncultivable; 50 per cent is usable for seasonal crops and pastureland; 10 per cent is cultivable, but only 10 per cent of that area is actually cultivated.

/B. Land

B. Land utilization practices.

1. On the estates practising intensive cultivation, modern agricultural techniques are employed.

Indigenous inhabitants who have been employed on the intensive cultivation farms and who cultivate their own holdings near the estates use some modern methods. In remote areas, the indigenous farmers practise a primitive form of extensive agriculture.

(a) On the intensive cultivation farms, where agriculture is specialized, crop rotation is practised so as to avoid impoverishment and exhaustion of the soil. Crop rotation has no place, however, in the traditional cultivation methods of the indigenous inhabitants, who grow the most varied combinations of crops, leaving the ground to lie fallow at the first signs of exhaustion.

(b) In the indigenous farms all tilling is carried out by hand, using a traditional implement on the lines of a small, short-handled hoe, which is very easily handled and known as a JAMBO. The land is divided into small sections of about 1.50 metres square surrounded by banks about 20 centimetres in height.

For this operation the Somali uses a wooden implement called a CAVAVA, consisting of a horizontal slab about 70 centimetres long worked by means of a handle in the centre of the slab itself. At the end of the slab there are two ropes by which the implement can be manœuvred. Its use normally requires two persons.

The Somalis do not use weed killers, fungicides or insecticides, unless they are supplied free of charge and pressed upon them by the Administration's technical officers. On the farms where intensive cultivation is practised, the land is ploughed and prepared and the various operations of cultivation carried out as far as possible by machinery. The mechanical equipment on these farms is being constantly improved in order to overcome the shortage of manpower. Weed killers are not used, but on the other hand wide use is made of fungicides and insecticides.

(c) Farms where intensive cultivation is practised normally use chemical fertilizers on the various crops, but the Somalis are unwilling to spend money on fertilizers, since there is land available in abundance and they can thus leave fallow any which is exhausted or worked out.

Land is arranged both by the Somalis and the Europeans in such a way as to safeguard the supply of water for cultivation and hence completely eliminate any danger of the erosion or leaching of the soil.

2. a. The use to which pastureland is put by the Somalis depends not only on its quality but also and to an even greater extent on its proximity to water holes.

b. During the rainy season, when it is possible to use the uar or puddles formed in the hollows found all over the Territory as watering places, the cattle are evenly distributed over the whole area, but during the dry season the areas near the wells are overstocked, causing damage to the pasture.

3 a. There are no forest formations of special interest in the Territory. The few that exist are distributed along the rivers and particularly along the Lower Juba near the Kenya boundary. The total area of forest formations does not exceed 10,000 hectares, and they are not subject to exhaustion as they are safeguarded by special provisions. The types of tree predominating in Somaliland are those typical of arid wooded areas, chiefly acacia, and the growth varies with the rainfall in the area. The woods are used to produce firewood for the Territory's needs and charcoal, a small quantity of which used to be exported.

b. The use of the country's forest resources is regulated by an Act of the former government of Somaliland (D.G. 7 September 1936, No. 11865). Proclamations No. 4 and No. 6 of 1944 of the British Occupation Authorities lay down regulations for the exploitation of certain forest species. These provisions regulate the issue of licences to cut wood for firewood and charcoal. The use of the euphorbia (*Euphorbia Ruspolii*) to produce packing materials for the banana export trade is particularly noteworthy. The annual consumption of euphorbia for this purpose is about 35,000 quintals. In 1951 ten licences were issued for the cutting of firewood, nine for the production of charcoal and three for the cutting of euphorbia for packing materials.

In view of the small wooded area and the impossibility of increasing it, the problem of conserving land and water supplies by means of afforestation does not arise.

C. Agricultural production

1. It is calculated that the Territory's present production could be doubled and in some areas quadrupled, despite climatic conditions and the scanty and badly distributed rainfall.

2. Quantitatively and qualitatively inadequate manpower and the lack of willing workers which can be attributed in part to the climate and to the fact that their health has been undermined by various hereditary diseases, the distance from markets for the produce, the lack of ports and high ocean freight are all negative factors which limit the Territory's productive capacity. To these are added a relative humidity which never falls below 60 per cent and for many months of the year hovers about 80 per cent, and which not only fails to contribute to the water-supply for vegetation, but creates an atmosphere very favourable to the spread and multiplication of insect parasites which attack and damage crops.

D. Information on progress achieved and land utilization policy.

1. The efforts of the Administration to improve Somali agriculture are conditioned by the fact that indigenous agriculture varies from area to area.

Near the rivers, the most important factor in the improvement of indigenous agriculture is irrigation. Next in importance is the use of agricultural machinery to increase the productive capacity of the farmers. Of course, the work of diverting water and using of machinery to raise water from the rivers cannot be considered and planned for every single farmer, whose activities are confined to an area of one or two hectares. Such works presuppose an area of not less than fifty hectares, if production is to carry the cost of amortization, maintenance and operation. It was therefore thought advisable to combine several Somali farms in a joint enterprise, making use of the co-operative spirit which, in certain forms and for certain necessities of life is not unknown to the Somalis. With this in view, in 1951, the Administration set up two agricultural co-operatives at Balad and two agricultural co-operatives in the vicinity of Genale, on the Uebi Scebeli, together with three irrigation companies on the Juba, covering an area of about 3,250 hectares in all. Catchment works were constructed on the river for the

/co-operatives ,

co-operatives and the Administration's machinery was used to prepare the land.

The success achieved can be judged from the number of requests received by the Administration for the establishment of new co-operatives; fourteen of these requests have already been examined and plans to put them into effect are now being studied.

In order to back up these co-operatives, the Administration has already set up three mechanization centres (two on the Uebi Scebeli and one on the Juba) which help the co-operatives themselves to clear the land.

The use of machinery by the co-operatives, besides genuinely helping with the heavy work, is also intended gradually to encourage the Somalis to acquire and use machinery to increase their productivity.

In the river areas, the Administration's programme is thus designed to transform the extensive farming of the Somalis into intensive farming, by leading them gradually to turn their attention to, in addition to the typical traditional food crops, cash crops which are more profitable and equally useful to the community.

In the upland and areas remote from the rivers, the Somali agricultural economy is quite different in character. Here the cattle are more closely limited to the farm; there is not a sharp differentiation between purely agricultural and pastoral activities, as in the river areas, nor, on the other hand, is it possible to count on irrigation in view of the lack of water courses. However, the environment is rather more favourable in this area, because of the better distribution of rainfall, which extends over a longer period in the crop cycle. The action of the Administration, in particular in the uplands, is therefore directed towards a greater combination of agricultural and pastoral activities, in order to ensure that some of the cattle, which for a certain period live on waste produce of the farm, are used to increase crop production. Cattle, properly trained and yoked, could provide animal power to increase the cultivated area, by making it possible to use small ploughs, harrows and cultivators.

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For this purpose, the Administration has in mind the establishment of model farms as pilot stations, organized to demonstrate to the Somali farmer the desirability of using cattle to provide power for agricultural needs. However, this programme presupposes technical assistance which, although already in operation, will have to be extended, with additional European experts and with the technical instruction of various Somali farmers, to be used afterwards as chief-farmers, assistants and propagandists.

A start will be made in the training of Somali technical officers with the opening of the first course given by the agricultural school at El Mugne (near Merca). However, the contribution which "co-participation" in cotton-growing has made and is making in this field should not be underestimated.

"Co-participation" contracts under which the European entrepreneur provides agricultural skills, possible cash advances to the Somali farmer, and organized assistance to farmers in the various stages of cultivation, harvesting and processing of the cotton, and the indigenous farmer provides the land and the manual labour needed for cultivation, has made it possible to strengthen the position of cotton-growing among the Somalis. The encouraging profits have attracted the attention and support of persons not familiar with it and it has even reached typically pastoral peoples who in the past have never in any way engaged in field cultivation.

The experience of a few years has already shown that the economic symbiosis between the European entrepreneur and the Somali farmer can make a real contribution to the spread of the cultivation of cash crops and the acquisition of the technical knowledge essential for the undertaking of such enterprises.

A special ordinance (No. 3 of 21 March 1952) has been issued to regulate "co-participation" contracts for the production of cotton. "Co-participation" is being introduced in sesame and sisal growing. In the latter case an Italian entrepreneur has already brought seedlings to Somaliland and distributed them to nurseries and to indigenous farmers.

2. There are no soil conservation programmes in Somaliland because there is no problem of this kind in the Territory.

3. No programmes have yet been drawn up with regard to pasture land. In view of the nature of the Territory, there is no problem of reafforestation. Land which is not used for agricultural purposes serves as pasture for cattle-raising which is widespread.

III. INFORMATION ON AGRICULTURAL CREDIT

Agricultural credit for working expenses and land improvement is organized by the Italian credit agencies operating in the Territory (The Bank of Naples and the Bank of Rome), and is governed by Royal Decree 7/3/1933, No. 452, Royal Decree 17/3/1938, No. 542 and Ordinance No. 55 of 1 June 1951.

While the first two decrees limited credit to farms already in full operation, with developed land and special guarantees of land ownership, Ordinance No. 55 extends credit facilities to any person who, as the owner or tenant of a farm, or as the farmer of land on any footing, carries on agricultural activities. Under this law, agricultural credit has become genuinely operative and has been used in particular to support "co-participation" contracts for cotton-growing.

PRODUCTION AND VALUE OF INDIGENOUS CROPS

Product	1950		1951	
	Quintals	Somalis	Quintals	Somalis
Millet	127,000	6,350,000	450,000	22,500,000
Maize	96,000	4,032,000	280,000	14,000,000
Beans	4,400	189,200	6,000	258,000
Sesame	20,000	2,200,000	20,000	2,000,000
Cotton	6,000	6,000,000	10,000	10,000,000
TOTAL		<u>18,771,200</u>		<u>48,758,000</u>

Product	1950		1951	
	Quintals	Somalis	Quintals	Somalis
Bananas exported	169,990	6,804,817	251,813	10,094,781
Bananas sold on the local market	171,110	2,566,650	148,187	2,222,705
Ground nuts	8,000	600,000	1,500	165,000
Cotton	3,000	3,000,000	5,000	5,000,000
Sugar	50,000	8,300,000	50,000	9,700,000
Citrus fruits	2,000	160,000	2,000	160,000
TOTAL		<u>21,431,467</u>		<u>27,242,486</u>