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COMMITTEE ON THE RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
OF THE TRUST TERRITORIES

LAND UTILIZATION IN THE TRUST TERRITORY OF
TOGOLAND UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION

Memorandum submitted by the Government of France

Note by the Secretariat: In a note dated 27 February 1952, the Permanent Delegation of France to the United Nations transmitted the following memorandum in reply to a letter of the Secretary-General of 14 August 1951 concerning the request of the Committee for information on land utilization and land tenure in the Trust Territory of Togoland under French Administration

52-41443

I. LAND UTILIZATION

A. Possibilities of cultivation

Obviously only very approximate figures can be given, in order to indicate roughly the extent of the areas involved.

1. Land unfit for any use. The only lands of this type are:

(a) Mountain land (4,500 sq. km). Excessively steep slopes and absence of humus make cultivation impossible. The farmers of the Cabrais mountain region are the only ones to practise terrace cultivation, on land which would normally be unusable.

(b) Regions with outcroppings of laterite. Such outcroppings generally occur on slopes, even gentle ones, at the points of greatest erosion.

2. Marginal but usable land

This category would include waste lands (cf. Report for 1950, page 90) other than forest reserves essential for maintaining stable climate, and the regions with outcroppings of laterite. It may be estimated that there are 12 to 14,000 sq km of grassy or wooded savannah (particularly in the central regions).

3. Cultivable but unused:

In the East-Mono region there are 12,000 hectares of land more fertile than that in the foregoing category. It has not been worked because it is situated in an area formerly ravaged by war and slave hunts. It is proposed to set this land aside for colonization by the inhabitants of the Cabrais region.

B. Agricultural methods

1. The traditional agricultural methods were described in detail in the report for 1950, pages 90 et seq.

The same report summarizes as follows the conclusions drawn by French technicians from their experiences in attempting to introduce new techniques.

"Rational farming methods must lay primary emphasis on the maintenance of soil fertility. In extensive farming the methods of cultivation and the alternation of cultivation and fallow must be such as to ensure the minimum consumption of organic soil materials and the maximum biological reconstitution of the soil. When farming is intensive, it must be based on the rational and intensive utilization of organic materials, which is possible only at a stage of social and material evolution which has not yet been reached in Togoland and which cannot possibly be achieved in the space of a few years."

This explains why:

- (a) mechanization, where it has been tried, has not proved particularly profitable. It makes soil conservation very difficult, and climatic variations are too great to permit normal amortization of the capital investment (machinery).
- (b) the efforts of the technical services are principally aimed at:
 - securing the adoption of a number of simple techniques designed to promote soil conservation, directly or indirectly (burning the brush at an early stage etc...),
 - encouraging the formation of large herds of draught animals,
 - inducing the indigenous inhabitants to use organic fertilizers, manure and manure crops.

Hence the new agricultural technique which it is being attempted to substitute for the traditional methods (shifting cultivation by hand on burnt-over patches) consists in cultivation with draught animals, in conjunction with cattle-raising.

With particular reference to soil erosion and fertility, it should be pointed out that in the mountainous areas of the West Central region (Adele, Litime, Akposso), the clearing of slopes for rice cultivation causes intense gully-erosion, leading to the rapid sterilization of formerly

wooded lands. The Forestry Department has taken energetic steps to protect the endangered areas. As has been seen, in the Cabrais mountain region the farmers themselves preserved the mountain soil from erosion by the practice of terrace cultivation.

It should be noted that there has been a pronounced decrease in the fertility of the soil in the Anecho region (bar zone) owing to the excessive curtailment of fallow periods. The intensified cultivation (manioc, maize) in that region is due not so much to an increase in the population as to the rise in the market prices of food crops, which are exported in very large quantities.

2. Use of pastoral and grazing lands

No special problems arise in Togoland. There could be a considerable increase in livestock without any danger of overstocking. Nevertheless fodder plants suited to the country are at present being sought.

Attention may also be drawn to the overstocking of horned cattle in the coconut plantations of the coastal region. This is due to the fact that the indigenous inhabitants keep their animals in this practically grassless region in order to obtain manure for their coconut palms. Efforts are being made to accustom the owners to pasturing their herds from time to time in the table-lands.

The problem of soil erosion through over-grazing does not arise in Togoland.

3. Use of forest lands:

See Annual Report for 1949, pages 96 et seq. and Annual Report for 1950, page 98.

Togoland is not a densely wooded country; the Forestry Department endeavours to maintain and regenerate the existing savannah forest in such a way as to ensure that at least in the protected areas there should be stands of sufficient density to resist brush fires.

C. Productivity of Land

1. Actual and potential productivity

As everywhere in Africa, actual productivity, based on indigenous farming techniques, is roughly equal to potential productivity. In certain cases (as we pointed out in connexion with the Anecho region) there is even some tendency for the scale to be turned.

2. Barriers to productivity

To the extent that productivity could be increased without difficulty, the barriers to such an increase are presumably:

- the practically total lack of technical training of the farmers (attempts are being made to overcome this by mass education methods)
- the indifference of the more educated inhabitants to agricultural problems. This is most clearly evidenced by the relative failure of the schools of agriculture; as a rule, students trained at such schools try to find employment as shop-keepers or clerks. A growing interest is, however, being noted among certain traditional chiefs who work vast domains and are trying, for example, to use selected seeds and see that their lands are fertilized.

D. Progress achieved

1. Laws, policies and programmes

See Annual Report for 1950, page 85 et seq.

2. Popularization of improved agricultural methods

Great efforts are being made in the North to introduce farming with draught animals. There is constant propaganda to persuade the chiefs to form herds of draught cattle, accumulate stocks of manure etc. Consideration is being given to the formation of a staff of farmer-instructors. Seasonal demonstrations of farming with draught animals are given at pilot farms.

An interesting experiment in mass education was carried out this year at the pilot station of Barikoissi (Cercle of Mango). A farmer was given a free grant of 3 hectares of land in the farm school provided that he farmed with draught animals. The equipment and cattle were provided by the pilot station.

/3. Soil conservation

3. Soil conservation

This question was dealt with in the Annual Report for 1950 (pp.93-94).

4. Grazing lands

No special problem.

5. Forest lands

See Annual Report for 1950, pp. 98 et seq.

6. Unused lands

Reference has already been made to the East-Mono region, where some ten thousand hectares of unused arable land are being used for a programme of colonization by Cabrais farmers.

II. INFORMATION ON AGRICULTURAL CREDIT FACILITIES

Agricultural credit has up to now been furnished by the indigenous provident societies. During 1950 these granted loans amounting to more than 7 million francs CFA. In future the Joint Fund (Fonds commun) of the indigenous provident societies will receive considerable loans from the Caisse Centrale de la France d'outre-mer. These sums will then be distributed by the administrative board of the Joint Fund as agricultural, handicraft and real estate loans. Moreover, the various indigenous provident societies of the Territory can themselves obtain loans which can then be distributed among their members. This flexible organization, resting as it does on a system with which the indigenous farmer is already familiar, is bound to meet with great favour. A first instalment amounting to 30 million francs CFA has already been released.

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