

Mozambique tries cashewnut revamp

A MAJOR CASHEWNUIT PROJECT aimed at revamping the existing plantations to meet rapidly rising export demand is to be launched in Mozambique's Manica province this year.

Agriculture Ministry officials in Maputo told AB that the five-year, \$258m project will be funded by the World Bank and will involve setting up some 18,000 hectares of new cashewnut plantations. About 27,000ha of the existing state-owned plantations are to be replanted, and another 15,200ha are to be identified for new planting.

In addition, medium-sized plantations should, for the first time, be established by small farmers who are to receive back-up services such as credit, research, extension services, advice on land husbandry and evaluation from state agricultural specialists.

President Samora Machel has accepted the launching of the project because production has decreased in the ageing plantations, the Ministry explains. However, some prominent

business executives in Maputo were quick to say the decline was because of inefficient marketing practices by state enterprises which actually encourage growers to sell their produce on the parallel market.

Latest statistics from the Ministry of Home Trade indicate that between 1982 and 1983, cashewnut production decreased by 44%. Output for 1984 is estimated at 117,000t, bringing \$22.1m into the legal economy as compared with an unofficial figure of \$27.8m on the parallel market.

The project, expected to create some 11,000 jobs, is envisaged to expand cashewnut production to over 250,000t by 1995. However, this will depend on the government's ability to protect the transport routes to reach the plantation areas from rebel activity and to create enough incentives for the cashewnut exporters to stop using the flourishing unofficial market.

Tony Tembo recently in Maputo

