

# Maputo farms - Collectively out of favour

MOZAMBIQUE'S LARGE stateowned agriculture collectives are being **dismantled** and redistributed to private farmers.

This is the latest step in an **agrarian reform** programme begun in 1983 when the state offered private family farmers production incentives.

The reform was prompted by the **disasterous** results shown by the collectivised agricultural system.

Maputo nationalised the land one month after independence in 1975 creating large Soviet-style "kolkozes" to which were added some of the besta lands expropriated from **Portuguese settlers**.

Farm production then entered a sharp decline reaching levels well below those of colonial times.

There are some **120** state agricultural units in the country, some of which are larger than **2000** hectares.

The biggest is at **Chokwe (CAIL)** where despite fertile earth, good irrigation and high degree of mechanisation, the average cereal crop harvest per hectare is only **three tonnes** (compared to 18 tonnes normally)

Despite having more fertile land and more favourable investment conditions, State owned farms produce considerably less than private or family concerns.

In 1988 the private sector is expected to contribute **21** per cent to the overall forecast **31** per cent agricultural increase in the country.

Studies show that among the causes for state agriculture failures are: oversized farms, managerial shortcomings; decisionmaking impeded by excessive bureaucracy; arrogant administration; backward machinery technology; unrealistic planning.

More than 40 per cent of the total costs of running the farms is absorbed

by the wages of the administration staff who nevertheless appear unable to prevent **bottlenecks** in the supply of fuel, seeds and fertiliser for the farms.

In the early days of collectivisation, Mozambique purchased quantities of farm machinery from **Bulgaria, the Soviet Union and East Germany**.

This equipment not only was of poor quality but deficient maintenance programmes reduced its useful life drastically.

The Bulgarians also tried to impose farming **methods** which Portuguese settlers decades earlier had shown to be inappropriate.

Currently the policy is to buy technologically advanced and suitable machinery, designed to last, from Britain, France and the U.S. instead of the East bloc.

*Informafrica 1(7) March 1988 p. 11*