

**State Farms** 30/4/78

Mozambique's ruling party, **Frelimo**, has defined agriculture rather than industry as the basis of the country's economic development. State farms and communal villages are now being created as the twin vehicles for transforming and socialising the rural sector. But the State farms, rather than the communal villages, have received most attention.

The Matama State farm, of 3,200 hectares, for example, which lies outside Lichinga in the northern province of Niassa, has received 39 new tractors, one **French** agronomist, a team of 17 **Chinese** agricultural technicians, and a modern irrigation system. But the Lisanhando communal village nearby has received nothing. The Government has decided that modernised and mechanised State farms, at least at this stage, will be the central vehicle for achieving self-sufficiency in food production. The communal villages are aiming simply at internal self-sufficiency, growing enough food to feed their population.

Most of the State farms are being formed from the hundreds of farms abandoned by the **Portuguese** who have emigrated from Mozambique. These farms vary widely from one part of the country to another. In the richer and more developed sections of south and central Mozambique, the Portuguese farms were large, up to 4,000 ha. with much infrastructure, roads, stores, workshops, tractors, lorries and irrigation systems. It has been easy and inexpensive for the Government, using former workers on these estates, to set up State farms.

In Manica province, in the fertile west central part of the country, the Government has already established 85 State farms, each of 1,000 ha. or more. But in the less prosperous north, Portuguese farms were much smaller, less than 100 ha. each. They lacked the facilities of the large estates. Here, the problems and costs of forming State farms are much greater. In Niassa province, on the **Tanzanian** border (see Map p. 4568), only two State farms and one poultry experimental station have so far been organised.

The Matama State farm, one of the two in Niassa, has been formed from nearly 30 small farms of about 100 ha. each. At present the farm is growing 1,000 ha. of maize, sunflowers and beans, and 200 ha. of wheat. It has also started a small orchard. Potentially, the most significant project is an impressive new irrigation system, the first in the province. Its design is simple, using local materials and no mechanical parts. The **French** agronomist working on the project, M. Denis Herbal, believes that the irrigation system will have multiple benefits both for

the State farm and for the entire province. The simple design can be copied by communes and other State farms. With irrigation it should be possible to grow two crops each year instead of the traditional one. It should also be possible to grow more wheat, one of Mozambique's basic foods. At present much of the country's wheat is imported. (GD 30/3)

**Agricultural Slump**

With the reorganisation of agriculture into communal villages and State farms it is envisaged that production should begin picking up over the next few years following the disastrous slump after independence. Estimates provided by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (**FAO**) indicate that cereal production dropped by a third between 1974 and 1975 before recovering in 1976. However, the production of the major cash crops showed steep declines over the period. The output of **cashew-nuts**, normally accounting for some 30% of export earnings, was reported to be only 95,000 tonnes in 1976, more than 50% below pre-independence levels, because of collection difficulties. Mozambique is one of the world's largest suppliers of cashew-nuts and plans are under way to revive the industry with a target of 300,000 tonnes by 1980 (p. 4510A). Estimates show that sugar, cotton lint, tea, sisal, groundnuts and tobacco all fell substantially between 1974 and 1976.

The slump in agriculture almost certainly worsened in 1977 as a result of devastating floods in February in the Limpopo Basin, a fertile agricultural area. (BNK 6/2)

**Disastrous Floods**

This year the country is again suffering from vast flooding. The official Mozambican news agency (**AIM**), reported on March 27th that the Zambezi River in central Mozambique had burst its banks after weeks of torrential rain, flooding the town of Inhangoma completely and isolating the important centre of Tete which has become an island. The toll so far is 44 dead and more than 200,000 homeless, the agency said. Thousands of square miles of crops have been washed away, cattle drowned and road and rail links severed. The giant Cabora Bassa dam above Tete has had to open all eight flood gates owing to the pressure of water.

The agency said hundreds of miles of the river downstream from the dam, in Tete, Sofala and Zambezia provinces, were "a scene of tragedy and desolation. Roofs and treetops appear above the rising waters. The maize, the cassava, the vegetables, the sugar lie below, destroyed". Urgent relief measures are under way in all three affected provinces. (EGG 28/3)

In response to Mozambique's call for international aid following the severe floods, the European Economic Community (**EEC**) will send 600 tonnes of rice and 350

tonnes of skimmed milk powder valued at \$533,000. **Britain** is providing some £117,000 worth of aid including six inflatable boats with outboard engines and spares, blankets and antibiotics and other drugs. (DNS 14/4)