

## **IS STATE FARMING WORKING?**

Stretching for a distance of 70km along the south bank of the river Limpopo, is the Limpopo Agro-Industrial Complex. Mozambique's largest state farm, normally referred to by the Portuguese acronym CAIL. This year a total of 16,294 hectares has been sown with rice. The harvest, gathered in by more than 200 combines, is expected to be about 48,000 tonnes at an average yield of 2.9t per hectare.

The figures need to be treated with caution, however. Last year similarly optimistic predictions were issued but yields were a mere 1.6t/ha (the lowest in CAIL's history). The final harvest was just over 25,000t, instead of the 44,000t planned.

This year operations should benefit from the considerable effort put into improving CAIL's organisation and efficiency, but until official harvest figures are available in August, it will not be possible to judge whether CAIL's performance has been revitalised.

Huge amounts of money have been invested in CAIL – in machines, in crop spraying, and fertilisers. But in CAIL's five years of existence rice production has never reached the desired level. The best year to date was 1979, when 41,000t were produced at a yield of 2.7t/ha.

During last year's harvest, only 75% of the combines were operational and a mere 25% of the tractors. This year all 282 combines were in working order. Some of the improvement stems from making the best of CAIL's tractor drivers and mechanics personally responsible for six machines each. In this way workers' apathy towards equipment is being overcome.

Improved organisation is also evident in the ordering and delivery of fertilisers and pesticides. This year, unlike 1981, they arrived on time, and the campaign ran according to the correct agricultural time-table. Fuel for the machines is now guaranteed through a contract with the state oil company, Petromac. Currently CAIL is using 200,000 litres of fuel a week, and Petromac will supply more if necessary.

One of the problems CAIL still faces is attracting sufficient labour. Needs are seasonal; out of a total workforce of 7,000 at harvest, only 3,000 are permanently employed at CAIL. Each year it is more difficult to find casual labour. **T. M. Burley**