

GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TARIFFS AND TRADE

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Agricultural Policies

Addendum

BOTSWANA

The broad aims of agricultural policy are:

- the development of livestock industry on a basis of sustained production;
- the development of basic food crop production to provide improved and more reliable food supplies for most farm families, and, for those that show sufficient management ability, the encouragement of commercial production to increase cash incomes and provide the basis for a progressive arable industry; and
- the introduction of systems of land use that will allow increased production while conserving our natural resources.

In 1971/72 arable and livestock production contributed 31 per cent of the GDP, 20 per cent of this originating from the traditional sector and 11 per cent from the modern. Livestock production from the traditional sector contributed 15 per cent of GDP, and, that is accordingly vital to the rural economy of Botswana, on which 90 per cent of the country's population depend. Thus although the distribution of cattle ownership is skewed (30 per cent of the farming population own no cattle), emphasis is being placed on livestock development. The most important factor in improving livestock production at this stage in the country's growth has been shown to be nutrition, primary emphasis thus is being placed upon the upgrading of Botswana's pastures through better range management and on the redistribution of the national herd through improved water supplies. Closely allied to this is a programme for the improvement of marketing systems to increase offtake from the national herd. The offtake figure from the traditional cattle herd now stands at approximately

7 per cent, possibly the highest in Africa; and in 1973, 209,000 head of cattle were slaughtered for export. Co-operative marketing is being encouraged to ensure that the world price for beef are passed on to the producer.

The semi-arid climate in Botswana makes arable agriculture risky despite the fact that it is practised by nearly all the population. Botswana has been a net importer of grains for many years and the increase in arable production has barely kept pace with the growth of the country's population. Recent agricultural research has centered round the twin problems of increasing production and reducing the riskiness of cultivation. During the current five year plan the results of recent research findings will be applied. The effort to increase yields is being primarily concentrated upon staple foods, and primarily on sorghum as these will bring the best cash returns to the majority of Botswana's farmers. For those who are more able, advice is tendered on specific cash crops which require better standards of husbandry to ensure adequate returns under Botswana's climatic conditions. An Agricultural Marketing Board has just been created to improve the country's marketing channels and stabilize farmers prices.

Botswana is unique in that most of its rural farming population is concentrated in large central villages, often miles away from cultivated fields. Investigations into the possibility of decreasing the bi-annual population movement in order to increase the efficiency of production are taking place. In addition, the crisis of decreasing productivity resulting from misuse of the land extends to arable as well as pastoral areas. With the growing population, land is becoming a scarce resource throughout the country and thus traditional land tenure laws which were evolved when land was plentiful must be changed to meet current circumstances. Rapid and poorly planned tenural change could be highly disruptive and result in a large landless class which could be disastrous in Botswana where alternative sources of employment are not yet available. As a result considerable effort will be executed to ensure that changes in the land tenure system are planned and controlled, and, as far as possible, the better aspects of traditional tenurial laws are retained.