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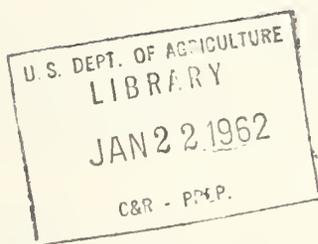


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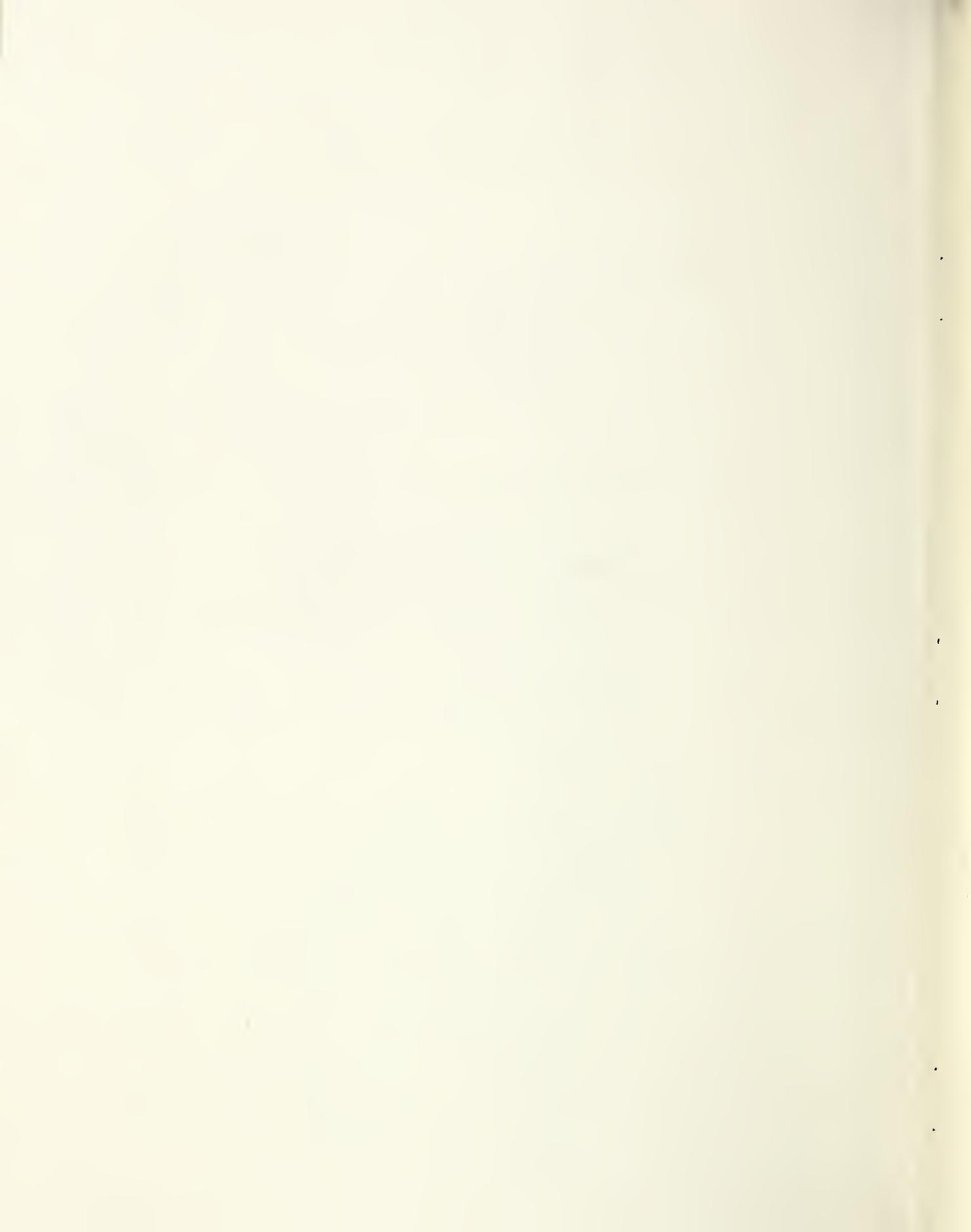
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NOTES  
ON THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY OF  
UPPER VOLTA



Africa and Middle East Analysis Branch  
Regional Analysis Division  
Economic Research Service  
U. S. Department of Agriculture

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NOTES  
ON THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY OF  
UPPER VOLTA

Located in the great Atlantic bulge of Africa and formerly one of the eight territories of the Federation of French West Africa, Upper Volta achieved its independence August 5, 1960.

Population - The population estimates for Upper Volta as of January 1, 1959 were 4 million Africans and 3,441 non-Africans. The population density is estimated at about 38 persons per square mile and is fairly evenly distributed throughout the republic except in the far eastern part of the country where inhabitants are scarce. This density is surprisingly great in view of the scarcity of natural physical resources (soil, water, valuable minerals).

Growth is estimated at about 2.4 percent per year.

Approximately 98 percent of the inhabitants are classified as rural.

There are no large cities. Ouagadougou, the capital city, has a population of 33,000 and approximately 45,000 people live in Bobo-Dioulasso, the largest commercial center.

The dominant ethnic group is the influential Mossi. Many of the other tribes have adopted their customs and language. Domination by the Mossi tribes dates back prior to the coming of the French and in 1950 the French decided to make Ouagadougou the capital of Upper Volta as it was the traditional seat of the Mossi "Emperor."

Land characteristics and use - Upper Volta has a total land area of 105,839 square miles which is slightly larger than the State of Colorado. It is bound on the north and west by the Republic of Mali; on the east by Niger; and, on the south by Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo, and Dahomey.

It is located in the Soudanese climatic zone which is characterized by cool, dry winters and hot, humid summers. About two-thirds of the land area is limited to a three-month growing season with inadequate rainfall. In addition, the soils of Upper Volta are generally poor with silicic sandstone as the dominant soil-forming material.

The topography of the country can be described as a vast undulating plain interspersed with occasional rocky areas. All of Upper Volta slopes toward the south except for a portion along the northeast border that drains eastward to the Niger River.

Agricultural activities are fairly well distributed throughout this country with the exception of the northeastern area where the harmattan (hot desert winds) add to the dryness of the region, resulting in sparse animal and human population. Although inadequate rainfall is a problem in all areas of this semiarid country, it is especially acute in the north.

Annual rainfall varies from about 35 inches in the extreme southwest to less than 20 inches in the northeast.

Agricultural patterns - Upper Volta's agricultural pattern consists almost entirely of subsistence crop production and livestock herding. Farms are generally small and cultivated with the use of primitive hand tools. The limited rainfall determines, to a large degree, the agricultural patterns that exist. Fast maturing crops predominate throughout the area and nomadic cattle are prevalent especially in the northeastern portion of the country. Land tenure is based on occupancy rights and is generally regulated by tribal customs and law.

Agricultural production - Food crops of sorghum and millet are widely grown throughout the area while peanuts and cotton are grown mainly as cash crops. However, exports thus far have been small.

Unlike the tropical areas where the tsetse fly hampers cattle raising, livestock production is an important source of both food and revenue.

Upper Volta.--Estimated crop production, 1960

Crop	Production
	: 1,000 metric tons
Sorghum and millet .....	559
Cowpeas .....	63
Corn .....	55
Peanuts, unshelled .....	55
Cassava .....	30
Yams .....	25
Sweetpotatoes .....	20
Shea nuts .....	20
Rice, paddy .....	18
Cottonseed .....	5
Cotton lint .....	3
Cocoyams .....	3
Sesame seed .....	1

Upper Volta.--Estimated livestock numbers, 1961

Kind	1,000 head
Cattle .....	1,780
Goats .....	1,400
Sheep .....	1,325
Donkeys .....	185
Horses .....	96
Hogs .....	41

Agricultural trade - Over 70 percent of Upper Volta's total exports are classified as agricultural. (Fish make up a large part of the nonagricultural exports). Cattle, the most important single export, make up nearly half of all exports. Most of the cattle are driven across the border and purchased by the neighboring country of Ghana. Officials feel, however, that the actual number of livestock crossing the border is probably double the recorded number.

Exports of crops are relatively small. Cotton, peanuts, sesame, vegetables, and shea nuts and shea nut butter are the chief export crops. Ghana is Upper Volta's best customer, taking 74 percent of all exports in 1959, followed by France, which bought 16 percent.

Upper Volta: Principal agricultural exports, 1958, 1959

Commodity	Quantity		Value		Percent of
	1958	1959	1958	1959	total value of all exports 1959
	1,000 metric tons		1,000 dollars		Percent
Live animals .....	24.7	19.1	2,838	2,248	49.5
Cotton lint .....	.9	n.a.	505	275	6.0
Peanuts, shelled .....	3.2	2.1	395	235	5.2
Sesame seed .....	.9	1.4	167	223	4.9
Vegetables .....	1.2	1.3	152	134	3.0
Shea nuts and butter .....	1.0	.5	86	85	1.9
Total, above agricultural exports .....			4,143	3,200	70.5
Total exports .....			5,386	4,541	100.0

France is the largest supplier of agricultural products (as well as nonagricultural products) to Upper Volta. Second place is taken by Ghana, supplier of kola nuts. The kola nuts are shown under "fruits and vegetables" in the table immediately below.

Upper Volta: Principal agricultural imports, 1958, 1959

Commodity	Quantity		Value		Percent of
	1958	1959	1958	1959	total value of all imports 1959
	1,000 metric tons	1,000 metric tons	1,000 dollars	1,000 dollars	Percent
Sugar .....	1.8	1.2	414	251	3.0
Fruits and vegetables .....	3.1	2.5	571	239	2.8
Wine and beer .....	.4	.4	181	158	1.9
Dairy products and eggs .....	.2	.2	119	118	1.4
Wheat flour .....	.8	.6	110	81	1.0
Flour preparations .....	1/	.1	33	57	.7
Fruits and vegetables, pre- served .....	1/	.1	29	41	.5
Total, above agricultural imports .....			1,457	945	11.3
Total imports .....			8,571	8,390	100.0

1/ Less than 50 metric tons.

Note: These export and import statistics should be considered as minimum figures. Many Upper Volta exports shipped through the port of Abidjan, Ivory Coast, are undoubtedly included in the Ivory Coast export figures. Furthermore, many imports coming through Abidjan finally reach Upper Volta without an additional customs inspection; they are thus counted among the Ivory Coast imports and not those of Upper Volta.

Food consumption and degree of self-sufficiency - The diet of the people of Upper Volta is primarily based on millet and sorghum. Although rather starchy in composition, it does include animal products to a greater degree than do the diets of the inhabitants of tropical Africa.

The country is largely self-sufficient in food production, importing only a small amount of sugar, dairy products, wheat flour, and bakery products.

Agricultural policy - So far, the agricultural policy of newly-independent Upper Volta is largely a heritage from the French. The overall objective of the agricultural policy as pursued by the French has been to raise the standard of living of the people of Upper Volta. To meet this objective the French have encouraged the Africans to increase agricultural production, especially in cash crops, thereby increasing capital accumulation. Thus far, however, exports have been small.

France has also initiated programs to demonstrate improved farming methods but the African farmer has been slow in adopting these methods. Other agricultural development programs financed by French economic development funds include soil, water, and weather studies; and the development of land for additional production.

In addition to direct aid to the agricultural sector of the economy, French aid has also been extended to the development of infrastructure (roads, railroads, communications, etc.) within the country. These programs will help to make new areas accessible for agricultural development.

France has also attempted to stabilize the price of commercial agriculture by a system of price controls. This has helped the commercial peanut grower, in particular, as the price paid is usually higher than would have prevailed had the price been determined by supply and demand.

France is continuing to provide loans and grants to Upper Volta. The previous FIDES (Investment Fund for Economic and Social Development) program has been replaced by the present FAC (Aid and Cooperation Fund) program.

Trade policy - The independent nations (except Guinea) which were formerly territories of French West Africa have entered into a customs union which provides for: (1) the elimination of all trade barriers between them and (2) a uniform tariff against all imports from outside the area. This customs union was originally formed when the seven countries had the political status of autonomous republics. Imports from all countries are subjected to "fiscal" duties which are collected primarily for revenue. In addition, "custom" duties are collected on trade with non-franc countries which is a restrictive measure as well as a source of revenue. Licenses are required for imports originating outside the franc zone as a means of regulating trade.

In June 1961, the customs barriers between Upper Volta and Ghana were suppressed. Goods can now pass freely from Ghana to Upper Volta and from Upper Volta to Ghana, without payment of customs in either case. However, a statistical record is made of goods crossing the border. For imported goods landed in Ghana but subsequently re-exported to Upper Volta, the Government of Ghana has agreed to pay the Government of Upper Volta 90 percent of the customs originally collected at the Ghana port.

Economic situation - Upper Volta is not a prosperous country and prospects are slim for any major increase in prosperity in the near future. The land is poor and the rainfall sparse and there are few opportunities for major irrigation schemes. In spite of these adverse conditions, the economy of Upper Volta appears to be destined to remain agricultural, at least for the near future, as no major mineral deposits have been discovered that could be used for industrial purposes or as a source of national income.

The French through FIDES programs and presently through FAC are granting financial aid for economic development. Before Upper Volta became an autonomous republic this aid was organized under a series of 4-year plans. The third 4-year plan that went into operation in 1958 had a greater proportion of funds specified for agriculture than were budgeted through the first two such plans. Greater stress on agricultural development was made with the intent of raising the national income through increased production and exporting.

Inflation has been a problem in the French territories due in part to large expenditures on infrastructure made possible by the first and second 4-year plans. However, it is hoped the emphasis on increased agricultural production, as outlined by the third 4-year plan, will do much to halt this inflation. At present the official exchange rate is 246.853 francs CFA to one United States dollar.

United States - Upper Volta agricultural trade - The United States share of Upper Volta's imports is extremely small, amounting to little more than one percent of the figure for the franc zone for total imports (agricultural and nonagricultural). No agricultural exports go to the United States.



