

Understanding Agro-pastoral Shows in a Planned Economy (1973-1987): the Case of Cameroon

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Abstract: The paper examines the sway of Agro-pastoral shows in Cameroon during the period of planning for development. Planned Liberalism was a post-independence economic development policy aimed at integrating the economies of East and West Cameroons. Initially, two medium term plans were put in place covering the periods 1960-1965 and 1966-1971, with much priority on industrial rather than agricultural development, considered a key prerequisite of any meaningful economic take off point. Realizing that industrial development was costly and slow in reducing poverty and stimulating socio-economic change, greater attention was shifted towards agricultural development in the 1970s, more precisely during the periods of the 3rd (1971-1976) and 4th (1976-1981) Five Years Development Plans. In the wisdom of the time, agriculture was reconsidered as the primary and most important stage to real development in the country. Agro-pastoral shows were conceived and instituted, to stimulate, incite, inform and act as forums where farmers could learn and emulate from one another thereby enhancing agricultural development. The paper is based on primary and secondary data. It examines how agro-pastoral shows emerged and evolved in Cameroon. It starts with a contextual setting and examines why and how agro-pastoral shows emerged and evolved in West Cameroons and later on in the Unitary State. It ends with some agro-pastoral incentives. The paper contends that agro-pastoral shows enhanced Cameroon's policy of planning for development, but clogged due to the lack of proper functioning mechanisms and advent of economic crisis in the mid-1980s.

Keywords: Agro-pastoral shows, Planning, Economy, Agriculture, Development.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is one of the earliest sustainable development strategies. Among other strategies at independence, Cameroon gave priority to agricultural development during the period of planning for development through agro-pastoral shows. Agro-pastoral shows were first introduced in West Cameroon before being integrated nation-wide. Cameroon's development efforts were managed through a series of five years development plans. These plans laid conditions for public investment and facilitated the flow of development assistance from foreign partners. Government intervened massively in rural development, directly through the establishment of state-owned agro-industries, rural corporations and settlements, and also indirectly through various support programs. About 85 percent of the population of the country lived in rural areas and relied principally on agriculture for their livelihoods.

Peasant agriculture did not augur well during the period of the first and second five years development plans, as growth and performance in agricultural output came rather from increases in the

areas under cultivation than yield gains. These plans did however envisage experimentation with other forms of intervention structures in agriculture and production. The unification of the country in 1972 and creation of a new Ministry of Agriculture led to a substantial modification in the colonial institutional structure of this domain. Considering the agricultural and pastoral vocation of Cameroon at the time, rural development was given a pride of place in the third plan, baptized: "production and productivity plan". The third Five Years Development Plan, constituted not only of extending large scale plantations and agro-industrial structures, but also on creating new ones. Apart from these, some projects of integrated development were created, to operate with the active participation of the populations concerned thereby improving on agricultural output.

Period of the Study

The period for the study ranges from 1973 to 1987. This period has been chosen because the first national agro-pastoral show was introduced and hosted in Buea in 1973, while the last in range was organised in Maroua I in 1987 due to some difficulties that

emanated from the economic crisis that hit Cameroon in 1986.

Area of the Study

Cameroon is located in Central Africa in the heart of the Gulf of Guinea and covers a surface area of about 475 000 km². It shares common borders with Chad, Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. The country is marked by diversity in unity with more than 250 national languages spoken by the populations in the 10 regions. It is a resource rich country heavily dependent on revenues generated from oil, timber and agricultural products [1]. The country was formerly divided between France and Britain, gained its independence through a two stage process in 1960 and 1961 to become the Federal Republic of Cameroon, renamed United Republic of Cameroon in 1972 and later Republic of Cameroon in 1984. Its first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, ruled for over 20 years. Agriculture, education, health care and transport services were improved during his tenure of office. It was equally during this period that agro-pastoral shows were introduced under the policy of planning for development to boost agricultural development [2]. This continued shortly after President Paul Biya, but terminated due to the outbreak of the economic crisis in 1986.

Contextual Setting

At independence, Cameroon's economy was based mainly on the policies of planned liberalism and self-reliant development. 'Planned Liberalism' was out to regulate, manage natural resources and orientate foreign investments towards the common interest [3]. It was equally to partner with foreign entities to set up various parastatals providing jobs to Cameroonians in general and youths in particular. In addition, it encouraged investments in the private sector, the rational exploitation of production factors and market forces. In line with this policy, two medium term plans were formulated, covering the periods 1960-1965 and 1966-1971, with a view of doubling the real per capita income of the federation by 1980 [4]. This policy was aimed at integrating the economies of the federations in what became known as Five Years Development Plans [5]. The resources for financing the various projects of development plans could have in principle, been provided, by drawing on domestic resources, thereby restricting current consumption through higher tax rates or utilising the idle resources of the country and or sought for foreign public and private funds. However, Cameroon just like any other less developed country with inadequate domestic resources chose to finance the development plans through both means.

The policy of planning was earmarked due to the complex and challenging problems of independence and reunification of Cameroon. The prevailing political mood at the time was one of optimism that the country would attain self-sustained growth [6]. According to President Ahmadou Ahidjo, this form of development was not only necessary, but conformed to the evolution of the world at the time, when he intimated that: "The national construction which is our supreme mission cannot be happily pursued, without plans; planning is necessary in all fields of national activity. This is not an exclusive Cameroon ambition or necessity; the twentieth century is a century of planning" [7]. Russia was one of the earliest prominent examples that adopted this policy in 1928 through forced collectivisation of agriculture [8]. India copied Russian methods in 1947, with the first plan being implemented in 1950 [9].

In the case of Cameroon, the policy remained profoundly democratic as it did sought to orient, incite, influence and persuade rather than coerce. It was also worked out amidst a dialogue at all levels (village, communities, regional councils, divisional councils and national development councils), between the authorities, producers and the consumers, in the final analysis, by the whole population [10]. It was with the foregoing aims in view, that a plan was elaborated in 1960 to run for a period of 20 years. Initial efforts to achieve this were in two medium plans, called the First and Second Five Year Development Plans [11]. It should be noted and understood that the first plan was produced and in some haste by a French research and planning group, without adequate preliminary study.

And because the plan was put together before the reunification of the country, it did not take into account the entrance of West Cameroon in the total economy of the Federation. Therefore, the plan was somewhat unrealistic in some of its provisions as it did partially correspond to its stated aims in areas such as infrastructure (railways), public education, health, and housing. Moreover and most seriously, very little was met in the field of Agriculture, which was one of the plan's key points of emphasis [12]. Despite these, the plan permitted the creation of structures necessary for the success of the second plan. According to Hugon therefore, the first plan (1960-1965) served as a, "Period of Adaptation" for the second plan [13]. In other words, it did prepare the grounds for the putting in place of this plan.

The Second Five Years Development Plan (1965-1971) was elaborated under the auspices of the Federal Government and struggled to remedy the failures of the first plan. Agriculture was given a pride of place in the plan and this explains why it was named

the “peasant plan”, to mean that greater emphasis was placed on it. The Plan further called for accelerating the commercialization of agriculture, agricultural reform and reorganization [14]. This plan envisaged a total investment of 165 Million Francs CFA, amounting more than three times that scheduled for the first plan, with 45.6 percent of it devoted to increasing the overall agricultural production of the country [15]. An important aspect of the plan involved the sweeping enhancement of peasant export production through the diversification of cash crops. The production of key cash crops such as coffee, cotton, cocoa and others increased significantly. Wood, meat and livestock were also produced and exported in greater quantities [16].

The production of tea, rubber and palm products did also increase. Most export crops were marketed through cooperatives, in both parts of the country. In addition, the Federal government created agricultural modernization centres in the five geographical areas of the country to coordinate development research and technical aid relating to the principal crops grown in each of these areas [17]. The plan also called for the establishment of regional development institutions combined with plantations and agro-industrial structures. This plan was regionalized with the aim of effectively developing each region’s economic and social potentials, especially in farming, crafts and industrial growth [18]. The major issue in the plan was that the successes earmarked were limited, especially in the domain of agriculture.

The Third Five Years Development Plan was baptized: “production and productivity plan.” This plan was drawn around a certain number of strategic operations, principally directed towards the public sector aimed at breaking the chief strangleholds preventing the economic and social development of the country [19]. Due to the agricultural and pastoral vocation of Cameroon at the time, a lot of attention was placed on rural development. Much of the country’s agricultural intervention was undertaken with the help of foreign aid donors. It was understood that agricultural structures were to be run as quasi-private enterprises, with administrative, technical and financial autonomy and therefore potential efficiency.

The plan was therefore aimed at attaining the objectives of the second plan, constituted not only of extending large scale plantations and agro-industrial structures, but also on creating new ones. Apart from these, some projects of integrated development were created, to operate with the active participation of the populations concerned. Unlike in the first and second plans where development was virtually equated with industrialisation, greater attention was placed on

agricultural development and on improving living conditions in rural areas in the third plan [20]. This awakening was urged by the fact that industrial development was deemed costly and slow in reducing poverty and stimulating socio-economic development [21]. This is commensurate with why despite all early efforts; the economy still faced serious difficulties caused by a production gap, due to unfavourable climatic conditions and simultaneously the fall in the prices of some basic products in the international market.

Government action was further geared towards promoting high and equilibrium growth, principally in the domains of Agricultural modernization, development of industries and acceleration of collective equipment. But due to preponderant effects on agriculture and volume of exports on the economic sector of the country, there was a slowdown in production; rhythm of economic activities; national demand; public finance and the balance of payment. Added to these were the effects of world inflation and hikes in prices of petroleum products, which contributed to disequilibrium in the economies of the different countries of the world including Cameroon [22]. Following this situation, the Gros Domestic Product (GDP) of Cameroon fell from 8 percent in 1970, to 4 percent in 1971 and to 3 percent in 1972 [23]. This situation urged the Government, to put some measures in place so as to elevate the living standards of the masses.

Existing plantations, agro-industrial structures, and others based more on cash and food crop production such as the Société de Développement du Cacao (SODECAO), the Cameroon Development Cooperation (CDC), Société Camerounaise de Palmeraies (SOCAPALM), Société D’expansion et de Modernisation de la Riziculture de Yagua (SEMRY) and the Société de Développement du Coton au Cameroun (SODECOTON) were extended [24]. Ndongko acknowledges that one of the most remarkable events in Cameroon’s political economy was the promotion of Agro-industrial enterprises in particular, based on plantation production [25]. He further states that Government did implement a general action, aimed at reinforcing farmers’ training through the provision of technical progress and professional structures, indispensable for the full success of the quest for development.

The government of Cameroon further saw the need for harmonious integration of development activities on account of geographical, historical, socio-cultural and demographic differences. Developing resources through equipment projects set up within a coherent framework, modernising and developing rural

areas around development poles. This latter wave of structures prompted the establishment of development bodies of integrated nature, launched, to be executed with the active participation of populations and meant for the development of zones with multiple roles. Such were: the Rural Migration projects of North- East of Benue, Doulo-Ngane and Guider, all situated in the North Region (the French and European Development Fund (EDF), assistance was very essential for the project; the Priority Integrated Development Zones (ZAPI), which functioned as development Authorities, one in the Centre South and the other in the East, beginning from 1972; the Wum Area Development Authority (WADA), which received the German Technical Aid (GTA); the Nkam Development Authority (SODENKAM), which was out to establish willing young farmers in the Yabassi-Bafang Zone and the Ombessa Area Development Authority (OADA), established to promote vegetable production [26] .

These projects were to insert the youths into rural development activities. Their possibilities complemented the initiation of the Civic Service in the development drive. All these were aimed at reducing rural exodus in general and luxury in urban centres among the youths in particular [27] . The forgone structures were production targets of agricultural activities during the period of the Third Five Years Development Plan. It was held that by these, food production will increase by 2.3 percent per year on average against 5.4 percent for agricultural products destined for export [28] . It was in this light that the idea of food self-sufficiency evolved within a development-oriented framework of what was officially labelled “Sahel Vert” and the “Green Revolution.” Agro-pastoral shows were an important aspect of the Green Revolution in the country’s socio-economic and political agenda. For a better perception of how agro-pastoral shows emerged and evolved, it would be essential to give a pride of place to West Cameroons.

State of West Cameroon Experience

Even before Agro-pastoral shows became part of West Cameroon’s agricultural policy were some general institutional structures and policies put in place by the federal government to promote agricultural development in the country. One of the most prominent of these was the Department of Agriculture and Rural Animation created in 1964 under the Federal Ministry of Planning. Coordination in the department’s efforts was seen more in areas of research, extension, availability of inputs and others, all in a bid to obtain changes in peasant behavior in view of their autonomy in decision-making. This was such that when future measures came, it would be easier for farmers to assent.

Agro-pastoral shows were first experienced in West Cameroon, before being adopted nationwide. West Cameroon adopted Agro-pastoral shows as a means to contributing and promoting food self-sufficiency in the country in pursuance of the national development policy [29] . The slogan “grow more food” was thus launched by R.E.G. Burnley and his agricultural colleagues of West Cameroon in this regard. This worked so well that in the early 1970s, President Ahmadou Ahidjo, decided to make it a nationwide event. When Cameroon got unified in 1972, those who were appointed to this part of the country saw how this slogan worked. The main objective behind why Agro-pastoral shows were promoted in West Cameroon was not only because there was need for food self-sufficiency, but also because the idea of the green revolution was spreading worldwide and West Cameroonians too embraced it.

Farmers were encouraged to grow not only cash crops like coffee, cocoa and banana, but also food crops. For instance, most of the yams before the advent of agro-pastoral shows in West Cameroon came from Nigeria, so farmers were encouraged to plant yams. What existed more in West Cameroon were plantains, coco yams and colocassia. Farmers were equally encouraged to remain attached to livestock of their respective areas: pigs, goats and sheep in the South West; in the North West the farmers raised cattle and other small ruminants as those of the former. These were the various crops and animals that farmers brought and exhibited during Agro-pastoral shows.

Agro-pastoral shows in this part of the country were done both at provincial and divisional levels. For instance, the Wum and Nkambe Divisions’ shows took place in 1966 [1] . These were to help change the people’s minds, so that they could look to agriculture as a dignified career and highest in importance to an agricultural country like Cameroon [31] . The first Agro-pastoral show that took place in Buea West Cameroon was on the 7th November 1967. This was organised and financed by the Bakweri council with the assistance of the technical officers of the Ministry of Agriculture West Cameroon [32] . In effect, agricultural shows were not new to Cameroonians before 1973.

Unitary state experience

After the referendum of 1972, with East and West Cameroons uniting as the United Republic of Cameroon, president, Amadou Ahidjo decided that the West Cameroons experience of agro-pastoral shows be adopted and done at the national level. Buea was chosen to host the first show in March 1973 and this was jointly organized by the ministries of Agriculture (Jean Keutcha) and Livestock and Animal Industries (Sadjo

Agokay). Eager to promote rapid development through Five Years development plans the government of Cameroon decided to refocus on Agriculture considered the primary catalyst of economic growth. Agro-pastoral shows were founded on Cameroon's desire to grow adequate food for consumers or have a stabilized trade balance.

Cameroon had vast expanses of exploitable land or sea, generally favourable climate, fertile soils, many plant varieties, industrious and hardworking labour that augured well for a rapid development of the country. Considering that Agriculture was the primary job provider that could employ the about 80 percent of the population that depended on it, Agro-pastoral shows were deemed necessary to boost production. Again given its dominant role in socio-economic development, it was understandable that Cameroon's access to food was to be found in its agricultural potential and adequate policy planning. This was although many youths still found it difficult to get employed. The launching of Agricultural shows came along with the institutionalisation of periodic agricultural festivals held regularly in major cities and towns of the country [33]. This was to see into it that the problem of rapid economic development of the country is resolved.

In its Magazine entitled: "the Grand agricultural show Buea South West Province," the then Minister of agriculture Jean Keutchu said: "... Such a manifestation brings together farmers, extension and research services, manufacturers; traders etc and thus play an important role of training and information of rural populations." [34]. They were therefore to act as impetus to stimulate, incite, inform and also as forums where farmers and youths in particular could learn and emulate from one another [35]. They were further created to speed up national agricultural production while encouraging all actors of the sector to work harder in order to ensure food self-sufficiency. In order to materialize government's encouragement, competitors (planters or growers, fishermen and stock breeders) of the country who presented the best products and farmers were awarded prizes. Government organized and encouraged shows at periodic and rotating intervals, at provincial and even very restricted territorial units. Giving priority to promoting Agricultural growth is reminiscent in the following views expressed by Anderson and Lorch:

Very few countries, particularly in the developing world have experienced rapid economic growth without agricultural growth either preceding or accompanying it. This is because agricultural growth is a catalyst to broad-based development. At the micro level, for instance, it provides eventual savings for entrepreneurial development in the informal sector. At

the macro level, it provides raw materials which are a strong base for industrial development [36].

It was in such basis that Agro-pastoral shows were adopted during the period of the Third and Fourth Five Years Development Plans (1971-1981). Both plans are often considered main pillars of Cameroon's agricultural development. Not less than 60 percent of the total planned budget for the plans was reserved for agricultural development [37]. During agro-pastoral ceremonies, competitions were organized, with appropriate compensations given to participants for efforts put at agricultural production both in quality and quantity. The spirit of emulation was also encouraged, given that this was perceived as the most favourable factor of technical progress that played a great role in promoting economic and social progress in the country. According to Simon Tamanjung, the then provincial delegate of agriculture for the South West Province: Agro-pastoral shows were normal events in former West Cameroon and occasional events in East Cameroon. The objectives of Agricultural shows were to "accelerate agricultural development so as to find an early solution of providing the population and the industrial expansion of the country," this meant a radical change from the subsistence farming techniques and improved marketing circuits resulting in higher incomes from agricultural pursuits [38].

Agricultural shows were to urge Cameroonians in general and the youths in particular, to be conscientious of the problems plaguing the rural world. They were also to orchestrate serene confrontations between agriculturalists, graziers, foresters, artisans, business people and industrialists, thereby, constituting an irreversible meeting point of diffusion and information where each of them could enrich their knowledge, compare experiences and appreciate the technical progress so far realised in their various domains of activity [39]. Agro-pastoral shows were to transform villages from places where the inhabitants would not remain essentially agricultural, living on one and the same activity, to places where apart from farmers, were going to be added an important tertiary population of trades, services, a secondary population of small local industries and even a resident population which consumed on the spot.

All of these motivations were to discourage the youths from migrating out of the villages, because in return to the training and other facilities which the state did provide for them, they had to, on the other hand provide their dynamic generosity to the drive for national development. It was in this direction that structures like WADA, SODENKAM, ZAPI, MIDO and others were earmarked, so as to coordinate such intentions. The youths were to through such structures

show in an efficient manner their taste for work, accountability and quality to ameliorate the quality of life in rural settings. These structures were also founded from the nationhood-felt patriotic and naturalist ideology that emerged at the time, to accommodate the demands of large, medium and small size farmers in search for self-determination and the right to sustainable development. Apart from individual farmers that were indirectly connected to these structures, they were also encouraged to have their products exhibited during agro-pastoral shows.

Some major corporations that got involved in rice cultivation were the Société d'Expansion et de modernisation de la Riziculture de Yagoua (SEMRY) and the Société de Développement de la Riziculture dans la plaine Mbo (SODERIM). Agro-pastoral shows were therefore to encourage these and individual farmers increase production in quality and quantity. In fact, the importance of rice cultivation was noticed even before the Buea show especially with the identification of its cultivation in various extensive sites like Yagoua, Mbo plains (Mungo), Nanga Eboko, and Doumé (East Region). Their primary goals were to increase the market share of Cameroonian rice, enhance agricultural revenues in the isolated regions, provide jobs, supply the local consumption market with adequate food and bring large scale imports under control. This was in effect to render the work of the soil its dignity and nobleness.

The first achievement of the Buea show was that agriculturalists present and consecrated best provincial producers considered it a practical assignment to conserve and improve on their performances. Again, those who were not well classified at this occasion were urged to work harder and did not only take the lead during the next show that took place in Ngaoundere, but emerged among the group of best producers [40]. In this way, structures put up during the third plan were to compete and either or not compensated as best or weaker structures during the shows. Prior to agro-pastoral shows, best farm competitions were organised at all levels as a means of motivating farmers [41]. That is to say from village to provincial levels. Such competitions and prizes won acted as incentives to farmers and as catalysts for rural development. After the Buea agro-pastoral show of 1973, was Ngaoundere in 1974, Bafoussam in 1977, Bertoua in 1981, Bamenda in 1984 and Maroua I 1987. That of Ebolowa was announced in 1988, but never held, because of the outbreak of the economic crisis.

Incentives to Agro-pastoral shows: The Operation Green Revolution

The Green Revolution was a strategy introduced to satisfy Cameroon's ambitious quest for a rapid development. It did in part reflect the deep concern at

which Cameroonian authorities espoused President Thomas Jefferson's "agrarian state" ideology that formed the benchmark of the American Republic at the end of the 18th century, aimed at the mass production of high consumption commodities such as rice, wheat, bananas, tomatoes, vegetables, corn and others. This policy regarded agriculture as a national base for feeding the population and also as strength to the country's industry and most importantly, an essential factor in the strategy of economic growth. In order to continue to encourage the practice of agriculture in the country, President Ahmadou Ahidjo while launching the first Agro-pastoral show in Buea, announced the operation Green Revolution to help meet its development objectives. He presented the operation Green Revolution in the following terms:

Ce comice agricole de Buea, ouvrant la sève prometteuse des rencontres du même genre bientôt périodiquement organisée à travers toutes nos provinces constitue le signe annonciateur de la réussite certaine au Cameroun de la "Révolution Vert," cette révolution vert ou prône l'usage rationnel de nos ressources naturelles, qui suscite notre prise de conscience pour une mise en valeur optimum de ce patrimoine irremplaçable qu'est le sol de la patrie, constitue le jalon essentiel de la Révolution toute court dans laquelle nous sommes engagé : Révolution émancipatrice, révolution créatrice d'un esprit d'initiative et de responsabilité, par laquelle nous forgerons nous même les moyens de notre émergence afin que l'homme Camerounaise relève le défi du développement , devienne pleinement et de manier irréversible, sujet et partenaire active de l' Histoire [42].

From the foregoing presentation, it can be understood that the Green Revolution implied steady and forward-looking changes in attitudes, goals, means, methods, traditions, and vital structures to promote growth in the Agricultural sector. This was all in the process of mobilizing the human and material resources of Cameroon, towards increased agricultural production in particular and productivity in general. Therefore it was aimed at increasing and improving agricultural production possibilities in order to ensure a steady surge in quality and quantity of the country's agricultural produce, needed so direly to feed the growing population [43]. According to the then Vice Minister of Agriculture Mr. Joseph Awunti addressing the youths of the CNU party in Yaoundé, on July 1976:

The green revolution called on all Cameroonians to engage in agriculture in a realistic manner: modify ancient traditional farming methods so as to replace them gradually with more modern and scientific methods; replace low yielding cocoa, coffee, and food crops, planting materials with high yielding disease resistant varieties; readapt agricultural policy to the

needs of the nation so as to be able to maintain a proper and careful balance between cash crops and food crops [44].

During the lunch of the first Agro-pastoral show and operation Green Revolution in Buea 1973, farmers were called upon to form groups to better qualify for government assistance. It was in this framework that all the Agro-industrial projects created and or extended did operate under the Third and Fourth Five Years Development Plans for better returns. The advent of the Green Revolution led to the establishment of several agricultural parastatals such as, the National Fund for Rural Development (FONADER 1969); National Produce Marketing Board (NPMB Sep 1972); Cameroon Chamber of Commerce, Industry and mine (March 1986); Nkam development Corporation (SODENKAM); Hevea Cameroon (HEVECAM), which was created in Dizangue in 1975 to counter growing rubber prices on the international market.

It did also lead to the training of rural consultants, agricultural technicians and engineers through various academic and professional institutions that emerged nationwide under state support: Regional colleges of Agriculture (Bamenda and Ebolowa), Institute of Agricultural Research (IRA-Nkolbisson), National School of Waters and forests (Mbalmayo), Agricultural Technical Colleges (ETA) Institute for Agricultural Research and development (IRAD), Nature conservation School Garoua. The training of senior agricultural managers did successively take place at the Agricultural science Institute (ITA), Advance national school of Agronomy (ENSA) and the National Institute for Rural Development (INADER), that formed the bulk of the then Dschang University Centre. All of these were to assist in increased agricultural production and productivity of the country.

Farm Credit Bodies and Related structures

Another great stride in this light was the establishment of agricultural banks and other input institutions. Taking into account the fact that a larger number of the country's population depended on agriculture for livelihood, the state embarked on assuring that it did move from subsistent to commercial Agriculture. This was to be done with sufficient financial backings and measures to solve the problems of rural savings and agricultural credit. The Rural Fund for National Development (FONADER), the "farmer's bank" was therefore created by presidential decree No. 73/24 of 29th May 1973 to play this important role by promoting and accelerating economic and social development in rural areas [45]. Generally, FONADER's mandate included inter-alia the financial management of specific funds placed at its disposal by the state, domestic, and or foreign bodies; granting if need be guarantees to loans accorded by commercial

banks to certain intervention bodies in rural areas; provision with the Cameroon Development Banks (CBC) and commercial banks of joint financing for rural development and above all, distribution of agricultural credits [46].

This role was to be fulfilled in the following ways: providing aid and credit to farmers or groups of farmers who undertook agricultural activities considered profitable in the context of the objectives of the economic and social plans of the URC; guaranteeing loans granted by created bodies to pre-cooperative groups, cooperative societies and Unions as well as to farmers and stock breeders; granting advances for purchase of agricultural tools, materials and constructing storage facilities especially for the settlement of young farmers in rural areas [47]. This was to permit farmers improve on the quality and quantity of agricultural production. Considering that small farmers constituted the bulk of the rural poor in Cameroon, the importance of the credit to them could not be over emphasized. Even civil servants who owned economically viable farms were encouraged to benefit from the scheme [48].

Understanding that moving from subsistent agriculture to a market oriented one, required necessary financial means to farmers, government embarked on the foregoing, to solving the problems of rural savings and agricultural credits [49]. This helped broaden the scope of production by increasing the number of people involved in agriculture. This role was mandated to FONADER rather than the Cameroon Development Bank, the institution which was supposed to finance development activities, probably because it made agriculture lag behind the industry by reserving much of its funding for the later. But with the establishment of the third plan, the state thought it fitting to reinforce the credits that were put at the disposal of farmers [2]. It is argued that FONADER granted loans mainly to civil servants or wage earners wishing to engage in agricultural activities than to farmers and this defeated the broad objective of the bank [51].

Other related bodies included farm equipment bodies like the Centre National d'Etudes et D'Expérimentation du Machinisme Agricole (CENEEMA) involved with the production of agricultural tools and equipment to facilitate input needs. Bodies to promote cooperatives like the Centre National de Développement des Entreprises Cooperatives (CENADEC) were equally put in place, to run cooperative activities within the framework of improved agricultural production. Agricultural research units like the Institute de Recherche Zoologique (IRZ), agricultural training schools as well as bodies for the commercialisation of agricultural produce like the

“National Produce Marketing Board (NPMB), were also established. These bodies were expected to work in a coherent and coordinated manner in order to develop zones that were so far abandoned thereby improving on the national agricultural output [52]. The preceding incentives, made agro-pastoral ceremonies flourish as farmers were able to improve on the quality and quantity of their produce.

CONCLUSION

Cameroon’s post-independence development drive was based principally on planned development and self-reliance. These were among other things to promote and enhance agricultural production and productivity entailed in Five Years Development Plans through ideological spurs like: the operations “Sahel Verte” and “Green Revolutions”. Agriculture was practised in its broadest sense, including stockbreeding and fisheries, in order to encourage food crop production and discourage the importation of rice, maize, sugar, meat and fish. Agro-pastoral Shows were practical manifestations that started in West Cameroons and later opted for the entire country to act as spurs to its agricultural development strategy. Participants came from all parts of the country, received prizes in cash and inputs like sprayers, grinding mills, fertilizers and a host of farm tools aimed at improving agricultural production and productivity. Apart from agricultural benefits, important projects were realized in all host towns, such as the construction and maintenance of roads, building of new structures (hotels) to accommodate participants; the renovation and construction of new facilities for these towns and cities to have new facelifts, boast the rural world; sell and expose agricultural and pastoral products. All these, are understood, moved Cameroon towards a plantation economy, although later halted by difficulties stemming from the economic crisis that hit the country in 1986, thereby disrupting the agro-pastoral show scheduled for Maroua I in 1987.

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