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EEC FOOD AID TO ZIMBABWE

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1. Building up the rural environment

The European Community's recent decision to implement a four-year food aid programme in Zimbabwe - the first multinannual food aid programme undertaken by the EEC in any member country of the Lomé Convention - is part of its wider-ranging attempts to link food aid to specific rural development projects in the Third World.

This reorientation of the direction and goals of the European Community's long-standing food aid programme falls in with the wide-ranging plan to fight hunger in the Third World launched recently by Edgard Pisani, the European Commissioner for development policy. The Commission's new emphasis on food self-sufficiency in Africa is echoed by a number of African organisations. The Lagos Plan of Action adopted by the Organisation of African Unity in April 1980 gives priority to stepping up food production in the continent by the year 2000. The Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) which is currently working to reduce Southern Africa's economic dependence on the Pretoria regime also emphasises the importance of developing agriculture and food production in the region.

2. Not food aid alone

As the Commission sees it, food aid alone cannot solve the serious food shortage facing the Third World and especially Africa. Although food aid is essential, even indispensable in times of natural disasters such as earthquakes, cyclones and floods, it cannot strike at the roots of underdevelopment. Food aid does, of course, offer temporary help to the victims of famine, but it does not, on its own, work to prevent future famines and food shortages. These can only be avoided through real development efforts aimed at improving the social, economic and agricultural situation in a country.

The action suggested by the Commissioner is expected to have longer-lasting and more permanent results than annual food aid programmes which only provide temporary relief. The focus of future EEC action will be on increasing agricultural production in Third World nations and the implementation of "strategies designed to increase food production through a range of coordinated actions which include food aid as one of their elements.

In order to allow for such agricultural development, food aid programmes must be planned and implemented on a multiannual basis. They must also form an integral part of larger rural development programmes designed to ensure food self-sufficiency in Third World nations.

3. A previous experience "Operation Flood" in India.

Until the recent decision to finance a four-year food aid programme in milk products in Zimbabwe was taken by the EEC, European experience in the multi-annual field had been restricted to food aid to "Operation Flood II".

The Commission sees "Operation Flood" as the most striking example of what the EEC's food aid programme can achieve if implemented on a multiannual basis. In fact, "Operation Flood" which started in 1970 has proved to be not only the largest project of this type but also one of the most comprehensive rural development projects undertaken anywhere in the Third World.

The project aims to improve the living conditions by 1985 of 10 million milk producers' families by building up an efficient dairy industry. The scheme also involves the setting up of dairies, dairy cattle cooperatives, as well as veterinary services aimed at increasing the productivity of local dairy farmers. The food aid sent to the project by the EEC is sold to cover some of the operational costs of the ambitious programme. The EEC has contributed a fixed quantity of 31,000 tonnes of milk powder and 12,700 tonnes of butteroil each year to the project since 1978 and is expected to continue until 1985.

4. Zimbabwe's dairy programme: the goals

Zimbabwe's dairy development programme is somewhat smaller than the Indian project, but the goals are essentially the same:

- attaining self-sufficiency in milk products;
- improving the economic and social conditions of small farmers by encouraging milk production in the rural areas;
- improving the structure and operations of the national dairy industry.

The European Community is committed to supplying 16,000 tonnes of milk powder and 2,750 tonnes of butteroil yearly to the four year programme which is scheduled to end in 1985. The total cost of the food aid contributions to be made by the EEC is put at 36.52 million European Currency Units (ECUs), of which 23.12 million ECU for aid in milk powder and 12.4 million ECU for aid in butteroil. The first instalment of the EEC food aid to Zimbabwe - covering 4,000 tonnes of milk powder and 1,000 tonnes of butteroil - was sent out in 1982.

5. Programme costs

The total cost of the project is put at 47 million Zimbabwean dollars. Bilateral donors, including EEC Member States, will provide 17.3 million dollars, while 7.2 million dollars will be provided by the Government of Zimbabwe. The rest of the costs will be covered through sales of the food aid sent by the EEC, which is expected to fetch about 22.5 million Zimbabwean dollars on the local market. The money will be used for the milk production programme, the collection of milk and the setting up of special governmental services.

The dairy development programme is part of the Zimbabwean Government's recent economic reform programme aimed at restructuring the economy and improving the living conditions of the rural population. As a result of these measures,

demand for dairy products, especially liquid milk, has increased by some 40 % since independence, provoking a serious structural dairy deficit. This deficit will total 66 million litres of liquid milk in 1982 and could, in 1983, increase to 86 million litres or 36 % of estimated national consumption of milk. This explains the country's need for aid in milk powder and butteroil which are re-processed into liquid milk.

According to estimates these requirements will continue for five years, the period during which the Zimbabwean authorities will implement their global dairy development programme designed to assure Zimbabwe's self-sufficiency in dairy products.

6. The programme's economic impact

The fact that Zimbabwe already has a rather sophisticated and effective dairy industry will of course be an enormous advantage. The country's dairy herd is distributed among 450 medium or large dairy farmers. There are also 5 dairy processing plants, with a sixth in the pipeline. Milk production in Zimbabwe is expected to reach 148 million litres in 1982, but demand will total 212 million litres. While in the past, the dairy industry produced a number of products such as cream, butter and cheese destined for consumption by the country's white population, the country's majority Government has put the emphasis on increasing production of milk which is drunk by the population as a whole.

Milk sales are, in fact, subsidised by the Government which sees these efforts as part of its overall action to improve the food intake of the entire Zimbabwean population. The direct beneficiaries of the programme for dairy development will be Zimbabwean families in rural areas. Statistics indicate that peasant farmers in the country possess about one million dairy cattle which produce only 150 million litres of milk per year. This milk is not sent to dairies, being consumed locally. Therefore, any increase in the productivity of the herd, and resulting sales of milk will provoke an improvement in the social and economic situation of the rural families by allowing the purchase of other food items.

The programme will also include the following aspects:

- the creation of centres for the collection of milk in rural districts and the implementation of a training programme and education on improving dairy herds, etc. Fifty centres serving about 500 families each will be set up during the preliminary phase;
- the development of a system for the collection of milk in order to facilitate the production and collection of milk in rural areas;
- the setting up of cooperatives within the framework of the governmental programme for the redistribution of land; these centres will produce milk, fruit, coffee and other food products and employ 5,000 families;
- improvement of the dairy equipment used by industry to prepare for the future increase in production and demand;
- the setting up of services designed to improve the dairy herd and research and development services.

The programme therefore fulfills the food self-sufficiency goals set out clearly by the European Community's long-term plan to fight hunger in the Third World. Instead of focussing solely on short-term food aid, the Zimbabwian and the Indian programmes - and, perhaps, soon the Botswana scheme - use food aid to stimulate local dairy production, thereby improving the nutritional intake of their citizens, and developing the rural areas where the majority of their populations live. The Commission believes that it is through such long-term but consistent and well-planned operations that the scourge of famine and malnutrition will finally disappear from the Third World.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS CONCERNING "DEVELOPMENT"

Other EEC publications about the Community's relations with the Third World can be obtained from the following address:

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Publications distribution service, Room 2/84
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- The European Community's development cooperation policy, 1980
Offprint of the 'Courier', n° 69,
- How to participate in contracts financed by the European Development Fund
Development Series - 1981 n° 3
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2. SERIES: "INFORMATION" ET "EUROPE INFORMATION"

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