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**Seminar on the Development of the
Leather and Leather Products Industries
in Developing Countries
Regional Project for Africa**

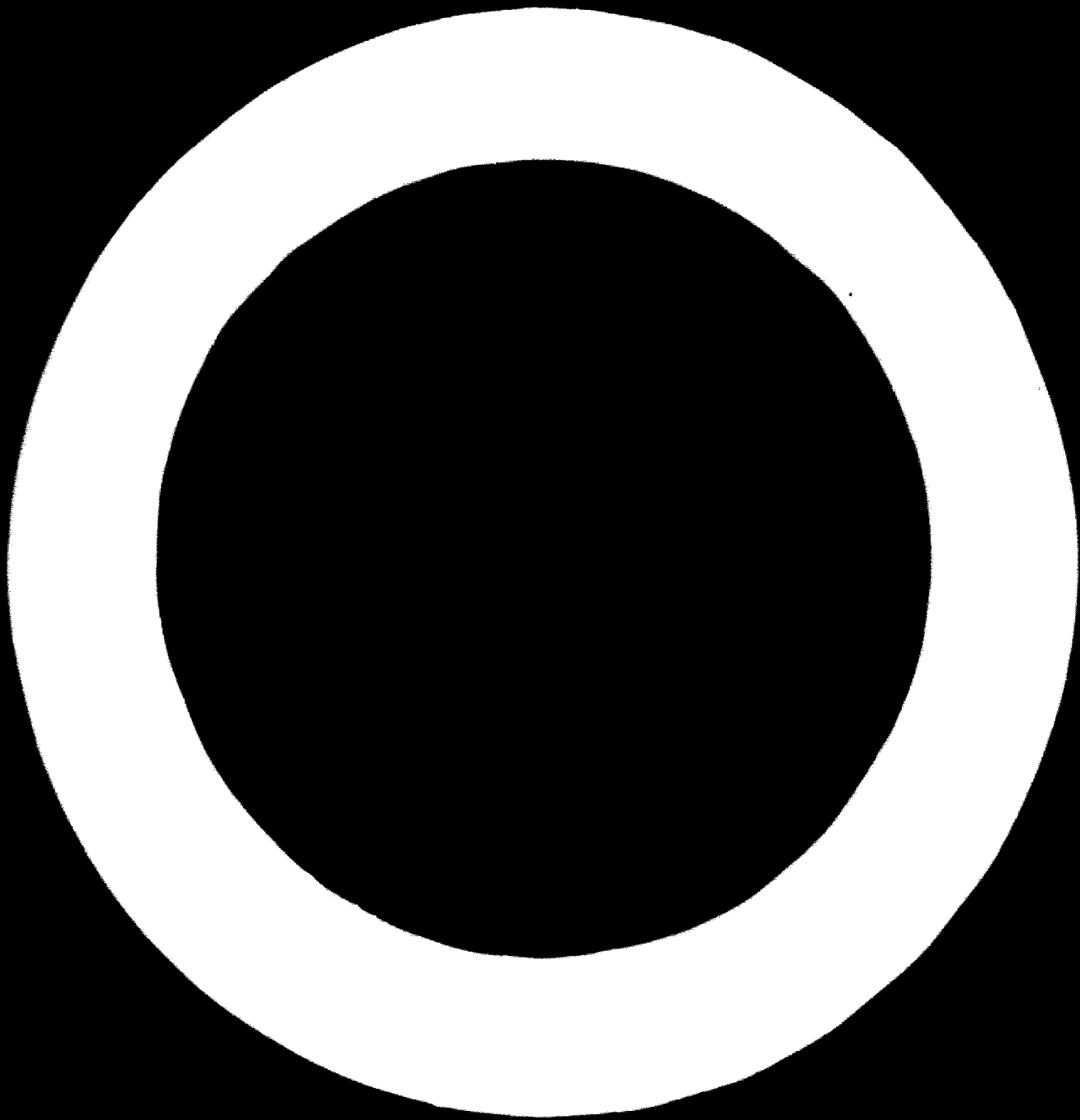
Vienna, Austria, 22 February - 5 March 1971

**STATEMENT
ON THE SITUATION OF THE HIDES AND SKINS,
LEATHER AND LEATHER PRODUCTS INDUSTRIES IN
ETHIOPIA ^{1/}
presented by
N.M. IRAN**

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Livestock is one of the main sources of income in Ethiopia and its breeding is a traditional branch of the national economy. Thus, Ethiopia ranks first in livestock production among the African countries.

The estimated livestock figures are as follows:

Cattle	26.2 million head
Sheep	12.7 million head
Goats	11.3 million head.

Hides and skins are produced throughout the country at abattoirs, meat packaging plants, slaughterhouses, individual slaughterings and rural farms. Hides and skins are important commodities for the economy of the country.

The production figures for hides and skins are as follows:

Cattle hides	2.7 million pieces
Sheep skins	7.0 million pieces
Goat skins	7.0 million pieces.

The industrial tanneries treat 220,000 hides per year, while the annual average export is one million hides. It was calculated that some 750,000 hides are used by village tanners for household purposes, the remaining hides are either lost in remote parts of the country or smuggled out.

As in any industry, the hides and skins industry is not without its problems, the most important ones being quality production and market incentive.

Hides are sold according to three qualities:

1. Butchery hides - air suspension dried
2. Dry salted hides
3. Caravan hides - ground dried hides.

Air suspension dried hides make 25 per cent of the market output and 75 per cent of these are consumed by the industrial tanneries.

Ground dried hides which are produced on rural farms, in small townships and villages comprise the majority of hides produced in the country. There are not many slaughterhouses in the smaller townships and cattle are slaughtered in the open field.

Generally speaking, skins (sheep and goat) are of better quality than hides. This is partly due to the fact that the animals are easier to skin and less damage is suffered during slaughtering and curing processes.

Ethiopian sheepskins are known throughout the world as being used for making high quality gloves; goat skins are appreciated for suedes.

As mentioned above, the export of hides and skins constitutes one of the biggest items in the local Ethiopian export industry, being second only to coffee as a foreign exchange earner. This export value equals about 10 per cent of the total value of exports. Owing to improper handling and lack of incentives, the majority of Ethiopian hides command lower prices.

Ethiopia exports the following quantities of raw hides and skins;

Cattle hides	1.0 million pieces
Sheep skins	5.5 million pieces
Goat skins	5.0 million pieces.

Improvement Service

The Livestock and Meat Board is responsible for the development of the hides, skins and leather industry. It was established in 1964 and has actively contributed to the improvement of quality and marketing procedures of hides and skins since 1968. It has trained hide and skin instructors for work in the field in an attempt to improve the quality of the hides and skins produced. The instructors are actively engaged in stimulating and encouraging the adoption of suspension drying methods. As a result of this programme, progress has been made in some parts of the country.

The Board has also organized hides and skins displays and marketing centres in order to facilitate its improvement service.

Hides and skins are sold according to grade - first, second and third. Hides and skins are treated with insecticides and graded in accordance with the specifications of the importing countries.

Leather Industry

Though Ethiopia is a vast producer of hides and skins, the shoe factories import some types of leather

The country has some four medium-sized and six very small tanneries which are engaged in the production of various types of leather. The quality of the leathers produced and the level of technology used differ from one tannery to the other. In toto, the tanneries employ 850 people.

The tanneries process 10 per cent of the cattle hides and 20 per cent of the skins produced in the country. They use 80 per cent of air suspension dried and 20 per cent of ground dried hides. Tanned hides measure 25-30 sq.ft., goat skins 4 sq.ft. and sheepskins 4.75 sq.ft.

Cattle hides are manufactured into various leather uppers, soles, beltings, split linings and blue chrome for export.

Sheep and goat skins are manufactured into finished leather, pickled and blue chrome for export purposes. One million pieces of pickled sheepskins and 300,000 pieces of goat skins in blue chrome are exported yearly.

Fur skins are used for garment and exotic leathers like lizard, snakes, etc., are used for the tourist market. Crocodile skins are produced as unfinished leather for export purposes.

The total processing capacity of the tanneries is 400,000 cattle hides, 3.1 million sheep and goat skins, 20,000 fur skins, 15,000 exotic leather and 15,000 crocodile skins per year. Most of the tanneries are not working at full capacity due to many factors.

The tanneries produce 220,000 cattle hides, 2 million sheep and goat skins, 5,000 fur skins, 9,000 exotic leather and 15,000 crocodile skins.

So far most of the leather produced is used for local purpose. The local shoe factories' requirements are large; most of the tanneries are solely engaged in satisfying the local demand.

The quality of leather produced in some of the larger tanneries is good when finished. Since most of the tanneries are associated with shoe factories, the best leather is used there.

All chemicals except lime, salt and small quantities of vegetable oil are imported. There is no tanning extract factory in the country despite the abundant supply of mimosa and acacia trees for wattle extracts.

The tanneries are equipped with both new and old machines. Those with old machinery do not work at full capacity because of frequent stoppages due to old machines.

The modern tanneries have all types of machines and use good quality of chemicals. The techniques used are good and the quality of leather produced is also good, and much of it is of export quality.

By-products

The by-products from the tanneries and shoe factories are not utilised, they are thrown away. In most tanneries, the hair that is collected is burned.

Rural Leather Tanning

The present method of rural tanning employed in Ethiopia is primitive. An appreciable quantity of leather is used for household purposes such as clothing, bedding, water and grain containers, etc.

The method of tanning is unsuitable for certain requirements, e.g. sole leather, upper leather, etc., because the processed hides are not actually tanned but only in oil and fat tawed.

The rural tanner lacks basic knowledge in leather tanning. Thus he is unable to utilize the local raw materials available to him, e.g. mimosa bark, lime, wood ash, etc. He also lacks the basic equipment such as suitable knives, wooden beams, tan liquor containers, etc.

Leather Goods

Classified into two categories:

1. Utility articles like handbags, belts;
2. Articles of tourist attraction.

Large quantities of ladies' handbags are made in the country and some of them are of high quality. Many exotic leather goods are of good quality. Fur skins are made up into garments and sold to tourists. Certain leathers and leather goods such as briefcases, belts and the like are imported.

No great attempt has been made to produce traditional articles as tourist attractions.

Footwear Factory

There are a number of footwear factories of varying sizes in the country. The factories employ about 4,500 people.

They produce about 2,400,000 pairs of leather shoes, 0.4 million pairs of rubber shoes and one million pairs of plastic shoes. The quality of the shoes produced in the larger factories is good.

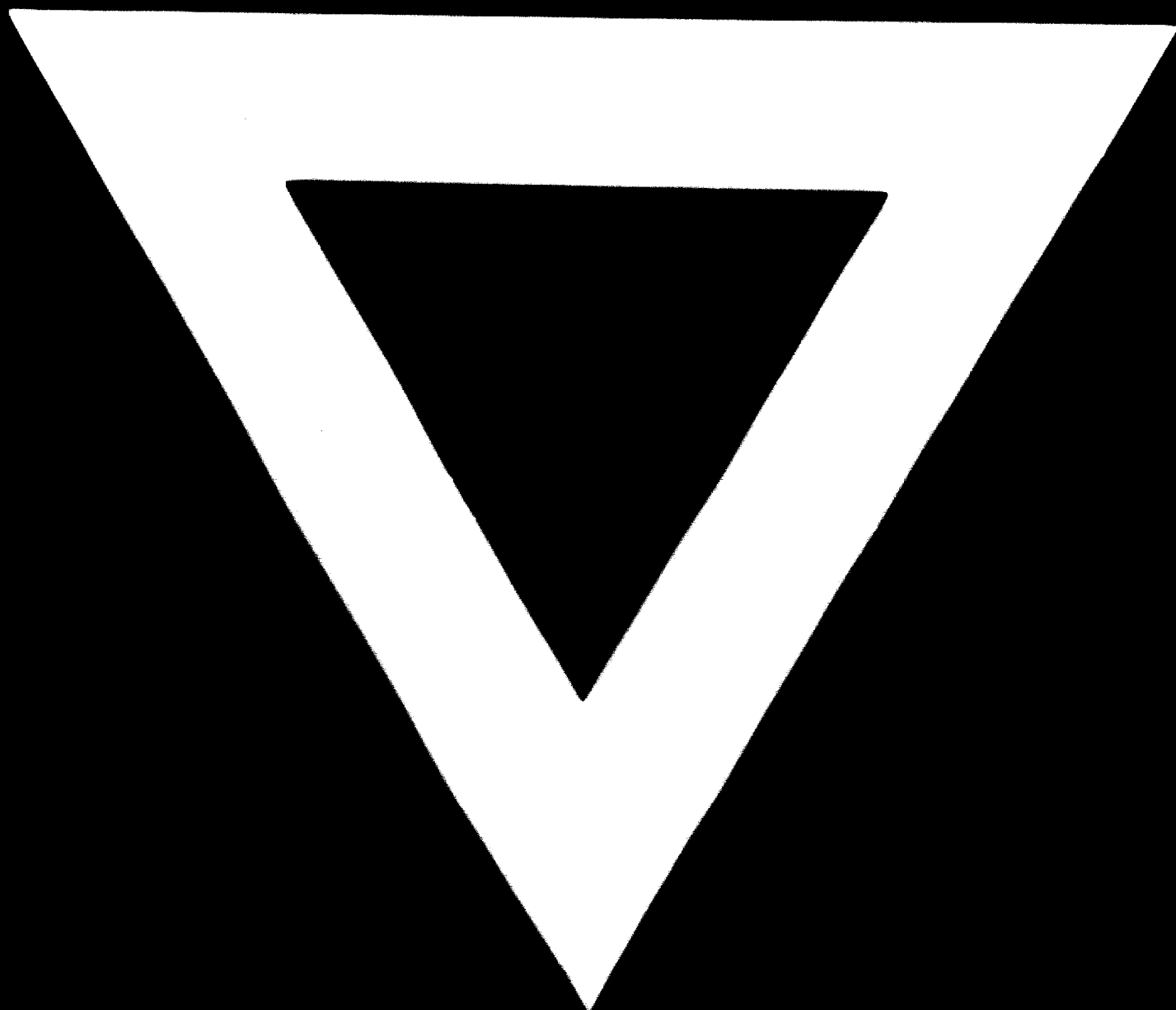
Certain types of shoes are imported but the volume of imports is decreasing yearly.

A comprehensive quantity of footwear is exported to the Arabian countries each year.

The Government realizes the potential of this industry and has devoted great attention to its development. The Livestock and Meat Board has requested loans from certain international financing organizations to develop the livestock industry. They plan to build many slaughterhouses, slaughterslabs, hides and skins preparation centres and to increase the number of field staff to be engaged in the improvement work. They also plan to establish organized training centres and tanneries to be engaged in export production. When drawing the layouts for the tanneries the Board faced problems as to the kind, type and size of tanneries. They do not have trained leather technologists or any other qualified people to carry out such kinds of projects.

The industry is still in the infant stage, and is not very well exploited. In Ethiopia, there is no leather institute as such.





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