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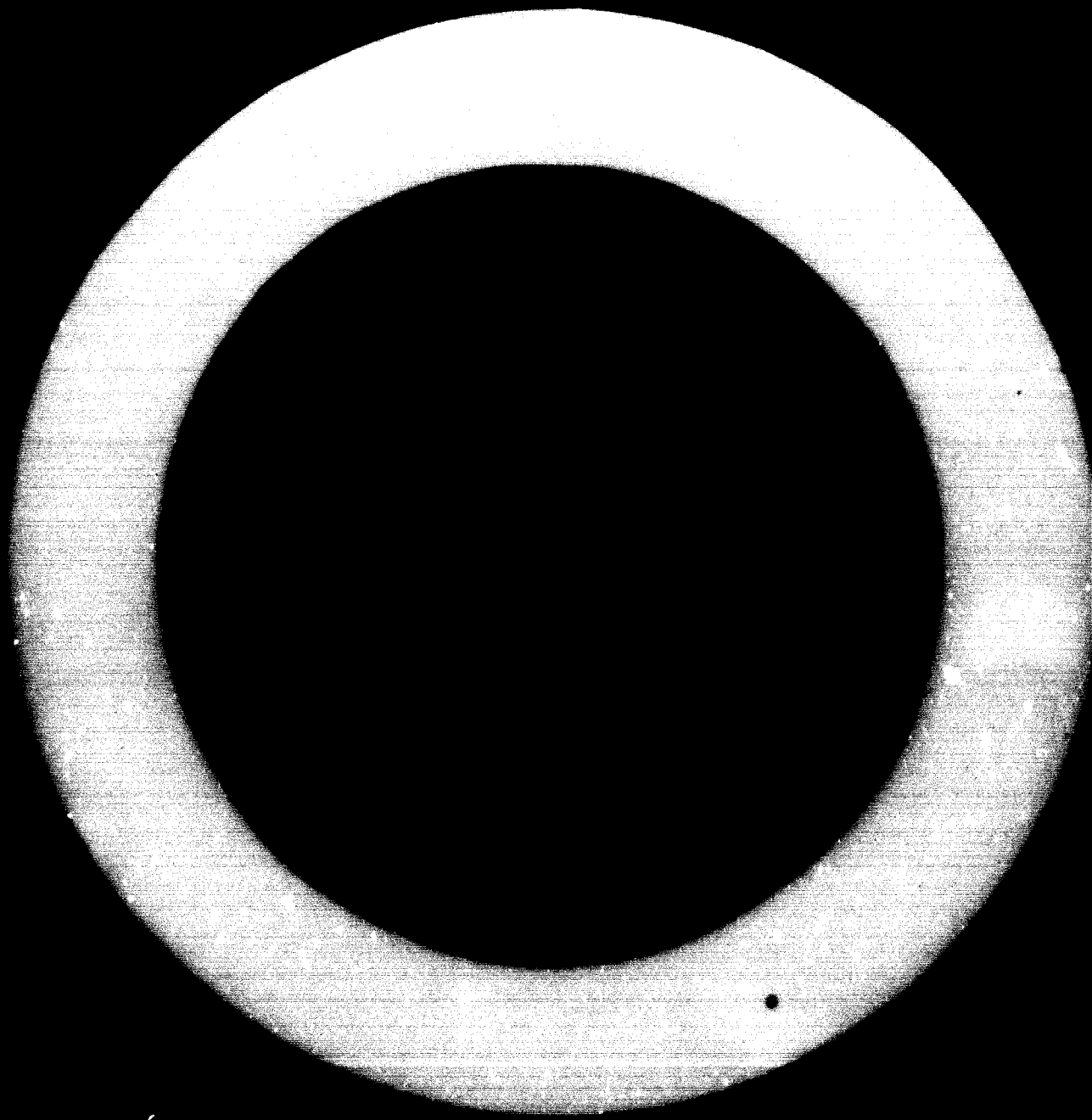
THE WOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES IN KENYA: 1/
ITS STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT, PROBLEMS AND FUTURE NEEDS

Country Paper
presented
by

Mr. G.M. Thuo
Assistant Commissioner of
Prisons (Industries)
Nairobi, Kenya

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Kenya is located in the tropics and is divided by the Equator, it extends from about 5° North latitude to approximately 10° South Latitude. Because of the wide range of altitude (0-19,000 ft.) Kenya has a wide range of climatic and vegetation regions, and hence a wide range of timber species varying from valuable tropical hardwoods such as Mvuli and Elgon Olive to utility softwoods such as Podo, Cypress, Pine and cedar etc. The following are the main forest-types of commercial importance together with some of their major timber species.

1. Mountain Forests. Including Highlands and mountain forests: Podocarpus, Juniperus, Bombeya (Podo, Cedar, Mkeo)
2. Semi-tropical Rain Forests. Lake Victoria Basin and a small area in North Eastern Mt. Kenya, Croton, Olea, Cordia, Celtis etc.
3. Wet Lowland Forest. The Coastal Strip comprised of wet lowland forest contains mainly: Chlorophora, Antiaris, Newtonia, Brachylobium etc.
4. Dry Lowland Forest. Contains mainly:- Blachyleana, Afzelia, and Combretum etc.
5. Plantation Forest. The main species being:- Cupressus, Pinus, Eucalyptus etc.

WOOD PROCESSING KENYA - FOREST PRODUCTS

Multiple use forestry are the key words to good forest management, forests are for recreation, for watershed, for the preservation of wildlife and for the production of forest products. The production of forest products, not only provides royalties, but national wealth from both local and export sales.

SOME OF THE MAJOR WOOD PROCESSING ACTIVITIES IN KENYA

1. Poles and Posts. (Main species are Cedar and Eucalyptus)
 - telegraph poles
 - electricity poles
 - building poles
 - fencing posts

An estimated 20,000 eucalyptus poles are used annually for telegraph and power lines.

2. Sawn Timber. We have more than 50 licenced sawmills operating in our Forest Reserves. These mills produce about 3 to 4 million cubic feet of sawn timber every year, the value of which is well over one million pounds (£1,000,000) ex-mill. In addition to these above mentioned mills, Kenya has other small sawmills, resaw yards and timber merchants; these operators are not licenced by the Kenya Forest Department as they obtain their timber from private sources, often these private millers have pitsawing methods of producing the timber that they sell to timber merchants.

Although we do not have complete and reliable statistics on these other millers, it is thought that they number about 150 and produce about 1 to 2 million cubic feet of sawn timber per annum.

Sawmilling in Kenya is still at a low level of sophistication. If our sawmill industry is to be able to cope with the vast quantities of plantation timber which will become available in the future, our industry will need to expand. This is not to infer that we will necessarily need more small sawmills but rather bigger and more efficient mills.

3. Plywood. Kenya already has two plywood mills and a third plywood mill is being considered. At present the main species being utilised are; podoc, cypress, pine and mutati. Most of this production is being used for plywood tea-chests. However, it is expected that future production will include both high quality veneer for interior panelling and furniture and also construction grades of structural sheathing plywood. The potential annual capacity of the two mills is about 10 million square feet of 4 to 5 mm thick plywood.

4. Wood Furniture. The more valuable furniture timbers are: Elgon Olive, Camphor and Kwili. In Nairobi as in most of Kenya's major cities, there are a multitude of small furniture and joinery workshops, Kenya Prison Industries is very much in the development stage. The demand for wooden furniture has become very high in Kenya and the Kenya Prison Industries has introduced mass production to be able to produce the required furniture. Private firms order items like chairs, bed-ends, dining tables etc. which are produced by the Prison Industries besides the other production work which the Prison Industries receive from all Government Ministries.

Recently Prison Industries have steadily expanded within the Kenya Prisons; large and modern, well equipped workshops are provided at various big institutions. We experienced some difficulties recently due to shortage of skilled craftsmen, as technical and trades school workers are difficult to obtain. There are several companies in Nairobi either starting or considering mass production of some furniture items.

5. Roofing Shingles and Shakes. This is not a big industry, but rather a cottage type of industry. Forest stations and some sawmills produce cedar and cypress shingles for their own use.

6. Wood containers. Are produced by two major mills. The main species used are pine and cypress, the production being used for beer and soft drinks crates, and tobacco boxes (export). There is also a mill set up to produce sliced veneer fruit punnets and several mills produce wood pallets for cargo handling.

7. Other wood products are: pencil slats, matches, tooth picks, wood wool, wood turnery, dowels, handles, charcoal etc.

Kenya has the largest area of plantation in East Africa and a more extensive planting programme is planned for the immediate future. Also, sawlog production in Kenya is just over twice that of our neighbours, Uganda and Tanzania. Kenya has a timber economy dominated by cypress whereas Uganda and Tanzania produce greater volumes of valuable hardwoods.

Sawlog production in Kenya is expected to continue to increase at a fair rate, the increased output being mainly in exotic softwood species. In general, it is probably fair to say that the availability of valuable hardwood species in East Africa will, over the next decade, remain fairly constant.

PROSPECTIVE SPECIES FOR FUTURE MARKETS:

The economic advantages of utilising secondary indigenous species and recently introduced plantation timber should be of major concern to the timber user. The following species are likely to be of greater significance on the timber market during the next decade. Vitex or Mahuru, Maesopsis, Musisi, Acacia melanoxylen or Australian Blackwood.

Finally, it must be noted that Kenya's Forest areas and timber production at present are as follows:-

1. Annual sawlog production 9 million cubic feet.
2. Total forest reserves 6,500 sq. miles.
3. Area under plantations 450 sq. miles.





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