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05629



Distr.
LIMITED

ID/WG.183/7
22 July 1974

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Seminar on Furniture
and Joinery Industries
Lahti, Finland
29 July - 17 August 1974

FURNITURE INDUSTRY IN GHANA 1/

by

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We regret that some of the pages in the microfiche copy of this report may not be up to the proper legibility standards, even though the best possible copy was used for preparing the master fiche.

In recent years there have been radical changes in our furniture industry. A decade ago items of furniture were usually manufactured by one or two hands in small shops. Gradually, with increased taste and demand, the old order changed and the one-man establishment developed into bigger shops and establishments.

Unfortunately, this development did not proceed with proper planning. For instance plant layouts were so haphazardly done that almost invariably efficiency and output were sacrificed. The Government of Ghana is on the move to group all small shops to form co-operatives or companies to enable the Government to give them the necessary aid to improve their efficiency.

Siting of Factories

In the cities, furniture manufacturers have as a rule established their factories in the industrial areas, while in the smaller towns where the one-man shop is still the practice, siting of shops follows no definite pattern.

Automation

Automation in this field cannot be considered in Ghana as essential due to the availability of cheap labour. In spite of this, the price of furniture is still not cheap enough to meet the pocket of an average Ghanaian. The reason for the high price is the high cost of imported fittings and finishing materials. On the surface it looks as if automation is the answer, but the social and other economic repercussions that will follow automation do not justify its establishment.

Timber for Furniture in Ghana

Ghana is a timber producing country and has a very large forest area. Forests can be found mostly in the Ashanti, Brong-Ahafa, Western and Central regions. Our forests have various species of timber, as can be seen in Appendix I. Many of our logs and sawwood have been exported overseas year after year. Sapele is one of the richest timbers and our exporters prefer to export this species more than any other. It is used for high class furniture both in Ghana and in overseas countries, e.g. Britain, Germany, France, U.S.A. and Canada.

In the building industry, Ghanaians mostly depend on Odum (Teak), Cedar and Emmeri. A ban has been imposed by the Ghana Government on the export of Odum (Teak). Ghana has a host of secondary species, some of which are used for railway sleepers and some for boat building. Species like Kaku and Dahoma are noted for railway sleepers and Kaku is mainly used for boat building. Others are for construction jobs, such as partitions, parquet and temporary jobs.

Plywood Manufacture

Ghana has sufficient plants to produce plywood and blockboard in various sizes and species. Ghana exports 90% of its high grade plywood overseas. The main species are Sapele, Mahogany, Mansonia, Walnut Afronesia, Chire, Kye, Avodire and Candolici.

Chipboard

Chipboard is not known in the Ghana furniture industry. As a result, Ghana has wasted thousands of tons of timber being declared as offcuts and left to rot in the forest, while some were burnt for charcoal. If all the branches and so called offcuts were properly utilized for chipboard or any other timber products it would have fetched large sums of foreign currency for the country. It is now apparent that some anxious businessmen in Ghana have shown interest and are negotiating for the establishment of a chipboard factory.

Association of Furniture Manufacturers

There is no association of furniture manufacturers in Ghana. As such their voices are not heard either by the Government or the public. We have a manufacturers association but this is a mixture of different trades. Not only are there such allied trades as mattress, paint, leather and fabrics manufacturers, etc., but there are many others like boat building, shoemakers, hardware and asbestos manufacturers, etc. who are members of the association. This is, to my mind, an anomaly and entirely wrong when talking in terms of an Association of Furniture Manufacturers.

Specialization of Furniture

If there had been an association of furniture manufacturers, specialization might have existed and proper planning of marketing and distribution established. It would also open the door to international federation of furniture and impart any new ideas and techniques to the furniture industry, e.g. new lacquer or upholstery fabrics. There is no publication of any research or development that has ever been thought of or made in our daily papers or journals of furniture industry. It is because there is nobody or no association to come out with such periodicals or publications.

There has never been a separate or special trade fair on furniture held in Ghana. I think if such a fair were to be properly organized, it would attract foreign woodworking machine manufacturers to participate and to exhibit some of their modern improved machines.

In 1971 a similar seminar was held in Finland, which a member from Ghana attended, but as there was no established association, nothing was heard after the seminar. I hope in the future Ghana furniture manufacturers will realize the effectiveness and benefits they may enjoy after putting their heads together and forming an association of whatever name they may wish to adopt.

Marketing

Marketing of furniture in Ghana is unlike that of developed countries where the manufacturers have agents all over the country. Such a system of marketing enables the producers to plan how the annual production should be implemented.

The thirteen months plan or system is not practiced in Ghana's furniture industry. This is so because the producers have their own shops or showrooms where they sell their products. They make their own direct transactions to customers.

Ghana has been exporting furniture to the neighbouring countries: Togo, Upper Volta, Dahomey and others. There has been an increase in recent years.

Production

Production of furniture in Ghana is much the same as abroad. The only difference is that in Ghana the application of an incentive system is not practiced. This idea is entirely new to some of the directors of the furniture industry here. What the directors usually do is give their workers piecework. During my recent visits to some factories I tried to explain the tremendous results they will achieve if an incentive system is introduced in their factories and shops. I hope my efforts will yield better results.

Ghanaian producers manufacture all kinds of furniture from their factories and shops, which I feel retards production. They manufacture household, garden, school and office furniture. How can one plan ones annual production on such miscellaneous items? During my short visit to Sweden in 1970 I observed that a factory can produce only two or three types of furniture, e.g. upholstery or desk and dining room furniture. Another factory produces room dividers and bedroom furniture.

Tool Maintenance

Clean and sharp tools produce fine output, but blunt tools produce poor output and accidents. I observed in our factories that there are no universal tool grinding machines, especially those small workshops where two or three woodworking machines are fixed.

Furniture Design

Designs and types of furniture are similar to those in overseas countries. There is no designing faculty of furniture in our universities or technical institutions, but we design our furniture by the standard size of furniture exported by Britain to us. It has been published in Ghana just a couple of months that a faculty of timber technology will be opened in one of our universities during the academic year. This will help boost the designing image of the industry and correct most of the ills of the industry.

Problems

Problems affecting our furniture and joinery industries in Ghana are many, but a few of the most important ones are the following:

1. Lack of machines and layout planners and production management.
2. Sawdoctors to maintain cutting tools.
3. Furniture finishes (lacquers), stays, glides and upholstery fabrics.

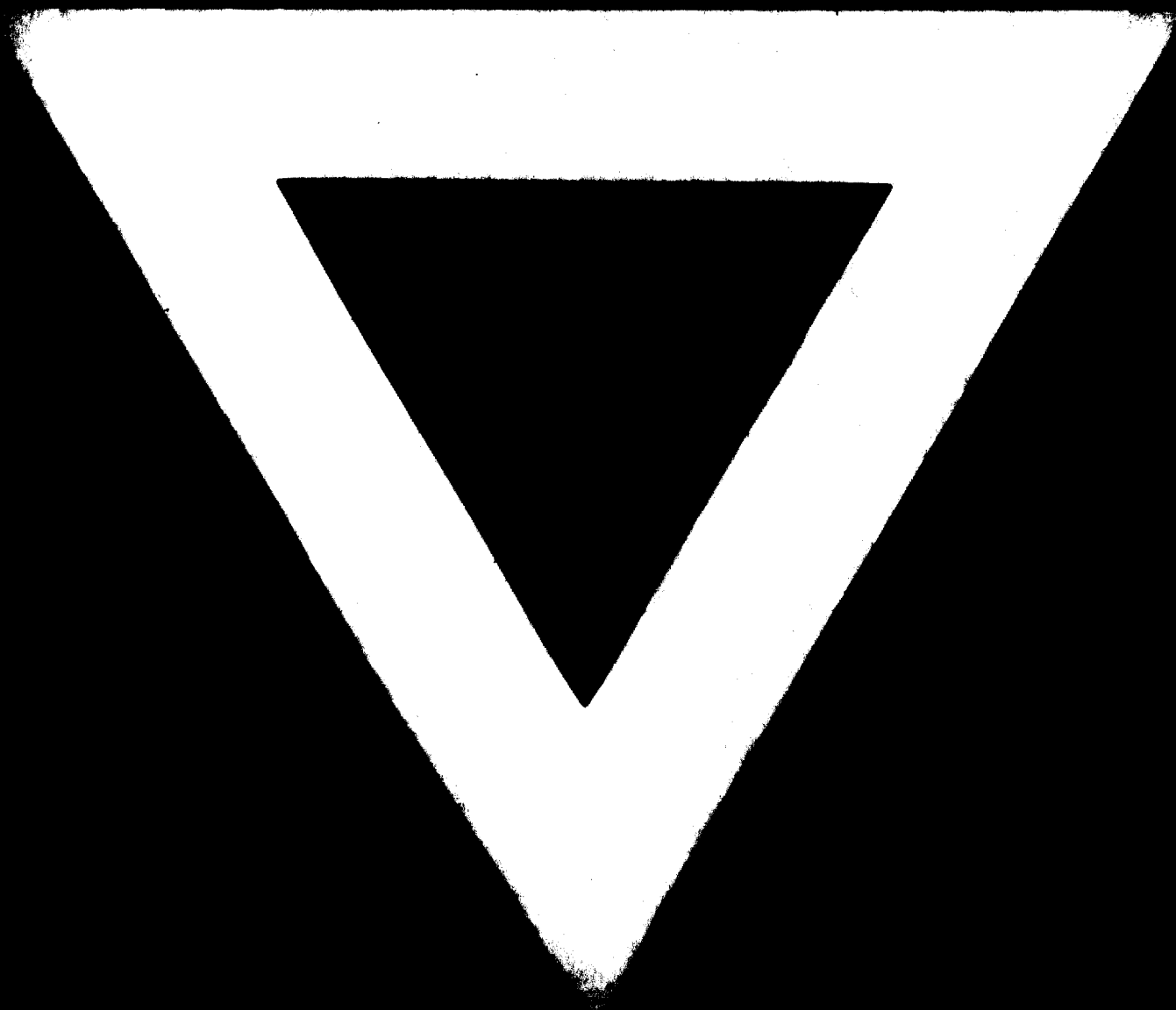
To arrest this poor performance in our furniture industry, I appeal for the training of sawdoctors and production managers to develop our industries.

APPENDIX I

<u>Local Name</u>	<u>Botanical Name and Uses</u>
PTERYGOTA (KYERE)	Pterygota Mactocapa - plywood and handles
(OPRAM) AFARA	Terminalia Superba C+J - Construction plywood
POTRODOM	Erythrophileum C+J - construction works
AYAN (BOSAM DUA)	Distemonanthus Benthamianus - floors, light construction
OBECHE (WAWA)	Triplochiton Scleroxylon - plywood, shuttering
NGO-NE-NKYENE	Cleistophols patens - packing plywood
OFAN	Parinari Excelsa Ofan
SAPELE (CEDAR or APENKWA)	Entandrophragma Cylindricum - high class furniture, decorative panelling
AFRICAN WALNUT)	Lovea Klaineana Pierre -- high class furniture, panelling, decorative veneer
ANATA	Cynometra Ananta - sleepers, bridges, flooring
SCENTED CUAREA	Gyarea Cedrata - furniture and panelling veneer
DANTA	Mesogordonia papaverifera -- plywood and gun stocks
HYEDUA-NINI	Guibourtia ehie - furniture, joinery and carpentry
AFRICAN MAHOGANY	Khaya Ivorensis - furniture, interior fittings, veneer plywood
TETEXON	Gilbertiodendron bilinea - turnery
OKURO	Albizzia Zygia macbride -- light joinery
NYAKOM	Terriettia utiles sprague - furniture, joinery, sleepers
APROKUMA	Antrocaryon micraster - boxes
ANSONA	Parkia Bicolor -- packing, furniture, joinery and light carpentry
OKAN (DANYA)	Cylicodiscus gabunensis Harms - (hard to saw) sleepers, bridges
WATAPUO	Cola gigointea
DAHOMA	Piptadenia Africana Hools - general construction, wagons, sleepers
CEDU HOHO CEDAROR EDINAM	Entandrophragma Angolense - furniture, joinery
OPEPE (KUSIA)	Mouleo dederrichii de W/d - flooring, boats, harbour bridges
(WAWA) OBECHE	Triplochiton Scleroxylon camecial - plywood, shuttering
AVODIRE	Turacanthus vegnei Hutch - high class furniture, panelling, veneer
EDINUNUA	Canarium schweinfurthii Engl. - interior joinery

OGEA (SHEDUA or HYEDUA)	<i>Daniellia Ogea</i> Rolfe - joinery, drawer sides, plywood
IDIGBO (EMERI)	<i>Terminalia ivorensis</i> - furniture, joinery, sleepers, plywood, truck bodies
APROKUMA	<i>Antrocaryon micraster</i> - planks, boxes
WONTON	<i>Morus Mozozgia stapf</i> - (v ry hard to nail) local use
EUBINGA (ENTENDUA)	<i>Copaifera Salikounda</i> Heck -- veneer, furniture, plywood
ESA	<i>Cettia soyawxii</i> Engl. - poles in house building
IROKO (ODUM) TEAK	<i>Chlorophora excelsa</i> Benth. - furniture, floors, construction, wagons
CONDOLLEI	<i>Entandrophragma Candellei</i> Herma - (hard to saw)
AFINA	<i>Strombosia glancescens</i> - building, poles, props, telegraph poles
EKKI (KAKU)	<i>Lophira Alata</i> - sleepers, hard wood mine shaft guides
AFZEDIA (PAPAO)	<i>Afselia africana</i> Smith - sleepers, joinery, flooring, furniture
OSESE (SESE)	<i>Holarrhena Wulfsbergii</i> stapf - carving





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