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Technical Course on Criteria for the
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WOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES IN KENYA 1/

by

F. M. Kamau *)

*) Managing Director, Sokoro Sawmills, Ltd., Elburgon, Kenya

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INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Kenya with an area of 224,960 square kilometres (approx. 224,960 sq.miles) and a population of 12.5 million people is a country of tremendous topographical diversity. Practically every land form and type ranging from glaciated mountains and permanent snow (found above 4,600 metres on Mt.Kenya) to a true desert landscape is present.

FORESTRY HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In Kenya, the forestry history is relatively young. The Kenya Forest Department came into being in 1902. But the Forest Legislation was made in 1891. This dealt with the protection of the mangrove swamps in Vanga Bay and was extended to protect mangroves throughout the coast in 1900. In 1897, the Ukamba Woods and Forest Regulations were published and subsequently amended in 1900 and 1901. The first conservator of forests was appointed in July 1902. At that time, large tracts of the temperate Kenya highlands, which the main forest areas are situated, were sparsely populated by the Nomadic Masai, their stock and extensive herds of the plain game.

Today, the forest estate of Kenya covers approximately 2.95 per cent of the country's land surface and there is no prospect of any substantial increase in this percentage except by afforestation on a very considerable scale.

As a result of the war years, large areas of the montane conifer forest were left denuded of all easily exploitable timber. The more accessible areas were fairly heavily exploited and there was little hope of natural regeneration. Forest Department re-afforestation work started seriously in about 1945 and by 1969 the established forest plantation estate was slightly more than 105,000 hectares (250,000 acres). The planting programme now runs at the rate of 6,000 hectares (16,000 acres) per annum. The target is 141,640 hectares (350,000 acres) of exotic softwood forest in 1980.

FOREST INDUSTRIES

The general productive use of our forests for the supply of timber and other reconstituted form of wood products such as pulp, chipboards, particle-boards, fibreboards and woodwool cement must assume an important economic preference in due course. These forest products will be primarily for the satisfaction of the needs of our country thereby saving foreign exchange and the surplus will be exported to other countries.

SAWMILLS

Commercial exploitation began as the railway line progressed inland, first for fuel and later for sawn timber. The first sawmill was set up in the East Aberdares about 1902, and was run by water power.

Since 1946, the sawmilling industry has suffered booms and slumps and, with few exceptions, there has been little capital investment in up-to-date sawmilling equipment. Some old sawmills work on a hand to mouth basis with a minimum of capital investment.

The old-fashioned mill, often remote from good road or rail transport, was designed to utilize large-sized logs scattered over a wide area. It was not designed for the economic utilization of large quantities of small logs from a compact plantation area. A major change in sawmilling equipment methods and policy will be required in the near future in order to modernize sawmills and to enlarge them so that they can cope with the yield of plantation forests. But this is a change that will be difficult as the necessary capital is not in the present industry.

It is estimated that the cost of building a small sawmill with a sawn wood production of 25 to 30 cubic metres per day is in the order of K£ 97,500 (US\$ 243,750) inclusive of sawmill machinery woodworking shop, tools spares and installation as well as the cost for power-plant and logging equipment.

It is the policy of the Forest Department that the small sawmills should be expanded into large and efficient mills as more and bigger plantation logs become available.

The Government assists those who want to establish viable sawmills with loans channelled through Industrial and Commercial Development Corporation, Development Finance Corporation of Kenya, and Industrial Development Bank. Sometimes Commercial Banks do advance money to viable sawmills for expansion.

PLYWOOD

There are three plywood factories which have been established in the country recently. These factories specialize mainly in tea chests material with little commercial plywood being produced. There is plenty of room for growth and development in plywood industry in this country because Kenya is very far from being self sufficient in plywood and wood based panel.

PULP AND PAPER PRODUCTS

A K\$ 17 million pulp and paper mill was commissioned at Webuye in Western Kenya in the middle of 1974. The factory is designed to produce about 50,000 tons of Kraft and Cultural paper per annum. When in full production the factory will employ more than 1,000 workers and contribute more than K\$ 3 million to the Gross National Product. The Project will increase considerable employment opportunities in the forestry and transport sectors.

FIBREBOARD FACTORY

A fibreboard factory was commissioned at Sokoro Elburgon near Nakuru in the Rift Valley Province in August 1975. This is a subsidiary of Timsales Ltd. Timsales Ltd. is a private company which has over 40 years experience in the marketing and re-processing of timber products in Kenya. Over the years Timsales Ltd. has worked towards an integrated wood using industry. To this end it has established the biggest sawmill in the country at Sokoro, the first plywood factory also at Sokoro and now a fibreboard factory at Sokoro.

The fibreboard factory at Kokoro is the first factory of its kind in Kenya. It utilizes Eucalyptus and Cypress mill waste as raw material. The factory is designed to produce hardboards, medium density boards and softboards. The production rate is approximately 1,400 to 1,600 sheets of boards per day and employs 200 persons. This project costs approximately KSh 1 million.

PARTICLE BOARD FACTORY

A small particle board factory opened at Nakuru towards the end of 1975. This plant is designed to utilize mill waste collected from several small saw mills in and around Nakuru.

MAJOR SUPPLIERS OF SAWMILLING MACHINERY IN KENYA

Only those suppliers known to the author are listed below. This list is not exhaustive, there may be other suppliers in Kenya.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. A. Baumann (Kenya) Ltd.
P.O. Box 30570
Nairobi | Mainly Stenner and Madkin
Products |
| 2. Oilfillan Co. Ltd.
P.O. Box 1044
Nairobi | Mainly Corley (USA) and
Centaurus (Italy) |
| 3. Machinery Services (G.+R. Ltd.)
P.O. Box 30347
Nairobi | Robinson (UK) and
Multico (UK) |
| 4. Radbone Clarke Co. Ltd.
P.O. Box 40930
Nairobi | Forano (Canada)
Brenta (Belgium)
Forester (UK) |
| 5. Sandvik East Africa Ltd.
P.O. Box 18264
Nairobi | Swedish Saws and Steel |
| 6. Jandu Workshop
P.O. Box 45786
Nairobi | Manufactures Simple Log
Carriage and small portable
circular saw mills |
| 7. Settlers Engineering Works
P.O. Box 234 | Manufactures simple log
Carriage |
| 8. Blackwood Hodge (Kenya) Ltd.
P.O. Box 45151
Nairobi | Skidding Equipments
mainly Timber Jacks from
Canada |

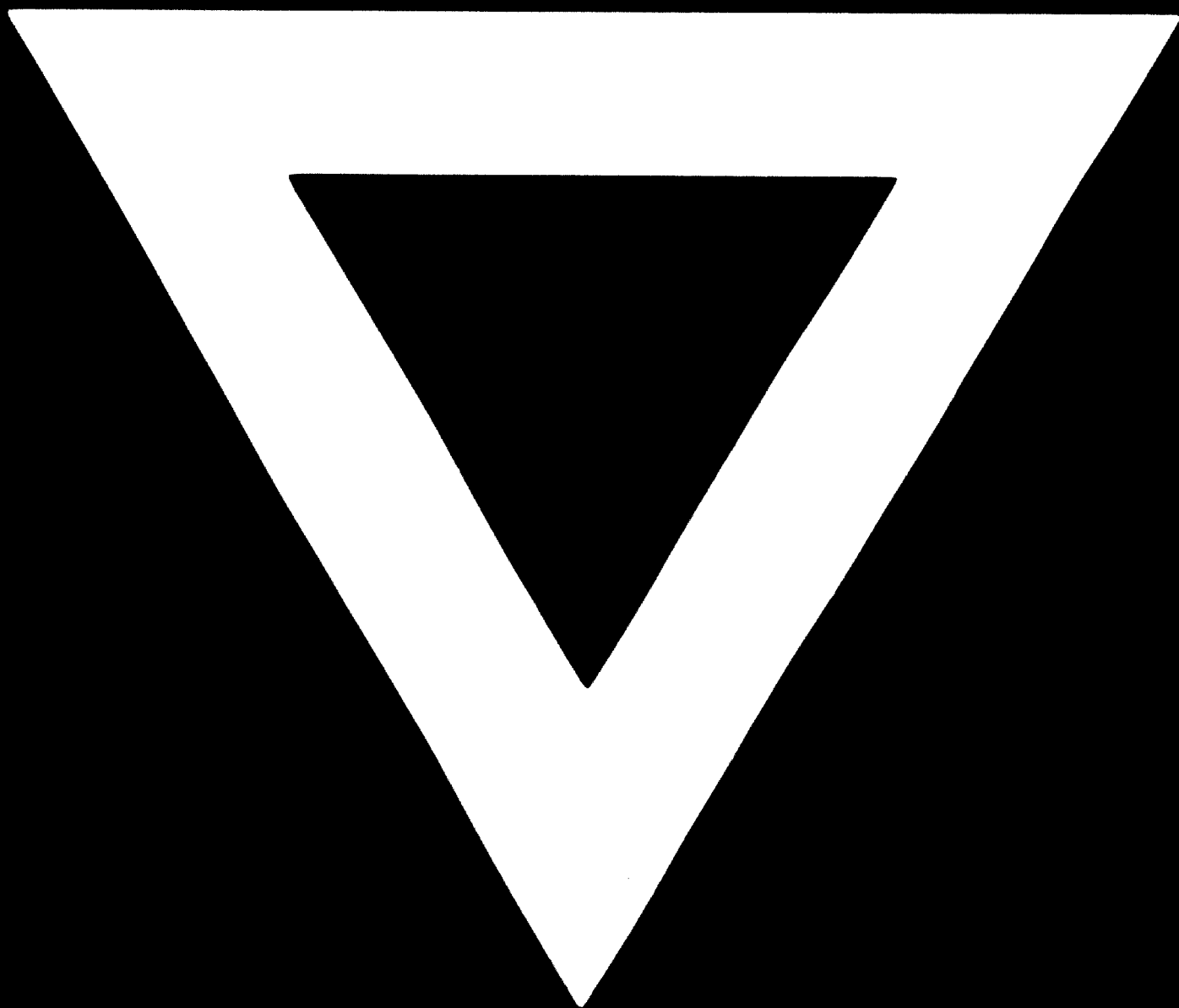
PERSONS EMPLOYED IN PRIMARY FOREST INDUSTRIES (SOURCE FOREST DEPARTMENT
ANNUAL REPORT 1969)

Fuelwood	989
Charcoal	1625
Poles	390
Fence Posts	719
Mangrove Harvesting	675
Timber Sawmills	4074
Timber Pitsawyers	1514
Others	61482
TOTAL	11468

Per statistics covering trade in timber and forest products for 1969
..... refer to attached Appendix I.



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