



## An Overview of Nigeria's Produce Inspection and Related Regulations in the Second Half of the Colonial Period

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### Abstract

The second half of the colonial period in Nigeria saw an emergence of different produce inspection and related regulations that aimed to protect the agricultural sector in the region, as well as provide a standard for improvement. In an effort to prevent the spread of pest, disease, and contamination, the Nigerian government began to implement and enforce certain regulations that inspected agricultural produce and ensured it met the required standards according to their respective markets. Furthermore, a second regulation implemented was the Pest Act of 1909 which aimed to minimize the spread of pests and diseases in Nigeria. The law required farmers to inspect their produce and only those that passed inspection could be sold or exported. This was done to reduce the chances of pests and diseases spreading from one region to another, as well as prevent contamination of produce. Therefore, this paper will aim to provide an overview of the specific regulations developed and implemented during the second half of the colonial period in Nigeria, as well as their ongoing impact on the region today. In conclusion, the second half of the colonial period in Nigeria saw the development and implementation of various produce inspection and related regulations aimed to protect the agricultural sector of the country. These regulations have had a lasting impact on the region, providing standards for the production and sale of produce, as well as promoting safety and quality.

**Keywords:** Produce, Inspection, Regulations, Second Half, Colonial Period.

## INTRODUCTION

British colonial administration's quest for agricultural raw materials to feed the metropole with surplus major cash (export) crops such as cotton, groundnut, cocoa, palm kernel and cassava led to the introduction of produce inspection and regulations in the second half of the colonial period. Many studies have shown there was neither adequate intervention nor clear cut agricultural economic policy and marketing by the colonial administration until the Second World War. Also, substantial encouragement did not extend beyond work on experimental stations and produce inspection and regulations during the colonial period. Hence the Nigeria's rural economy was left in the hand of market, to peasantry, to merchant capital and network of agents and buyers.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of this, therefore, the need for research on the less-known produce inspection and regulations during the colonial period provide the justification for this study. The paper attempts an overview of the Nigeria's produce inspection and related regulations during the second half of the colonial period. It also identifies some major impact of these regulations on Nigeria's peasant farmers and production during the period.

### Produce Inspection and Regulations

In line with section 8 of the Produce Inspection Ordinance No. 24 of 1950, a number of produce inspection and regulations were made by Produce Inspection Board in collaboration with the British colonial administration. The primary aim of these regulations was that no person shall ship or attempt to ship for export any produce in respect of

which all prescribed requirements as to inspection, passing and sealing have not been carried out during the second half of the colonial period.<sup>ii</sup> That was why Produce Officers were trained as well as employed to ensure absolute compliance with these regulations at registered produce stores throughout the country. The produce inspection and regulations made by Produce Inspection Board are examined below.

### **Cotton (Inspection for Export) Regulation**

The first was cotton produce inspection and regulations. These regulations were cited as cotton regulations and came into full operation on 1st May, 1956. It was a replacement of the regulation No. 2 in the laid down regulations No. 30 of 1951. The main objective of the produce inspection and regulations was to curb among other things:

- I. Mixing or combining any seed cotton with any seed cotton of exportable standard so that the resulting mixture or combination was not seed cotton of exportable standard.
- II. Injurious affecting the quality of any seed cotton by mixing or combining with such seed cotton any substance, matter or thing of any kind what so ever which is foreign or superfluous, whether such substance, matter or thing in itself harmful or not.
- III. Mixing or combining any husk, pod, pericarp, weevil or discoloured seed cotton with any other seed cotton so that the resulting mixture or combination was not seed cotton of exportable standard.
- IV. Altering the composition of any seed cotton by any means whatsoever so as injuriously to affect the quality of the seed cotton or to alter its bulk of weight.

In addition, examiner includes cotton Examiners appointed under regulation No. 5 of these regulations. Also, exportable standard as applied to seed cotton means seed cotton of a grade or quality not lower than minimum grade of seed cotton prescribed by the Nigeria Central Marketing Board under the provisions of Nigeria Central Marketing Board Ordinance, 1955.<sup>iii</sup>

### **Groundnuts (Inspection for Export) Regulation**

The second was groundnuts produce inspection and regulations. These regulations were cited as groundnut regulations and came into full operation on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1956. It was also a replacement of the laid down regulation of No. 2 of 1951. The main objective of the ordinance and regulation was to control among others things:

- I. Mixing or combining any groundnuts with any groundnuts of exportable standard so that the resulting mixture or combinations were not groundnuts of exportable standard.
- II. Injurious affecting the quality of any groundnuts by mixing or combining with such groundnuts any substance, matter or thing of any kind whatsoever which was foreign or superfluous, whether such matter or thing was in itself harmful or not.
- III. Mixing or combining any husk, shell pericarp, rotten, decayed or rancid groundnuts with any other groundnuts so that the resulting mixture or combinations were not groundnut of exportable standard.
- IV. Altering the composition of any groundnuts by any means whatsoever so as injuriously to affect the quality of the groundnuts or to alter their bulk or weight.

In addition, under this regulation Kano Area means the groundnuts producing area of Bauchi, Kano, Katsina, Plateau, Sokoto and Zaria Provinces, which evacuated groundnuts by railway. While, River-rain Area means the groundnuts producing areas of Adamawa, Bauchi, Benue, Kabba, Niger and Sokoto Provinces which evacuated groundnuts by water borne transport.<sup>iv</sup>

### **Cocoa (Inspection for export) Regulations**

The third was cocoa produce inspection and regulations. These regulations were cited as cocoa regulations and came into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1956. It was a replacement of regulation No. 2 of regulations No. 28 of 1951. The main objective of the produce inspection and regulation was to check among other things:

- I. Mixing or combining any cocoa with any other cocoa of a grade prescribed in the manner provided in regulation No. 3 so that the resulting mixture or combination was not cocoa of a grade so prescribed.
- II. Injurious affecting the quality of any cocoa by mixing or combining with such cocoa any substance, matter or thing of any kind whatsoever which was foreign or superfluous, whether such substance, matter or thing was in itself harmful or not.
- III. Mixing or combining any husk, shell, pericarp, or defective cocoa with any cocoa so that the resulting mixture or combination was not cocoa of a grade prescribed in the manner provided in regulation No. 3.
- IV. Altering the composition of any cocoa by any means whatsoever so as injuriously to affect its quality or flavor or to alter its bulk or weight.

In addition, defective cocoa includes all mouldy, weevily, decayed, germinated and flat cocoa beans.<sup>v</sup>

### **Cassava Starch (Inspection for export) regulations**

The fourth was cassava starch inspection and regulations. These regulations were cited as cassava starch regulations No. 33 and came into full operation in 1951. The main objective of the cassava regulation was to restrict among other things:

- I. Mixing or combining any seed cassava with any seed cassava of exportable standard so that the resulting mixture or combination was not seed cassava of exportable standard.
- II. Injuriously affecting the quality of any seed cassava by mixing or combining with such seed cassava any substance, matter or thing of any kind whatsoever which was foreign or superfluous, whether such substance, matter or thing was in itself harmful or not.
- III. Mixing or combining any husk, seed pod, pericarp, weevil or discoloured cassava seed with any other seed cassava so that the resulting mixture or combination was no seed cassava of exportable standard.
- IV. Altering the composition of any seed cassava by any means whatsoever so as injuriously to affect the quality of the seed cassava or alter its bulk or weight.<sup>vi</sup>

It should be noted here that few years later, cassava starch regulation No. 33 of 1951 was revoked by Produce Inspection Board and it came into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1956.<sup>vii</sup>

### **Palm Produce (Inspection for export) regulation**

The last was palm produce inspection and regulations. These regulations were cited as palm produce regulations No. 5 of 1954 and came into operation on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1958. The main objective of the palm produce regulation was to control among other things:

- I. Mixing or combining any seed palm with any seed palm of exportable standard so that the resulting mixture or combination was not seed palm of exportable standard.
- II. Injuriously affecting the quality of any seed palm by mixing or combining with such seed palm any substance, matter or thing of any kind whatsoever which was foreign or superfluous, whether such substance, matter or thing was in itself harmful or not.
- III. Mixing or combining any husk, seed pod, pericarp, weevil or discoloured palm seed with any other palm produce so that the resulting mixture or combination was no seed palm of exportable standard.
- IV. Altering the composition of any seed palm by any means whatsoever so as injuriously to affect the quality of the seed palm or alter its bulk or weight.<sup>viii</sup>

### **Impact of Produce Inspection and Regulations in Nigeria**

The produce inspection and regulations had three major effects. In the first place, it promoted the production of cash (export) crops such as groundnuts, cotton, cocoa, palm kernel and cassava during the colonial period. This was because from 1904 to 1944, groundnuts produced and exported from Nigeria were 825,092 tons.<sup>ix</sup> By the same token between 1904 and 1944, cotton produced as well as exported from Nigeria were 38, 328 tons. Similarly, Nigeria's peasant farmers produced 353,332 of cocoa for exports.<sup>x</sup> This perhaps could be largely attributed to the introduction of produce inspection and regulations by the British colonial administration. Also, Nigeria's peasant farmers exported substantial tons of palm oil and palm kernel especially in the second half of the colonial period. See table 1 below for the tons of palm oil and palm kernel exported from Nigeria between 1904 and 1944.

**Table below shows the year, tons of palm oil and palm kernels exported from Nigeria, 1904-1944**

Year	Palm oil (Total Export)	Palm Kernel (Total Export)
1900-1904	53, 729	120,778
1905-1909	65,177	130, 241
1910-1014	77, 771	174, 236
1915-1919	80, 485	184,567
1920-1924	90, 352	203, 021
1925-1929	124, 716	255, 469
1930-1934	122, 302	274, 584
1935-1939	139, 000	334, 000
1940-1944	134, 377	320, 613

**Source:** R. O. Ekundare, *An Economic History of Nigeria...*, p. 166

The above table indicated how Nigeria's peasant farmers were able to persistently increase the tons of palm oil and palm kernel for exports especially in the second half of the colonial period. This perhaps could be largely attributed to the introduction of produce inspection and regulations by the British colonial administration.

The second effect was that the produce regulations largely favoured British firms than the local producers to a larger extent. This was because of the fact that cash crops trade was mainly in the hands of the middlemen in whose Lorries the produce was loaded. Also, they acted as brokers who colluded with United African Company and other firms to get the entire profits instead of the local producers.<sup>xi</sup> Also, produce regulations affected the volume of exportable crops in Nigeria. That was why Falola records that:

It was difficult to get more than 500 tons of cassava starch unless the regulations were relaxed and the price increased to £15 per ton for the best quality. The Colonial Office urged Lagos to ensure shipment of 750 tons per month and accepted a possible increase in price for grade I quality. In line with this the price was increased in the U.K so that commercial firms could make reasonable profit.<sup>xii</sup>

The above statement indicated how these regulations including poor prices affected the volume of cassava starch in Nigeria. It also led to the increase of price of cassava starch by the British colonial administration so that commercial firms would benefit more than Nigeria's local producers during the second half of the colonial period.

The third effect was the obstruction of important food crops especially during the colonial period. This was because over production of cash crops coupled with famine affected production of major food crops in some parts of the country. Indeed, substantial number of farmers who had sold their groundnuts at the end of 1913 was later forced to buy grains with their cash earnings. Also, firms which had purchased groundnuts for export early in the season ended up reselling them to middlemen for food. As a result of the risen price of groundnuts in local markets to twenty pounds per ton, quantities of groundnuts already on their way to southern part of the country were halted at Baro (now Niger State) and immediately returned to Kano for sale.<sup>xiii</sup> By the same token, there was an increased in the price of *gari* because of the competition with starch in south-western Nigeria. For example in 1942, the chiefs in both Abeokuta and Ibadan had to appeal to their people not to let starch ruin food production. Also, in Abeokuta profiteers who made money by selling *gari* at high prices were threatened with court action, and a few were actually convicted. The quality of *gari* also fell. Waste products from starch processing were mixed up with *gari*, while low-quality starch rejected for export was dried and adulterated with *gari*. That was when other products were diluted with starch for export; the quantity of foodstuffs available for consumption was reduced.<sup>xiv</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the paper concludes that introduction of produce inspection and regulations by the British colonial administration promoted the production of cash (export) crops to the detriment of staple food crops in Nigeria. This must have affected food security of substantial number of people in Nigeria particularly people in the rural areas. Also, Nigeria's peasant farmers were deprived to sale as well as export their produce without rigorous inspection by the produce Examiners. It has been emphasized in the ordinance that, when a Licensed Buying Agent ceases to operate at a registered produce store. Licensed Buying Agent should within seven days deliver all registers which have been in use in respect of that store to the Produce Officer in charge of the area.

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- <sup>ii</sup> For more details see Produce Inspection Ordinance, (Ordinance 24 of 1950)
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