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REPORT ON

FAO/ECA CENTER ON LAND POLICIES IN EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

Kenya and Uganda - October 1960

1. The Economic Commission for Africa in collaboration with FAO co-sponsored a center on Land Policy for East and Central Africa, which was held from 2 to 6 October in Kenya and from 7 to 25 October in Uganda. The programme included field trips to various land tenure schemes such as the land consolidation, enclosure and registration in Kenya as well as land adjudication in Uganda. It also included lectures by outstanding experts on important economic issues, agricultural development, agricultural credit, cooperatives and community development as well as discussions, country reports and the exchange of views, information and experience by the participants through study groups. This part of the program took place in Fort Portal, Uganda, from 10 to 24 October 1960.
2. The center was the first of its kind for Africa and was modeled after similar previous centers held in Latin America, Asia, the Far East and the Near East. It was attended by participants from the Republic of Sudan, Somali Republic, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. Experts from ECA and FAO also took an active part in the center.
3. The main objective of the center was to provide an opportunity for an exchange of ideas and experiences on agrarian structure with special attention to the agricultural, social, economic and administrative aspects of these problems. Community development and social welfare were included in the discussions.

4. Among the major subjects discussed at the Center were the following : the concept of agrarian policy in East and Central Africa; land use practices in relation to problems of agrarian structure; the process of individualization of land tenure; appraisal of specific land problems such as the recording of rights in land, land consolidation, land resettlement and related problems in the field of agricultural extension, agricultural credit, marketing and agricultural cooperatives and participation of local people in the process of rural development related to measures for reform of the agrarian structure.

5. To appreciate the significance of the center it should be kept in mind that African countries are dependent on agriculture to a great extent. The process of economic development in Africa depends heavily on the maintenance and expansion of export levels of cash crops, while the rapid increase and urbanization of the population continue to create higher and different demands for food. Under circumstances where largely tribal populations are still living under customary arrangements, it is of decisive importance to formulate a new land policy which take into account these economic changes and permits increasing productivity of both farm labour and of the land.

6. Agricultural production is still largely based on customary institutions affecting the ownership and use of land. Communal ownership of land has predominated in East and Central Africa, and land use practices are frequently characterised by shifting cultivation and traditional farming practices. The process of economic development must inevitably be associated with agricultural development, including the transition of prevailing subsistence agriculture to commercial agriculture which means the extension of market operations. A great deal of discussion, therefore, was directed towards the exploration of relevant issues concerning the modification of existing institutional arrangement in such a way as to promote agricultural development.

7. It was recognized that adequate tenure arrangements supplemented by other institutional programs such as credit and marketing facilities are prerequisites of improved agricultural production.

8. One of the basic problems confronting developing African countries is the supply of capital which can be directed to agricultural investment. It was observed that capital for this purpose should largely be provided from public resources. Foreign capital under partnership arrangement may also be called upon as in case of Governments of Nigeria and Sierra Leone where licences were given to foreign plantation capital under specific guarantees and controls.

9. While there is no particular tenure system which can be applied universally, tenure arrangements must be suited to existing economic and social conditions, must induce investments, ensure good land utilization, and be in agreement with the social values of the people. They should also provide the cultivator with both security and an adequate income from farming in an expanding agricultural economy.

10. It was emphasized that land in a developing economy should be considered as a factor of production and not a store of value. Therefore, ownership of land should not be regarded as an end in itself but rather regarded in such a way as to enable the cultivator to achieve maximum production. It was also recognized that property rights in land have not always secured higher production.

11. It was agreed that property rights should not protect inefficient land use. The tenure system should be suited to certain type of agricultural production and allow the possibility of controlling the use of the land so that efficient land utilization can be ensured. The center therefore emphasized the importance of land use planning to be carried out on the basis of careful agro-ecological surveys in African countries.

12. The center focused attention on whether or not existing customary tenure conditions could be maintained without stifling economic growth. In some areas where tribal life is disintegrating and population density is high, individualization of land ownership leads to overstocking and overgrazing which destroys the pastures and leads to loss of fertility and erosion of agricultural land. There may also be land grabbing by enterprising individuals. However, it was generally agreed that individualization should proceed where the property concept has matured and tribal authority has weakened.

13. The participation of the people in Agricultural Development is essential to the success of land policy. Ways of participation including partnership arrangements, cooperatives, community development and local government were discussed.

14. The need for evaluation of the changes and of reform measures likely to be effective in the case of African land tenure was stressed. Research and evaluation pertaining to agrarian structures, land policy programmes and their implementation, and to tribal arrangements and their impact on agricultural production are of the utmost importance. It was also stressed that in order not to disrupt production and endanger the national economy, the process of land reform should be put into effect in such a way as to maintain and increase levels of productivity and quality standards.

15. The conclusions and suggestions of the study groups were submitted to the final session of the centre, which accepted them in full extent and expressed the wish that

- 1) FAO in cooperation with ECA should assist in the coordination of interchange of information in the field of land policy on a regional level,

and that

- 2) Member Governments should consider the possibility of strengthening evaluation and research in the field of land tenure and land policy by receiving assistance from FAO in cooperation with ECA.