

## **The National Produce Marketing Board (NPMB): An Historical Appraisal of its Origins and Mission**

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**Abstract:** *Cash crop cultivation and marketing was managed by different structures in British and French Cameroons before independence. These structures were developed under the colonial administrations to manage the sales of cocoa, coffee and other cash crops in the respective territories. This paper seeks to examine the driving force behind the creation of the National Produce Marketing Board (NPMB) in the United Republic of Cameroon. It analyses the political and economic programmes in the Federal and later United Republics of Cameroon which rendered the colonial structures obsolete. The paper justifies that agriculture was the mainstay of the country's economy, thus justifying government interest towards production and marketing in its state planning programme. The paper equally explains the differences in government policies in the two federated states towards the exploitation of cash crops before 1972. It probes into President Ahmadou Ahidjo's intension in creating a centralized unitary system whereby all the forces of production were directly controlled and monitored by the government. The creation of the unitary state implied that the semi-economic independence enjoyed by the two federated states, especially the state of West Cameroon, ended. This resulted in the establishment of a centralized economic organisation to control cash crop production and sales in the United Republic by 1976.*

**Keywords:** *Marketing Boards, Caisses, Economic planning, Export trade, Produce marketing, Farmers, United Republic of Cameroon.*

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### **I. Introduction**

The creation of the National produce marketing Board (NPMB) fell within the historical context of President Ahmadou Ahidjo's economic planning. Cameroon's economy revolved around the concepts of self-reliance and planned liberalism. Self-reliance implied harnessing all the human, material and financial resources to enable the development of Cameroon by Cameroonians themselves, while planned liberalism entailed borrowing the best of the capitalist and socialist system to adapt to the nation's context.<sup>1</sup> It was with these objectives in mind that President Ahmadou Ahidjo placed much emphasis on agriculture in carrying out economic planning. This was also because of the significant proportion of Cameroonians involved in agriculture. By 1980 it was estimated that about 83% of the labour force in the country was involved in either plantation or subsistence farming and some of the farmers produced crops for export such as cocoa, coffee (both rubusta and arabica), palm products and others.<sup>2</sup> These developments probably influenced the government in laying the basis for an agrarian economy in the second and third Five Year Development Plans from 1966-1976. Even before this period various structures had been established under the colonial regimes in both the British and French Cameroons to manage cash crop production and Commercialisation. These structures evolved, especially in British Cameroons, in consonance with the changing political status of the area. The drift from the federal to the unitary system of government in Cameroon by 1972 certainly rendered the marketing structures that existed in the two federated states, obsolete. This paper therefore seeks to establish the historical importance placed by government on cash crop production and marketing in Cameroon. It shall examine the various

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<sup>1</sup> Victor, Julius Ngoh. *History of Cameroon since 1800*. (Limbe: Presprint, 1996).P.257

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p258

structures that were involved in the processes in both states, and explain how the changing political fortunes in Cameroon also implied changes in these structures leading to the creation of the NPMB in 1976.

## **II. Historical Background to The Creation of the National Produce Marketing Board (NPMB)**

The production and sales of cash crops in French Cameroon had been organised through the intermediary structures put in place by the French called "*caisses de stabilizations*". A '*caisse*' existed for each cash crop: cocoa, cotton, groundnut, robusta coffee and Arabica coffee. These structures were inherited by the government of *La Republique du Cameroun* following the independence of French Cameroon on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1960. The '*caisses*', however, were only involved in the purchase of products while the export was in the hands of other independent enterprises known as "*Exportateurs Agrées*".<sup>3</sup> This situation persisted throughout the 1960s up to the early 1970s when the federal system of government was scrapped. Under the unitary state, in the 1970s, the '*caisses*' that bought cocoa and robusta coffee were given the latitude to buy and sell directly to the world market. Both '*caisses*' were unable to carry out the Export trade as they still depended on the "*Exportateurs Agrées*."

Meanwhile the situation in British Southern Cameroon was dictated by the political and constitutional developments in Nigeria. This was the result of Southern Cameroon's attachment to Nigeria. In the 1940s cash crops from Southern Cameroon were sold through the Commodity Marketing Boards in Nigeria. This situation was however to change in the 1950s following the administrative reorganization of Nigeria. The creation of autonomous regions in Nigeria necessitated the modification of the Marketing Board System so as to fit within the specifications of each region. Southern Cameroon, which was administered as part of the Eastern Region of Nigeria, benefited from this reorganization. Thus, in 1954 the Southern Cameroons Marketing Board (SCMB) was created following the territory's attainment of a quasi-regional status.<sup>4</sup> This was the result of a legislation passed in November 1954, even though the SCMB began its operations only from January 1955.<sup>5</sup> The services of the SCMB were supplemented by the Southern Cameroon Production Development Board which ensured the economic prosperity of the producers and the producing areas.<sup>6</sup> The activities of the SCMB were terminated when the territory gained independence on October 1<sup>st</sup> 1961.

The constitutional arrangements that were reached at Foumban in July 1961 led to the adoption of the name West Cameroon by the former British Southern Cameroon. French Cameroon, which had gained independence earlier as "*La Republique du Cameroun*", was called East Cameroon. While the colonial "*Caisses de stabilizations*" continued to purchase cash crops in East Cameroon, the SCMB was replaced by the West Cameroon Marketing Board (WCMB). This change in name was accompanied by the restructuring of the number of products the WCMB had to deal with. These included cocoa, palm oil and palm kernel, Arabica and robusta coffee, hides and skin and castor seeds.<sup>7</sup> The state of West Cameroon controlled the buying and sales of these cash crops by the WCMB/ through an intermediary, the West Cameroon Produce Marketing Company, whose headquarters was in London.<sup>8</sup> Thus, while the purchase and marketing primary commodities in West Cameroon were closely monitored by the State government, the same processes in East Cameroon were organized by several independent bodies: the various '*caisses*' for the purchase of the different products, and the "*Exportateur agrées*" for their marketing.

It was therefore evident that the Marketing Board system in West Cameroon functioned differently from the '*caisse*', in East Cameroon. Farmers' Co-operatives had been established in West Cameroon which served as liaison between the farmers and the Marketing board. The cooperatives bought, hauled and marketed members' products (cocoa and coffee) to the WCMB. Cooperatives equally provided loans to farmers as well as cash advances for their products.<sup>9</sup> These farmers' co-operatives consisted of both licensed buyers and direct suppliers to the WCMB within the period 1961-1972. The WCMB exported the products and also ensured the

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<sup>3</sup> Emmanuel Benyoh Ntumfon, "The National Produce Marketing Board (NPMB): 1978-1991. An Historical investigation." The University of Bamenda, DIPES II Dissertation, 2015. Pp33-34.

<sup>4</sup> Emmanuel Makia Etuge, "The Marketing Board System in British Southern and West Cameroon: from Colonial to state monopoly, 1954-1974", M.A Thesis, University of Buea, 2014, PP 50-51.

<sup>5</sup> Emmanuel Alogangamo Aka, *The British Southern Cameroon 1922-1961. A study in colonialism and under development*, (Platterville: Nkemnji Global Tech, 2002)..P.92.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.p.93

<sup>7</sup> Emmanuel Makia. "The Marketing Board System" P.146

<sup>8</sup> Aka.p. *The British Southern Cameroon*.-92

<sup>9</sup> Emmanuel Ntrumfon. "The National Produce Marketing Board (NPMB) 1978-1991. An Historical Investigation." DIPES II Dissertation, HTTC Bambili-Bamenda, 2015.p.35.

stabilization of prices over this period of time. Thus, uniform prices were paid for all the products throughout West Cameroon under the marketing board system. The situation in East Cameroon was different. The 'caisse' did not have the monopoly over export which the WCMB had. The structures that linked the farmers to the WCMB were equally absent in the 'caisse' system in East Cameroon. These differences in economic structures guided government in economic orientation during the elaboration of the third and fourth plans as it sort out ways and means of harmonising the two systems.

### **III. The Third and Fourth Five Year Development Plans and the Special Emphasis on Agriculture**

Prior to the preparation of the Third Five Year Development Plan, an assessment of the Second Five Years Development Plan of 1965-70 by the Ministry of Planning and Development in Yaoundé, indicated the following tendencies: That there were difficulties in the appreciation of private and human investments in the sphere of agricultural production; that there was a drop in the cocoa trade due to setbacks in maintaining the plantations and; that there was satisfactory progress in the commercialization of robusta and Arabica coffee.<sup>10</sup> This assessment recommended the renovation of Cameroonian cocoa plantations using the favourable cocoa price stabilization fund that was available. As such a campaign was to be engaged on fighting the black pod disease and revamp the trade in the World Market by ensuring quality production. The government also had to pursue "agronomic research and the popularization of reasonable agricultural techniques." It was hoped that if a satisfactory state of world trade was maintained and measures put in place to improve the quality of exports, then the deficit in the balance of trade shall be redressed,<sup>11</sup>

Thus, circulars no 14/CAB/PR of 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1969 and 15/CAB/PR of 8<sup>th</sup> August 1969 outlined the spirit and manner in which the Third Five Year Plan was to be prepared. Part A of a circular outlined the general conditions of development and stated *inter alia* "the consolidation of national unity and .... Giving everyone an equal chance of satisfying his basic material... needs".<sup>12</sup> Part B of the circular, based on increased production, stipulated that the national product had to grow at a rate of 8.6% per year. It went further to anticipate a rapid increase in the level of national production and reserved a favoured place for the rural sector. This implied that all obstacles to development, especially in this sector, had to be removed. The circular further stated that "Agriculture, because of the great number of people it occupies and the volume of its products and exports, remains the essential basis of our economy."<sup>13</sup>

Much effort was directed then, under the Third Plan, to the development of agriculture. Production techniques had to be improved upon to ensure increased yields of farm products. This, it was hoped, would increase the income of the rural population. The plan further emphasized that increase in agricultural production had to be achieved through modernization of the production structures geared towards foreign market. The projection was intended to encourage the creation of producer groups, or professional structures in areas that offered the best guaranteed returns such as agriculture. Prospection were made for agricultural credits to be provided to farmers on the understanding that such loans would help improve yields so as to ensure repayment. Provisions were also made in this plan for the creation "of marketing establishments which would enable producers to market their produce under satisfactory conditions and enjoy good remunerations for their efforts."<sup>14</sup> The sales of produce in the former state of East Cameroon benefited more the "Exportateur Agrées" than the indigenous farmers. This trend did not encourage the local farmers to improve on their production. Thus, all these measures by government were intended to raise production and increase export.

In 1972, the federal structures were scrapped and a new republic, the United Republic of Cameroon, emerged. President Ahidjo intended to enhance greater unity, national integration and guarantee economic, cultural and social development.<sup>15</sup> This explains why he placed so much emphasis on agriculture, which accounted for about 60% of export earnings and about 93% of the labour force by the 1980s. Since Cocoa was the main agricultural product in the country, in 1973 Ahidjo created the "Société de Développement du Cacao" (SODECAO) to facilitate and improve its production. He equally launched the Operation Green Revolution and<sup>16</sup>, in order to bring the farmers co-operatives under greater Supervision, the Department of Cooperatives and Mutuality was created in the Ministry of Agriculture. In the same year the *Fonds National de Développement*

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<sup>10</sup> NAB. File No; Cl.592 (Qba/1965) 1 Gov't Third Five Year Development Plan 1971-76pp.2-3

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Pp 3-5.

<sup>12</sup> NAB File No. F817 (Qba 1969/7) Third Five Year Development Plan: 1971-76 p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.p3.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.p.4.

<sup>15</sup> Ngoh, *History of Cameroon*. Pp. 250 - 251

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. PP. 258 - 259

*Rurale* (FONADER) was also created. This was a farmers' bank, created with the main objective of providing loans to farmers to boost their production.<sup>17</sup>

The following year, by *decree No. 74/760 of 1<sup>st</sup> February 1974*, the Produce Marketing Organisation (PMO) was created to replace the WCMB in the South West and North West Provinces of the United Republic of Cameroon. The PMO existed alongside the five 'caisses' in the other provinces of the United Republic of Cameroon. President Ahidjo's drive for greater integration and economic growth eventually led him to merge these institutions in 1976 to create the NPMB. The 'caisse' was to gain from the long standing experience in the purchase and direct exportation processes which the PMO and its antecedents had operated over the years.

President Ahidjo already envisaged, in the plan, the possibility of government control over the purchase and marketing of the main cash crops in the country. It was evident here that while the farmers organizations in the former state of west Cameroon had direct control over purchase and sales of farmers produce, the parallel structures in former East Cameroon did not. The purchase was done by the "caisse" while the sales were done by foreign exporters. The President clearly stated in the projection of the plan that "only a greater contribution by natural resources in the financing of our economy is capable of re-enforcing the economic and political independence of our country."<sup>18</sup> The foreign concerns, responsible for the sales of farm products in the former state of East Cameroon, were predominantly of French nationality. Government takeover of this responsibility implied a significant loss in business by these individuals or groups with attendant consequences. They lost the profits they had been reaping over the years at the expense of the ordinary farmers and the Cameroon government.

This government action was anticipated by the fact that the production targets of the Third Plan were not met due to severe drought during the early years of the plan. New targets were then set under the Fourth Five-Year Plan of 1976 – 1981. Under this plan the Cameroon Fertilizer Corporation (SOCAME) was created to ensure regular supply of fertilizer to the growers.<sup>19</sup> The Fourth Plan also aimed at fostering self-reliant and self-sustained development with ultimate objective of raising the standard of living of the people. Above all, the main characteristic of the plan was to strengthen national unity and give concrete form to the policy of self-reliance.<sup>20</sup> Added to this was the fact that rural production involved almost 80% of the population and remained the mainstay of the economy. The plan noted the over-lapping of guidance structures in certain areas and the absence of co-ordination. Award of loans to farmers by FONADER were inadequate and unfavourable.<sup>21</sup> The situation which existed provided the driving force for President Ahidjo's decision to merge the marketing structures in the former states of West and East Cameroons. The decision was further motivated by the fact that the government came to realize that:

The growth of the Cameroon economy must depend on an improvement in the quality of the export goods produced... [especially as] difficulties were encountered in the production of cocoa and coffee..." and other crops. These problems were associated to "irresponsible statements made by middlemen regarding the [quality] and origin of the product."<sup>22</sup>

These middlemen were obviously the foreign exporters whose only interest was to maximize their profits. To this effect, therefore, the Fourth Plan was dedicated to enabling the rural sector perform fully its chief function of "raising the income of the small traditional farmers... and hence improving their standard of living."<sup>23</sup> The programme for farm-to-market roads had to be continued to ensure the easy evacuation of the cocoa and coffee products. Thus, while cocoa production was expected to hit 200,000 tons, robusta coffee was anticipated at 100,000 tons targets by 1981.<sup>24</sup>

Government therefore, intended, under the Fourth Plan, to set up a development oriented administration, "an administration which will secure the optimum satisfaction of the essential needs of the society..." To this effect, the commercial structures had to be modernized, the problems relating to policy

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. P. 259

<sup>18</sup> NAB. File N. F817.P.8.

<sup>19</sup> Fourth Five – Year Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan (1976 – 1981). PP 31 - 33

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. P. 72

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. P. 74

<sup>22</sup> Ibid P. 78

<sup>23</sup> Ibid P. 84

<sup>24</sup> Ibid PP. 85 - 86

solved.<sup>25</sup> Following these observations, the National Office to regulate foreign trade, which had been created in June 1962, had to go operational under this plan. The plan stated that the “coming into operation of the Cameroon Marketing Authority will, in other respects, permit the harmonization of the prices of the principal commodities.”<sup>26</sup> Studies were thus to be undertaken to fix reasonable prices for agricultural products. The government noted that the multiplicity of structures, which existed for the marketing of basic products, resulted in “wastage of human, financial and material resources”. The fourth plan therefore was devoted to the “development of the rural areas... and professional structures which... will be as close as possible to the farmer.” It continued to emphasize that “farmers will be incorporated into projects and a farmer development programme... will be drawn up for each major cash crop.”<sup>27</sup>

This plan further stressed that those organs like “FONADER and the Cameroon Marketing Authority will be firmly entrenched in the villages”. It was expected that mutual exchanges between these organs and the compatibility” of their actions will ... promote the rapid and integrated development of the rural areas.” The objective was to integrate farmers’ activities both horizontally and vertically in programmes which defined the maximum sizes of their farms that could procure for them optimum revenue.<sup>28</sup> Thus, programmes for expansion and growth of the farm, so as to ensure maximum profit to the individual farmers, were to be the targets of the Marketing Authority and FONADER.

Efforts were to be made under the Fourth Plan to satisfy the country’s trade balance. The policy was “not only to increase the traditional exports (cocoa, coffee, timber) but also to process staple products locally so as to increase their export value.”<sup>29</sup> It was within this formwork that the government engaged in the creation of the National Produce Marketing Board in 1976.

#### **IV. The Restructuring of the PMO and the *Caisse* Destabilization to create the NPMB**

After deliberations on Law No. 76/20 of 9 September, 1976, by the National Assembly of the United Republic of Cameroon, this law was enacted by the President of the Republic on 9 September of the same year. In its Article I the Law outlined the creation of “a public establishment of an industrial and commercial nature known as the National Marketing Board... [With] legal status and financial autonomy.” The law further stated in its article II that “ the National produce Marketing Board shall take over the activities of the price Stabilization Funds and the Produce Marketing Organization.” It should be noted that the Produce Marketing Organization (PMO) was the structure that existed in the former state of West Cameroon before 1976. This structure was responsible for the purchase of the farmers produce through the cooperation societies and the LBAs. Farmers did not therefore sell directly to the PMO in the sector which it controlled. This structure was equally responsible for the exportation of the farm products and for regulating the price of such products. It sponsored the payments of produce advances, supply of pesticides and rewards, in the form of bonuses, to the farmers through their various cooperative societies.

On the other hand, the Price Stabilization Funds operated in the former state of East Cameroon prior to the creation of the NPMB. These organs were independent structures responsible for the purchase of different cash crops. There were specialized Funds for the purchase of cocoa, robusta coffee, arabica coffee, cotton and groundnut.<sup>30</sup> These Funds were concerned with buying farmers’ produce but not responsible for exportation. This latter responsibility was left in the hands of “*Exportateur Agréés*,” who were, for the most part, foreigners. It therefore implied that the Funds had no significant influence over prices of farmer produce since they did not control the foreign trade. It should equally be noted that cooperative societies were not quite developed in the former East Cameroon. Thus, farmers were at the mercy of the Funds and the *Exportateurs Agréés*. It was also evident that the payment of advances to farmers as well as supply of pesticides and bonus payments were done haphazardly and depended on the disposition of the individual fund. The first measure adopted by the government to check this deficit was to create a department of Cooperative and Mutuality in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning. Later, the government proceeded with the creation of SODECAO and by 1976 it was clear that the structures that existed in the former federated states had to be harmonised.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid PP. 210 - 211

<sup>26</sup> Ibid P. 212

<sup>27</sup> Ibid P. 212

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. pp.212-213

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.p.224

<sup>30</sup> The funds for the purchase of cocoa and Robusta coffee were given the latitude to buy and export farmers produce following the dissolution of the federation, but both were unable and still depended on the foreign exporters.

President Ahmadou Ahidjo already indicated, in the follow-up to the institution of the Fourth Plan, his intension of “making the country less dependent on external factors.”<sup>31</sup> He equally observed the wastage in human, material and financial resources which went along with the old structures. Thus, the NPMB had to ensure “the regulation of he prices aid to farmers for their produce.” It equally had to organize and control “the marketing of produce within the country and on [the] international market.” This structure equally had to ensure that full payments were made to farmers whenever differences occurred between the prices guaranteed at the start of the production season and the sales prices at the export market.<sup>32</sup> The law in its Article 5 repealed all previous laws and decrees enacted under the different evolutionary stages of Cameroon, from Southern and French Cameroons to the United Republic of Cameroon, which created marketing structures. A Decree of the President laid down the objectives of the NPMB as well as its structural and financial framework.

## **V. Objectives, Structural and Financial Organisation of the NPMB**

The organigramme of the NPMB and the specific duties assigned to it were contained in Decree No. 78/54 of Feb. 1978. This decree set the NPMB structure and spelled out its specific duties. Article 1 of the decree dissolved the PMO and the Cocoa, Robusta Coffee, Arabica Coffee, Cotton and Groundnuts Price Stabilization Funds. Their duties were transferred to the NPMB. Thus, as outlined in Articles 2 and 3, the Marketing Board was to determine the prices at which cocoa, robusta coffee, Arabica coffee, cotton and groundnut were bought from the farmers. It also had to control the marketing of these products both within the country and on the international market. The NPMB was “the sole body responsible for selling produce on the international markets.”<sup>33</sup> This implied that the monopoly retained by foreign exporters, was abrogated and given to the state.

Besides, the NPMB had the responsibility of granting loans and subventions to structures in the rural areas that were responsible for promoting the production of the staple products, as well as to certain state institutions. It was to be an instrument for the economic and social welfare of the farmer and for the development of the rural sector. These activities were to be closely followed-up by the competent ministry. That is why Article 5 of the decree placed the NPMB under the supervisory authority of the Ministry in charge of the marketing of staple products: Thus the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile Article 4 established the head office of the NPMB at Douala.

Part II of the decree of 1978 defined the structures that were to ensure the administration and functioning of the Board. These comprised the Board of Directors and the Management. The Board of Directors was the administering authority of the NPMB. The twelve members of the Board, drawn from the top administrative organs of the state, fixed their own allowances and other travelling and subsistence expenses, which were all aid by the NPMB. These were public figures with an honorary status, but who, besides the financial power they wielded, also had “the widest powers for management and administration.” The Board drew the programme for the use of funds, approved the accounts and adopted the budget, endorsed the General Manager’s programme of work and authorized all activities and expenses carried out by management.<sup>35</sup>

The responsibilities of the Board of Directors were far ranging. In the first place, it was clear that if their allowances and other expenses were not paid by management, they would not approve its budget. These allowances were arbitrary and were consequently bound to be exorbitant since they were fixed by the very beneficiaries. It was equally evident that the hands of management were tied, since it could not object to proposals from the Board of Directors, for as long as it also wanted its proposed projects, to this organ, validated. This constituted the first setback that was likely to hinder free administration by management. The compromise between the Board of Directors and Management was likely to be at the expense of the farmers, who toiled to cultivate the produce.

Furthermore, this was a public establishment charged with determining the prices of, and buying the produce from the rural farmers. Unfortunately, only two, out of the twelve members of the Board, had some connection with farming. Even those structures that were directly responsible to the farmers (the co-operative societies) were not represented in the highest organ of the NPMB. This implied that the Board of Directors was cut off from the rural population for whom the NPMB was supposedly created. It could not therefore be expected that prices of produce be fixed to satisfy the best interests of the farmers, even when the trends were positive at the international markets. Even if it came to voting at the level of this supervisory body, the major

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<sup>31</sup> Fourth plan. P. 72

<sup>32</sup> Law and Decree creating and organizing the functions of NPMB.pp 2-3

<sup>33</sup> Law and Decree creating and organizing the functions of NPMB.pp.2-3

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p.10

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.PP.10-17

worries of the farmers could hardly be addressed, since decisions were based on a majority vote of Board Members.<sup>36</sup> This was thus a super structure put in place to be sponsored by the farmers.

Management was ensured by a General Manager assisted by two Assistant General Managers. All were appointed by decrees of the President of the Republic. The General Manager and his assistants were advisory members of the Board of Directors. They were responsible for the implementation of the decisions of the Board of Directors. The General Manager equally had a wide-range of powers- which included the recruitment and management of staff and the authorization of all expenses and purchases of the NPMB. But for the Assistant General Managers, the rest of the management staff were at the whims and caprices of the General Manager. He could appoint, transfer, promote, penalize or dismiss them, even though subject to approval by the Board of Directors.<sup>37</sup>

The organigramme of the NPMB provided for services attached to the General Manager both within and without the country. There were equally five directorates, each managed by a director and an assistant. These directors and assistants chiefs of services. Administration was at two levels: Central and External. The central service was lodged at the thirteen storey building in Douala.

All the services involved numerous workers both at the central and branch levels. Interestingly, the farmers, who provided the funds for the functioning of the NPMB, had no opinion in the appointment and dismissal of these personnel. They were never consulted before board members were appointed.

The implication here was that the NPMB, as a structure, had no direct interaction with the farmers. In its whole organigramme there was no structure directly related to farmers or rural welfare. This was despite the fact that the finances of the NPMB were provided, to a very large extent, from the sales of the farmers produce.

The third part of decree No. 78/74 of Feb. 1978 defined the financial provisions of the Board. The finances were placed under financial and accounting services. The funds of the NPMB were derived as follows – proceeds from sales of produce, proceeds from funds invested in banks and other financial establishment, and other secondary sources. The bank investments were certainly profits from sales of farmers produce. It was expected that the funds were to be used with respect to the profits derived from each staple product. As such a separate account was recommended for each staple product as well as a compulsory reserve fund. This compulsory reserve fund had to be derived from the sales of each product. It had to be at least 50% of the total deductions made by the NPMB to that effect. The best sales of each product for six financial years had to determine the basis for calculating the 50% reserve fund to be kept. This compulsory reserve fund could only be suspended if the reserves were enough to buy farmers' produce for three consecutive years, in the event of adverse international conditions.<sup>38</sup> It was equally clear from the decree that the NPMB had to generate funds for development projects. That was why section C of Article 21 of the decree of 1978 stipulated that at "the beginning of each financial year, the percentage of available fund to be earmarked for development projects shall be fixed by order of the President of the Republic." Provisions were also made for loans and advances to be granted to its main partners by the NPMB.<sup>39</sup> In this case these were the farmers and the cooperative societies who, either needed to develop their farms, or open-up the rural areas to ensure evacuation of produce. In all these arrangements the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as supervisory structure, was to ensure that withdrawals were not made on the reserve fund of the NPMB without the approval of the Board of Directors.<sup>40</sup> This was the framework within which the NPMB went operational in 1978.

## VI. Conclusion

Cameroon's economy was largely depended on agriculture from the colonial to the post-colonial era. This justified government strategy, at independence in the early 1960s, of targeting economic development to self-reliant and state planning mechanism under the five years planning system. The principal intention was to protect both the agricultural sector and guarantee government control over exports. This strategy was necessitated by the differences in economic heritage in the two sectors of the country at independence. While cash crop production, sales and exportation in West Cameroon was closely monitored by government, the situation was different in East Cameroon. These differences did not instill the feeling of national unity and integration which President Ahidjo so much cherished and for which the fathers of reunification stood. Thus in the political process of ensuring national cohesion, president Ahidjo adopted several measures to enhance economic unity. The process in the agricultural sector resulted in the creation of the NPMB in 1976 to ensure uniform prices for cash crops paid to farmers and guarantee government control over their sales, with the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.p.14

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.PP.17-20

<sup>38</sup> Decree No. 78/54 of Feb. 1978. PP. 25-28.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.P.29.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.P.30

intended objectives of developing the rural economy and improving on the living standards of the peasant population.

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