

No. IV of 1931-32.

Gold Coast.



Cola Survey
OF THE
Eastern Ashanti Areas and a General
Review of the Gold Coast Cola Industry

Ordered by His Excellency the Governor to be Printed.

GOLD COAST:

*Printed by the Government Printer at the Government Printing Office, Accra.
To be purchased from the Government Printing Office (Publications Branch),
Accra, Gold Coast Colony, and from the Crown Agents for the Colonies,
4, Millbank, London, S.W.1.*

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Price—One Shilling.

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Report of a Cola Survey of the Eastern Ashanti Areas and a General Review of the Gold Coast Cola Industry.

The Cola areas of Western Ashanti were surveyed during 1928-29. The report has since been published; see Paper No. XXVII in Year Book 1929 (Bull. No. 22).

2. During the months of January-June, 1930, a survey of the Cola areas in the Eastern Province of Ashanti was carried out by Mr. J. C. Muir and Mr. J. D. Broatch, Assistant Superintendents. The former officer was responsible for the survey of Western Ashanti and it was fortunate that his services should have been available to complete this important work.

3. In order to check the data obtained in the field, and to ascertain the actual state of the industry, it was found necessary to record the movement and tonnage of Cola leaving Ashanti. Enquiry and observation served to show that the main flow of traffic is to the north and, apart from despatches by rail, the quantity leaving Ashanti by routes other than those crossing the River Volta is negligible. Arrangements were made to check the quantities of Cola crossing the ferries at Bamboi, Morna, and Yeji, during the crop year 1929-30, and these recording posts will be maintained for an indefinite period.

4. Cola is indigenous to Ashanti and was used as a means of barter long before Europeans knew the country. The Ashantis have always been alive to the value of the crop and, although of late years cacao has become popular, the Cola industry has been maintained in a reasonably stable state, and there are no indications of it sharing the fate of the Palm Oil industry of the Colony.

5. For many years the Gold Coast has been exporting large quantities of fresh Cola nuts to Nigeria, and as transport systems developed in both countries the trade in nuts increased until 1924 when it reached the maximum of 7,800 tons. Until 1916 Nigeria was entirely dependent on Gold Coast supplies, but in 1917 Sierra Leone started sending nuts to Nigeria, and in spite of the greater distance and higher freight charges has continued to develop the export industry. Starting with 4 tons in 1917 which represented 0.13 per cent of the Gold Coast exports for that year, Sierra Leone has expanded her trade to such an extent, and in spite of an export tax, that in 1924 it amounted to 845 tons or 11 per cent of the total imported from the Gold Coast. Since 1925 our maritime exports of Cola have fallen off seriously and in 1929 the total was only 3,044 tons. Sierra Leone however continues to compete for the Nigerian trade and in 1929 landed 1,651 tons in that country, or 61 per cent of the Cola imports from the Gold Coast.

6. The diminution of maritime exports has attracted attention and given some cause for alarm, meantime however observations led the Department to suppose that overland traffic to the north was increasing, and it seemed likely that the decrease in the former was coinciding with this. Improved transport facilities and the development of motor roads, with the consequent increase in motor traffic, all tended to support the latter theory, but in the absence of proof a survey of the industry became necessary. This was commenced in 1928 by defining roughly the natural distribution of the crop, followed later by a local survey of the producing areas of Western Ashanti, and more or less completing same during 1930 by similar methods throughout the producing areas of Eastern Ashanti. During the interim the output

from producing areas has been checked at the points mentioned in paragraph 3, and in addition movement by rail has been recorded and maritime exports carefully watched.

7. In this connection useful evidence has been obtained, which serves to show that production within the Colony is appreciably greater than anticipated, and that a high percentage of the maritime exports are derived from the Akim and Assin countries. Crop surveys of these areas have not been undertaken but their total production can now be estimated with a reasonable degree of accuracy, and will be referred to in a later paragraph.

8. Production within Ashanti has now been ascertained, and with the aid of records of crop movement throughout the year, the output from districts can be defined fairly accurately. The two districts mainly responsible for production in Eastern Ashanti are the forest areas of Kumasi and Mampong. The approximate production in tons from each district being as follows:—Kumasi 1,600; Mampong 1,300; Ashanti-Akim 200; Obuasi 50; Bekwai 30. This total of 3,180 may be expected to show variations from year to year, and may be as low as 3,000, or as high as 3,500.

9. In the past, statistics relating to Cola have been compiled for calendar years. Reference to records of crop yields at the Department Stations, Aburi and Kumasi, serve to show that the crop production year extends from September to August, whereas statistics relating to movement of the crop can be best correlated with production for the period October to September. In a later paragraph statistics for the calendar year, and export year, are compared and serve to show how misleading the former may be. During the months November to March inclusive, the greater part of the crop is exported; thus the practice of recording for a calendar year is misleading as parts of two crop years are included. For the purpose of compiling statistics showing seasonal production of Cola the 12 months from 1st October to end of September should be used. The lag, or period which elapses, between harvesting and export appears to be approximately nine weeks, most of which time is taken up in curing the nuts.

10. Maritime exports of Cola show marked periodic increases from 1903 until 1919, then a period of fluctuation during which time the industry was adjusting itself to meet the newly imposed Nigerian duty and increased tariff in French West Africa. Figures for 1923 show a marked increase, and the improvement continued throughout 1924 when the maximum was reached. The following year there was a decrease of approximately 20 per cent and annual decreases have continued as may be seen in the following table, compiled from Customs records:—

TABLE I.
TONNAGE EXPORTED BY SEA FOR CALENDAR YEARS
1924 TO 1930.

Ports.	1924.	1925.	1926.	1927.	1928.	1929.	1930.
Accra ...	3,109	2,438	2,059	1,949	2,661	1,948	1,768
C.P. Ports ...	2,876	1,402	2,172	1,692	1,528	913	1,251
Takoradi ...	1,788	2,256	1,337	1,487	739	183	717
Totals ...	7,773	6,096	5,568	5,128	4,928	3,044	3,736

TABLE II.

TONNAGE EXPORTED BY SEA FOR CROP YEARS 1923-24
TO 1929-30.

Ports.	1923-4.	1924-5.	1925-6.	1926-7.	1927-8.	1928-9.	1929-30.
Accra ...	2,808	2,506	2,194	1,796	2,645	2,262	1,744
C.P. Ports ...	2,798	1,670	2,133	1,791	1,577	1,206	1,064
Takoradi ...	2,051	2,249	1,768	1,393	865	302	721
Totals ...	7,657	6,425	6,095	4,980	5,087	3,770	3,529

11. Comparison of the above figures will serve to prove the statement concerning them which is made in paragraph 9. It will be seen that by the method of recording used in Table II there was a slight increase in the 1927-28 exports, while the apparent increase of 692 tons shown in the former table for 1930 is actually due to the greater output of 1928-29, and the total for 1929-30 was in reality 241 tons below the previous crop year.

12. In Tables I and II exports are shewn for the Provinces and it is at once apparent that the falling off in exports is most marked at the Central Province ports and Takoradi. Tonnage shipped from Takoradi was derived exclusively from Ashanti until 1929, when small quantities came from other sources as the Central Province railway construction reached the Cola areas. Exports from the Central and Eastern Provinces are derived principally from Assin and Akim, and the bulk of these are motor borne. Decreased exports from these ports is thought to be due to ever increasing production of cacao and the larger profits to be derived therefrom. In the case of reduced railings from Ashanti, however it is evidently due to larger quantities being despatched by the northern overland route.

13. The number of loads of Cola recorded for the years 1924 to 1929 has been converted to the same unit as that employed for calculating tonnage checked in 1930, and while not claiming absolute accuracy for the figures obtained, the method does at least render the data more readily comparable. Table III serves to show the total exports from Ashanti and tonnage railed from Kumasi is shown in a separate column to facilitate comparison with maritime exports from Takoradi.

TABLE III.

TOTAL COLA EXPORTS FROM ASHANTI—CALENDAR YEARS
1924 TO 1930.
(IN TONS.)

Year.	South by rail from Kumasi.	North by motor and other means.	Total.
1924	2,449	2,086	4,535
1925	2,947	2,929	5,876
1926	2,050	3,487	5,537
1927	2,006	3,387	5,393
1928	759	3,206	3,965
1929	348	3,937	4,285
1930	753	4,650	5,403

It is unfortunate that the past records are for calendar years and cannot be transposed to crop years, as it seems likely that the traffic would show a steady increase except for 1928, and in that case it might indicate that the crop was small for that season.

14. The data given in Table III above are of special interest as they serve to show for the first time the actual tonnage of Cola exported from Ashanti. Figures for 1930 show an increase of 1,118 tons over the previous year, but much of this may very probably be due to the greater care in recording. A better measure of the increase may be obtained by comparing the exports for 1924 with those of 1930, which are as follows :—

Year.	Railings.	Overland.	Total.
1924	2,449 tons	2,086 tons	4,535 tons
1930	753 tons	4,650 tons	5,403 tons
Increase or Decrease ...	— 1,696 tons	+ 2,564 tons	+ 868 tons

This serves to show that exports from Ashanti have increased substantially during the period and that the direction of traffic has definitely changed in favour of the northern overland route.

15. There are several reasons for this change of direction and they are all due in some measure to the economics of the industry. Men from the north come south to the Cacao areas for the major harvest, and when returning invest part of their earnings in Cola. These, like the petty dealers in the commodity, carry their own load and can readily dispose of nuts on the way, thereby avoiding waste through deterioration, while realising sufficient to maintain themselves during the journey. The merchant dealing in tons of Cola, borne by motor-lorry, is equally well favoured and can realise his investment in a very short time, without undue risk of deterioration. Having purchased the nuts they can be loaded at his convenience, and even if cash must be paid in advance for transport there are good markets such as Tamale and Wa within easy reach, and still better prices to be obtained at places like Bawku near the frontier. All these northern markets are sufficiently near to enable the merchant to turn over his cash within a few days, involving little risk and a minimum outlay of capital during the interim.

16. Reference to the records of quantities crossing the ferries northwards will show that Yeji, on the old trade route Kumasi-Salaga-Tamale-Bawku, is the busiest of the three routes. It is open to motor traffic for ten months of the year, is the oldest motor road to the north, and traverses the eastern side of the Northern Territories. Traffic over Morna ferry is about one-fourth of that crossing Yeji, but there is no motor road beyond Kintampo and all produce is conveyed by manual or donkey transport, the former averaging 80 lbs. per load, and the latter 160 lbs. Data for Bamboi show that the tonnage is equal to about half of that passing Yeji; it is on a motor road traversing the western side of the country and still in process of extension.

17. The tonnage recorded during the crop season October, 1929 to September, 1930, and the derivation of nuts is shewn in Table IV which follows:—

TABLE IV.
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE RECORDS FOR
COLA GOING NORTH 1929-30.

Ferry.	ORIGIN OF NUTS.			Totals in tons from all parts.
	Ashanti.		Colony all parts.	
	Eastern.	Western.		
Yeji	2,375	110	28	2,513
Bamboi	360	899	3	1,262
Morna	273	398	.6	671
Totals	3,008	1,407	31.6	4,446

18. The Survey has produced the following interesting facts concerning production of exportable cola nuts.

During the crop season 1929-30 Ashanti disposed of 5,208 tons, of which 4,415 tons were sent north overland, and 793 tons south by rail for export by sea. These exports were derived as follows:—Eastern Province 3,455 tons, Western Province 1,753 tons. During the six years ending December, 1930 the total output from Ashanti shews an increase of 868 tons, and while the ocean exports have fallen by 1,696 tons, overland traffic has increased by 2,564 tons.

The foregoing refers particularly to Ashanti output during the past seven years and may be regarded as satisfactory. When reviewing the total output from the Gold Coast, however, it becomes evident that the trade is diminishing, and the change in direction of traffic results in a considerable loss of revenue in railway earnings. During the years 1924 to 1927 the mean tonnage carried by rail from Ashanti was 2,400, whereas during the period 1928 to 1930 the mean tonnage amounted to 650 only.

19. In the table below, the total output from the Gold Coast for 1923-24 crop year is compared with the same period of 1929-30.

TABLE V.

Year.	Marine exports.	Overland exports.	Total (tons).
1923-24	7,657 tons	*2,086 tons	9,743
1929-30	3,529 tons	4,446 tons	7,975
	— 4,128 tons	+ 2,360 tons	— 1,768

This serves to show that the total decrease in output amounts to 1,768 tons, and although some of this amount may be due to comparing a crop year with a calendar year, it will be seen on reference to Tables I and II that the greatest range of variation occurs in 1929 and amounts

*Calendar Year.

to some 700 tons. It thus becomes evident that there is a definite decrease in total output, and the survey shews that this may be attributed to the Assin and Akim production areas. Reference to Table II will show that exports from Accra (supplied by the Eastern Akim areas) were reasonably stable for the six crop years ending 1928-29, the mean annual tonnage being 2,386 whereas in 1929-30 exports were 624 tons below the mean, thus accounting for 35 per cent of the total decrease. Further reference will show the greatest diminution to be taking place at Central Province ports (supplied by Assin and Western Akim production areas) where there has been a steady decrease during the past four years. The mean annual exports from these ports for the six years ending 1928-29, amount to 1,862 tons, whereas in 1929-30 the total was only 1,064 tons, or 798 tons below the mean, which is equal to 45 per cent of the total decrease.

20. It is evident that the Cola industry in the Colony is being adversely affected by cacao production; the supply of labour being limited, one industry is developed at the expense of another. Transport facilities in Assin and Akim have been improved tremendously during the past six years, and savings thus effected have benefited the cacao producers, and encouraged them to extend farm areas. Meantime the Cola output is suffering to the extent shown in the preceding paragraph.

A. C. MILES,
*Officer-in-Charge, Division
of Statistics and Surveys,
Department of Agriculture.*

ACCRA,

20th March, 1931.

Statement giving particulars of the average price per ton of cola f.o.b. Accra, in respect of each of the years, 1924 to 1930, inclusive.

1924	...	...	...	...	...	£55.18 per ton.
1925	...	...	...	...	...	£54.45 per ton.
1926	...	...	...	...	...	£56.67 per ton.
1927	...	...	...	...	...	£39.12 per ton.
1928	...	...	...	...	...	£38.81 per ton.
1929	...	...	...	...	...	£44.84 per ton.
1930	...	...	...	...	...	£40.21 per ton.

H. W. R. CHANDLER,
for Acting Comptroller of Customs.

ACCRA,

24th June, 1931.

