

The Supply of Specific Foodstuffs to the Military in Nigeria during the Second World War, 1939-1945

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the supply of specific foodstuffs to the military in Nigeria during the Second World War, between 1939 and 1945; analyzing the logistical challenges and socio-economic impacts of this wartime procurement. Utilizing archival records, contemporary reports, and secondary sources, the research investigated the types of foodstuffs requisitioned, the methods of acquisition, and the roles of local distributors. It explored how the demands of the war effort affected agricultural production, distribution networks, and the availability of essential commodities for the civilian population. Ultimately, this study demonstrated the critical role Nigeria played in supplying the Allied war effort through its agricultural resources and highlights the lasting consequences of this wartime mobilization on the region's food systems.

KEYWORDS: Foodstuffs, Military, Procurement, Requisitioned, Wartime Mobilization

I. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, as a British colony, played an important role in food supply to soldiers during the periods of the two World Wars. Nigerian contributions to the British war effort during the Second World War was not limited to military and financial aid but equally played a significant role in food supply to soldiers (NAI, 1916). The supply of Nigerian extended foodstuffs to soldiers at the war front such as rice, yams, maize, garri, millet, guinea-corn, potatoes, fresh meat, fresh vegetables, cooking oil, and so on, to Britain for military provisioning did not halt throughout the Inter-War years (1919-1939), although it did decrease due to the restoration of peace and the resumption of food production in war-torn Europe. The British War Council was still in charge (as during World War I) of mobilizing Nigerian foodstuffs supply to the Allied Forces in West Africa and Europe during the Second World War (1939-1945). The Post-war period in Nigeria was distinguished by the pattern of food provisioning by the Armed Forces, which lasted from 1946 to 1960, being the Post-War period.

Significance of Food Provisions for the Armed Forces.

Wars are not only interruptions of normal life, but they provoke severe ruptures and breaks in food production, distribution, and consumption, which can have long lasting effects on the economic structure of the food industry, government food policy as well as the individual food habits (Ina, et al, 2012). The control, production, and access to food can also be used as a weapon by protagonists in conflict (Collinson & Macbeth, 2014). For instance, food blockade and scorch-earth tactics have been used by war parties to destabilize and de-provision the army of their enemies. Food shortages and restrictions in war periods resulted in a search for substitutes or new products. This has always been the practice, globally, from time immemorial (Ina, et al, 2012). Scholars like Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Rachel Duffett, and Alain Drouard (Ina, et al, 2012) state that conflict influenced negatively food production, distribution, and consumption in twentieth century Europe. While a nutritious diet is essential for supporting soldiers, it is also critical to sustain civilian health and morale in the era of total war, according to the book. Military provisioning and food rationing systems, as well as civilian survival strategies and the role of conflict in fostering innovation and modernization, are all included in the inquiry. It examines the challenges of feeding big armies as well as the challenges of enforcing food rules and rationing schemes at home, arguing that food should not be considered as a finite resource. It explains how new and alternative foods were invented and used in times of scarcity. Advances in food processing technology, a shift away from meat in the diet, and the introduction of exotic delicacies like horsemeat are all examples of this. Children, soldiers, and citizens alike, Katarzyna Cwiertka believed, needed to eat three times a day at the very least. This intriguing collection of essays looks at how people eat in wartime and post-war food storage facilities,

as well as on and off the battlefield. It also takes into account the effects of eating habits during a war on the course of the conflict as well as the development of post-war culture and society. The paper embodies the concept of food studies, which is to move the examination of the common dimension of conflict from the periphery of research to a crucial role in understanding the history of humanity (Katarzyna, 2013).

Having dealt with the general military requirements and supply, there is the need to examine the requirements and supply of some individual foodstuffs to the military. This will help to bring out the practical details of the subject matter. These foodstuffs include rice, yam, meat, fresh vegetables, and palm oil, among others.

Rice

Nigeria was a very large producer of rice. However, owing to the loss of Burma as a source of supply and the cessation of exports of rice from British India, Nigeria was now being called upon to meet the requirements of the Gold Coast and the Gambia, which total over 6,000 tons. In addition, military demands were increasing so that in spite of the great increase in rice production which had taken place in recent years, the demand was still greater than the supply. Likewise, in Sierra Leone, production had been stepped up considerably in recent years with the result that Sierra Leone was now more than self-supporting and the military requirements had been supplied to the Gambia. Requirements in Sierra Leone in 1942 were put by the military at 2,300 tons, all of which was met from local production, but it was estimated by the military that these requirements would rise to 4,032 tons in 1943. In view of the fact that Sierra Leone was able to build up reserves from last season's harvest, it was more than likely that military needs in 1943 would be satisfied but it was doubtful whether a surplus would be available for export.

Although there had been an increase in rice production in the Gold Coast, output still failed short of civil requirements by 4,000 tons per annum. Rice was not grown in the Gambia to any large extent and civil requirements were estimated at 2,400 tons.

It was evident, therefore, that in 1943 Nigeria would be called up to provide the deficiencies in the Gold Coast and the Gambia both for the military and the civil populations. It was estimated that these requirements would exceed 8,000 tons. During the past season, Nigeria was able to meet military requirements in these colonies amounting to 2,670 tons. In addition, 1,000 tons were being supplied to the Gambia for the civil population. It was obvious, therefore, that unless there was a substantial increase in production in Nigeria during 1942-1943 season, a shortage of rice in the Gold Coast and the Gambia might be anticipated in 1943. Military requirements would no doubt take precedence over civil requirements, and supplies would also be available from the Congo. However, the probability of a shortage of rice in 1943 should be made known to the Gold Coast Government so as to spur them on to further efforts in their drive for increased production (NAI 37909/S).

In 1944, the army in Nigeria held surplus stocks of rice partly due to the arrival of 1,500 tons of rice in Lagos: 500 tons of rice from Matadi (ex. Belgium Congo), 400 tons from Cameroons and 600 tons grown in Nigeria. After the rice had been shipped, it proved to be surplus to army requirements. The question of disposal of this surplus was immediately taken up by the office of the Director of Supply, Lagos, with the office of the Resident Minister and pending instructions it was necessary to hold this rice in Lagos and it was left in the transit shed as the military had no storage accommodation available and it appeared likely that it would have to be shipped to another colony (NAI E37909/S). The prices of the tons of rice were as follows:

a) EX BELGIAN CONGO

500 tons @ Francs 2415 (£12.1.6d) per ton	£6,037.10.0
Freight Leopoldville – Matadi @ 7/4 ½	184. 7.6
Freight Matadi – Lagos @ 48/- per ton	1,200. 0.0
Handling Charge – Lagos @ 5/- per ton	125. 0.0
Handling Charge – Matadi @ 3/8.7 per ton	93. 2.6
Total	£7, 640.0.0

(b) EX CAMEROONS

400 tons (paddy) @ £27 per ton F.o.b.	£10, 800. 0.0
Freight and handling charges Duala/Lagos 45/6 per ton	910. 0.0
Total	£11, 710. 0.0.

(c) EX SOKOTO AND ABEOKUTA

600 tons @ £15 a ton to Lagos	£9,000. 0.0
Total (a), (b) & (c)	£28,350.0.0.

Source: NAI E37909/S.13 Vol. II, "Supply of Rice to the Military, 1944-45 Crop", pp.53-54

Average price per ton landed Lagos = £18.18.0. This price did not include £413. 2. 0d the storage rent due to the Nigeria Railway, but this could be waived (NAI E37909/S.13 Vol. II.).

The Army was asked to confirm that it would deliver to civilian consumers 500 tons of rice at the price ex M.S.D. Apapa. The Deputy Food Controller, Native Foodstuffs, Lagos, who would take over the rice, had been asked to arrange details of transfer and payment direct with M.S.D(NAI E37909/S.). Again, contract purchase in Portuguese Guinea of 1,200 tons of rice required in Gambia had not finally been settled. This was because of their demand for payment in tyres and petrol for this rice (NAI E37909/S.). So it might be necessary to allocate above quantities or part of them to Gambia and/or Gold Coast. However, this proposal to send the rice to Gambia was challenged in Nigeria on some grounds. First, by June 1944, rice buying had finished. The season was fairly satisfactory, but there were 250 tons short of the target in Ilorin and 300 tons short in Nigeria. The stock position of rice in Nigeria by June 1944 was as follows:

Lagos Market Store (Capt. Pullen)	854 tons
Lokoja	80
Ilorin & Niger	214
Total	1148

Second, it was up to six months ahead before the 1944 crop would be on the market. In view of military requirements, it had been anticipated a period when no rice would be available. This had been accepted as being unavoidable.

Third, in the season just closed, 3800 tons were supplied to military. This quantity was secured with great difficulty and depleted civilian stocks to low levels and caused widespread black marketing. In Lagos such black marketing had been successfully dealt with by Pullen Scheme but it was anticipated that owing to lack of supplies there would be a period of three months during which Pullen would have no rice (NAI E37909).

Thus, it was also argued that if the military were not going to require all their rice, there was no reason why it should be exported to other colonies unless it was a unique experience of absolute necessity. It was suggested that all military surplus should be sold to the Nigerian Government for civilian consumption. This surplus amounted to 2648 ton (1148 available in the Lagos market store, Lokoja and Ilorin & Niger plus 1500 ex-Military). The allocation was suggested as follows:

Lagos Market 6 months @ 429 tons per month	2574 tons
Lokoja Asylum	7
Burutu Labour	7
Total	2648

Source: NAI E37909/S.13 Vol. II, "Supply of Rice to the military, 1944-45 Crop", p.34

Availability of 1500 tons ex-military surplus referred to above would make it possible to bridge the gap in rice supply and continue to make rice available without interruption. This would effectively kill black market in Lagos and would ensure there was no such thing as incentive to hoard Abeokuta crop next November. This should result in our obtaining Abeokuta crop without difficulty in 1945. The Governor of Nigeria most strongly urged that all military surplus should be handed over to the Government of Nigeria, because the country had born more than its fair share supplying West African Forces and this had only been possible at the expense of local shortages and rising prices which had adversely affected export production (NAI E37909/S.13).

In addition, on 4 August, 1944, the Controller, Local Foodstuffs, Control Centres – Colony, noted in a letter to the Food Controller, Supply Branch, Nigeria Secretariat, Lagos, that he received a consignment of 89 bags of rice from Gwada which showed a considerable discrepancy in bag weights ranging from 1cwt.50 lbs. to 2cwt 7 ½ lbs gross. There was a total shortage of 162 lbs on the consignment and the U.A.C. Gwada had already been addressed in this connection. The railway warrant booking this consignment had now been received for payment and it would appear that the 89 bags were originally consigned from Gwada to the military, Apapa, by Captain R.C. Fox for O.C. A.D.S.T., Nigeria area and chargeable to the military vote on 10 December, 1943. If they had been on the rail from December 1943 to July 1944, a shortage was unavoidable (NAI E37909/S.13).

From the telephone conversation between Major Heap and Mr. Shankland, it was understood that the rice stocks of which the Army wished to dispose were as follows:

520 tons rice ex Nigeria
55 tons rice ex Cameroons paddy
400 tons rice paddy ex Cameroons

The Director of Supplies wanted to know:

- What tonnage of rice would the army have on hand for current needs after disposal of the stocks referred to above?
- How long would these stocks last i.e. what was the army anticipated rate of issue?
- What was the earliest date at which the army would require deliveries of rice from the 1944-1945 crop and at what rate per month would the army require deliveries (NAI E37909).

In response, Lt-Col RASC, CC WAASC Nigeria Area gave the following figures:

- Tonnage of rice held by the military excluding stocks for disposal, at 31 July 1944= 565 tons
- Consumption Aug/Dec 440 tons
- Special requirements 100
- 540 tons
- Deliveries were required from 1 Nov. at the rate of 400 tons monthly in accordance with NA/4336/48/ST of 10 August, 1944 (NAI E37909).

In response, the G.F.T. Colby, the Acting Chief Secretary to the Government of Nigeria noted that deliveries of rice to the military at the rate of 400 tons per month from 1 November, 1944 could not be arranged. All supplies of rice for the military from the forthcoming crop would be drawn from the northern provinces where harvesting would not begin until January and deliveries could not therefore start before the end of January at the earliest.

After reviewing the rice situation, the Governor of Nigeria decided that none of the rice referred to could be exported from Nigeria. The army was therefore requested to make 200 tons of the cleaned rice ex Abeokuta available for the Lagos Market Scheme (Capt. Pullen) as soon as possible, retaining the balance against army requirements for 1944-45, thus bridging the gap between the final liquidation of the existing stocks and the start of deliveries from the new crop from January to February 1945. The financial details arising out of the revised arrangements could be settled between the Supply Branch and the Command Pay Office (NAI E37909).

On the basis that the 1945 demand of the army for 1500 tons, that is, an average monthly consumption of 125 tons and accepting their statement that stocks on hand, apart from surplus repeat surplus would last them until March 31, 1945. Army would not have completely consumed their surplus repeat surplus of 485 tons until after end of June. This presumably meant that since the proportion of rice now held by army would have been in store for eighteen months before it was required, rice in paddy form would of course keep better than hulled rice. Both army and Gold Coast had had heavy losses on lengthy storage. If it was possible that Nigerian civilians would use army surplus within the next six months it would seem to be safer that this should be done.

Meat

At the second meeting of the West African War Council, it was agreed that governments would take over existing reserve herds of cattle and military farms, if the necessary personnel could be made available; and that all governments, with the exception of the Gambia, would establish purchasing organizations, the detailed planning of which would be worked out with Area Commanders, on the understanding that the G.O.C.-in-C would release or loan personnel and assist where practicable in the provision of transport (NAI E37909). A number of crucial problems developed that went beyond the specific arrangements that would be worked out between the local governments and the Area Commanders. These questions fell under four major headings, namely, reserve herds of cattle, army farms, purchasing organizations and personnel.

Concerning the question of reserve herds of cattle, it was appreciated that all reserve herds of cattle would require European supervision and that, where no arrangements existed, shelter and water must be provided for the beasts and, possibly, dip tanks and other facilities. It was considered that the leading principle in framing plans for reserve herds should be the strictest economy in the use of European personnel. To achieve this, herds should be large in size and few in number. It was suggested that civil governments should select the most suitable locality for their reserve herds in consultation with Area Commanders, and should then frame estimates of the expenditure which would be required to provide the necessary accommodation and equipment. These estimates would be submitted to Force Headquarters, and if agreed, the army would reimburse the government concerned for any expenditure in connection therewith incurred by the latter. The procedure for calculating the charge for the expense of herding and maintaining the cattle would be negotiated between local governments and area commanders (NAI E37909). At the meeting held at the General Headquarters on 3 November, 1942, it was agreed that:

- That Nigeria should supply an average of 3,300 herds a month of which 500 herds would be for export to the Gold Coast.
- That reserve herds to a total of 6,000 herds should be formed to be drawn upon in the dry season when cattle were difficult to buy, but that the reserves should never be allowed to fall below 3,000 herds, which was approximately one month's requirements.
- That the reserves should, in the first instance, be established in the northern provinces but that as soon as mosquito gauze could be obtained, fly-proof byres should be built in the southern provinces to permit of the fattening there of 1,500 herds to meet the demands of the Lagos, Abeokuta, Ibadan, and Enugu areas.
- That the Nigerian government should take over the management of the existing reserves as from the 1st of January, 1943.
- That the army would lend to the government the officers who were now engaged in the supervision of the reserve herds, and would at once provide an additional four officers, one of whom was to have some knowledge of accounting. These officers would be entirely under the government. From the army point of view, they would be regarded as forming "a Reserve of Officers". They would continue to be paid by the army.

- That the Nigeria area should be requested to allow the government to retain, as long as they were required, the two pioneer companies working on the reserves.
- That the General Headquarters should arrange for three kit cars and two lorries to be provided for use in connection with the purchase of cattle and the maintenance of the bills.
- Cattle payments should not be made at the time they are delivered to the army, but that all expenditures on purchase and maintenance should be refunded by the army annually or at the end of whatever period it might be decided to adopt. If officers of the agricultural department had to be employed for the purpose of arranging supplies of cattle, their salaries, or the appropriate proportion of them would be included in the expenses (NAI E37909).

Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Fresh Fruit: With the exception of Sierra Leone, all colonies would likely be able to meet the new fruit requirements if transportation could be established. In Sierra Leone, considerable quantities of fruit were required for the victualling of ships. Early in the year, Sierra Leone government stated that only 50 percentage of military requirements in 1942 could be met and in view of the fact that these requirements would, it was estimated, increase by 610 tons in 1943, the deficiency was likely to be at least 1,000 tons. This quantity could be supplied in part from Nigeria and the Gold Coast, but difficulties might arise over shipping as fruit did not carry well.

Fresh Vegetables: A serious shortage of vegetables in 1943 was a very real possibility, based on information provided by governments earlier in the year and the greatly increased Military requirements. It was estimated that requirements in West Africa as a whole would increase from 7,980 tons in 1942 to 12,407 in 1943. However, all colonies were making strenuous efforts to increase production and the military authorities were also undertaking vegetable production in the Gold Coast. The main obstacle to increased production appeared to be the scarcity of good vegetable seeds. It was understood that attempts had been made by Nigeria to obtain seed from California by plane. The military authorities had placed orders in South Africa and had asked for confirmation as to whether these could be supplied. Mr. B.G. Owen, a civil officer in Nigeria, was at present in Kenya studying dried vegetable production with a view to the establishment of a plant in Nigeria (NAI E37909).

Salt

On the supply of salt to the military in Nigeria, the Gold Coast and the Gambia presented no difficulty. Sierra Leone had previously struggled to import enough salt for its civilian population and Nigeria and the Gold Coast had from time to time been called upon to assist. In view of the small quantity required by the army in Sierra Leone (424 tons per annum) there should be no difficulty in obtaining this quantity from the Gold Coast where there was a salt industry with a small exportable surplus (NAI E37909).

II. CONCLUSION

In retrospect, this paper has examined the provisioning of the Allied Troops in West Africa, with Nigeria in focus. The write up reviewed the formation of the Allied Forces in West Africa during the Second World War. It therefore pointed out how the Second World War disrupted the international system, politically and economically, and the concomitant restrictions and control of trade, food and prices. The issue of food requirements of the military and the supply of foodstuff to the armed forces in Nigeria during the Second World War was adequately cross examined. More importantly, the study appraised the nuances of production, requirements and supplies of various crops needed during the war.

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