



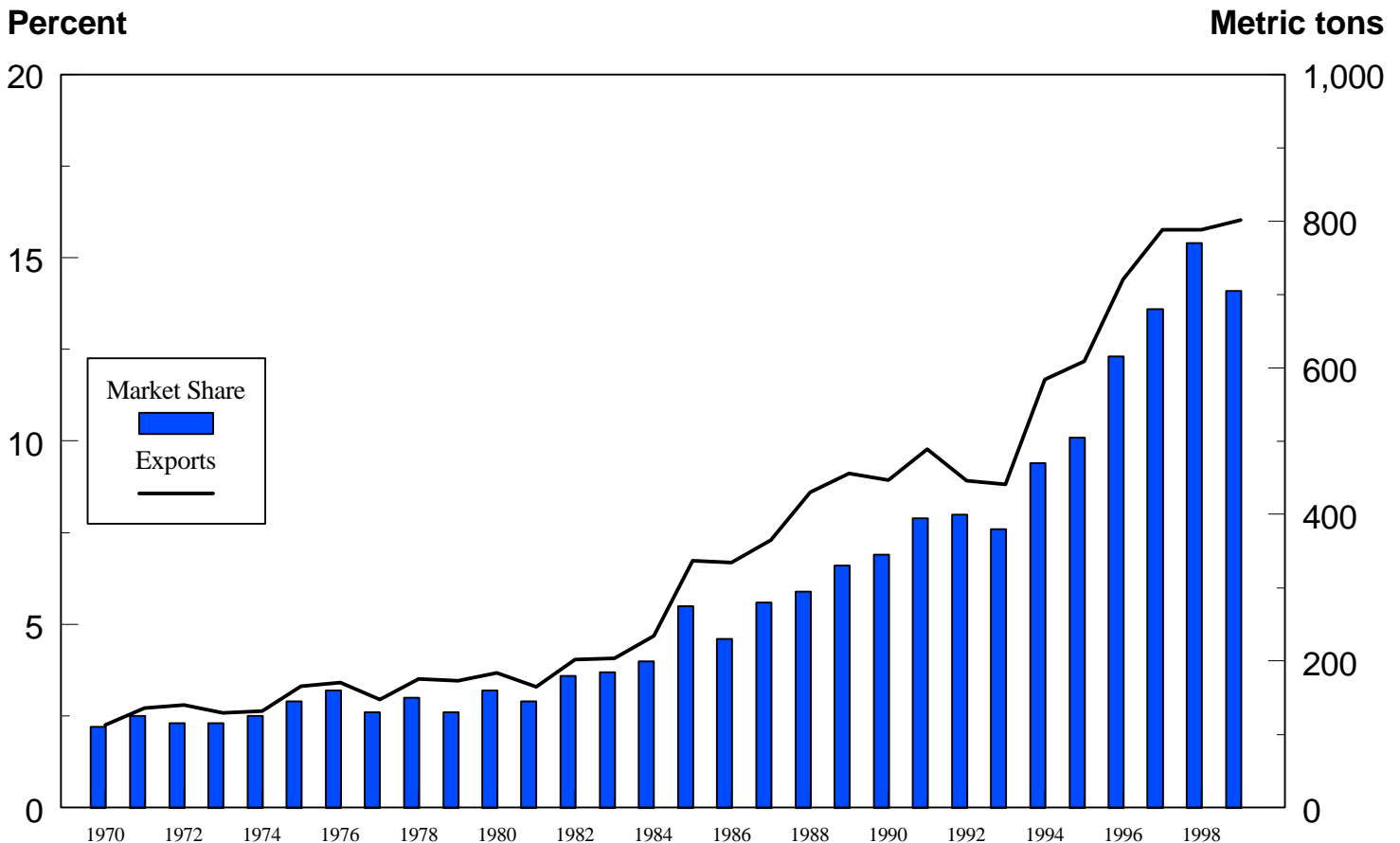
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Cotton: World Markets and Trade

Francophone West African Cotton Exports Reach 14 Percent of World Market Share



While Francophone West Africa's cotton crop accounts for 4.7 percent of world production, exports are 14 percent of world trade. Since the 1970s, cotton production increases have been driven by both area expansion and yield increases. Over the past 30 years, area has tripled. Yields have also increased dramatically, but reached a plateau in the mid 1980s. Cotton production has been an engine of economic development in the region for over four decades, where it is grown on 2.4 million hectares involving 10 million people. However, low world prices, stagnant yields and inefficient state cotton company operations have put the sector at a crossroads. This month's featured report reviews recent developments in this important cotton producing region of the world.