



Revisiting Land, Agriculture and Food Sovereignty in South Africa

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Abstract

The debate regarding South Africa's land and agrarian structure continues unabated, and oft-times it is very emotive. Part of the issue is whether South Africa would follow Zimbabwe's 'footsteps'. Having examined South African land and agrarian realities under colonialism and apartheid, and implications thereof regarding attempts on agrarian reforms, as well as undertaking an analysis of the contemporary South African agrarian class structure (which remains largely biased towards the control and ownership of vast expanses of lands by the white minority as well as capital), the paper makes proposals towards a possibly meaningful agrarian structure for South Africa (i.e. an agrarian structure that is likely to work for the majority of indigenous South Africans). The proposed interventions in dealing with the land and agrarian issues should be engaged with, as the paper explains, both in the context of food sovereignty and in dealing with the 'historical injustice'. In all the efforts, as a central argument of the paper, the countryside should be taken into account. The works of the late Sam Moyo emphasized the importance of the countryside, also in the context of the national question, and this should guide interventions on land and agriculture in South Africa.

Keywords: Agrarian reform, land question, countryside, peasantry, rural development

Introduction

One of the reasons the South Africa's land and agrarian structure debate continues unabated is a concern that South Africa is following Zimbabwe's footsteps¹. Indeed, an understanding of the dynamics of land accumulation is critical especially for policy makers who are interested

¹ Gumede (2014) wrestled with this issue and concluded that South Africa can pursue a mix of market and government driven land reform approaches.

in the socio-economic effects of land inequality. In South Africa, land ownership inequality has also been found to undermine efforts to reduce poverty, as the majority of households still lack assets that could enable them to make productive investments (Cousins, 2015; Twala, 2010). Land and agrarian questions are important issues which require urgent attention and intervention particularly as they are constitutive of the national question which could culminate in the disruption of national food sovereignty if neglected.

It is important to bear in mind that the historical land dispossession is manifested in pronounced urban slums and some rural spaces that are characterized by high population densities. Unlike other countries in the southern African region, the efforts to redress past injustices has always been frustrated by an organized and relatively large white minority population supported by capital finance with the support of the global white supremacy system. However, that said, the democratic government since 1994 has not been effective in dealing with the land question in South Africa. Nevertheless, or accentuated by that, the question of what kind of land and agrarian change approach should be followed remains insufficiently addressed.

The paper starts with reflections on South African land and agrarian realities under colonialism and apartheid, and implications thereof regarding contemporary attempts on agrarian reforms, both in terms of policy and practical action. I then discuss the contemporary South African agrarian class structure which remains largely biased towards the control and ownership of vast expanses of lands by the white minority as well as capital, both local and foreign. Before concluding, I try to make proposals towards what could be a meaningful and working agrarian structure in South Africa; an agrarian structure that is likely to work for the majority of indigenous South Africans. The fundamental questions that the paper wrestles with relate to the type of land and agrarian change approach that can be deployed to attain a racially unbiased land distribution that will address South Africa's basic socio-economic goals and the kind of land reform and land tenure that could be ideal for South Africa as well as the nature of farming that is appropriate for South Africa.

Colonial Land Reform and Accumulation

To start with, large-scale farmers – historically white and a few blacks lately – own most of the prime land and dominate agricultural and natural resource export economies. This has resulted in soaring rural poverty and population densities, and poor land management. The failure to make productive use of resources, or to take advantage of land accumulation opportunities, is based on the country's long history under colonialism and apartheid. It is

therefore not surprising that the effects of past racially motivated state policies remain intense. Colonial and apartheid policies were designed to engrain an arrangement of racial privilege, but also buttress regimes of property and capital accumulation. Thus, in any attempts at inclusive development approaches, the issues of land and agrarian patterns in South Africa cannot be ignored.

In the 1990s, South Africa emerged from a protracted history of minority domination and land alienation by whites; a situation that culminated in having the most of the country's prime land being in the hands of whites. Dealing with a view that colonialists found land uninhabited in what we now know as South Africa, Davenport and Hunt (1974) documented how the indigenous San people were almost wiped off by whites in their resistance to land dispossession by the invading whites, and how regardless of resistance, lands for other cultural groups were wrenched through wars or through fraudulent agreements which African chiefs did not understand. The colonial and apartheid state in South Africa confined the black people to reserves which consisted of barren lands with poor rainfall patterns while whites enjoyed fertile lands that supported robust commercial agriculture.

While the displacement and dispossession of black people first occurred through subjugation and deception, land alienation got sanctified and ended up becoming a state policy that would last for a very long time commencing with the Native Land Act of 1913 which set aside a meagre eight per cent of the total land area of South Africa for Africans as reserves and while the rest of the country was reserved for whites. The land occupied by Africans was increased by five per cent in 1936 under the Native Development and Trust Land Act 1936, thus, bringing the total to 13 per cent. However, it is reported that the larger percentages of the 13 per cent reserved for Africans still remained in the hands of the state through the South African Development Trust which purported to hold it in trust for the African people. Essentially, Africans were proscribed from purchasing land in areas outside the designated reserves.

In brief, the Land Act of 1913 was meant to ensure that there was adequate fertile land for white farmers; and to disenfranchise Africans through land alienation and to bar them from any forms of farming activities that would engender self-sufficiency (Twala, 2010). This arrangement ensured that Africans would depend on the sale of their labor for survival, thus generating a pool of cheap labor for the white farms and the mines (Ntsebenza, 2007). The 1913 Land Act also sought to enforce racial segregation as a policy. Land alienation resulted

in a migrant system where Africans males migrated to urban areas and white farms in order to earn a living and to provide for their families.

The Group Areas Act of 1950 was adopted with the ascendancy of the National Party to power in 1948. The Act enabled the new government to forcefully remove Africans from lands that had been declared as white areas and to seal the racial segregation policy by getting rid of Colored and Indian people from 'white areas'. Some African farmers who had escaped the notorious 1913 Land Act by virtue of possessing title deeds to their land were gotten rid of under the Group Areas Act in a process that was meant to clean up the black pockets (Rugege, 2004). The areas inhabited by this 'black residue' were usually fertile for agricultural activities as compared to the Bantustans that were characterized by over-crowding, over-grazing and over-cultivation.

The Group Areas Act was augmented by the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act of 1951 and other racially based pieces of legislation that ensured that Africans had no formal rights on land. Among other things, the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act of 1951 empowered the apartheid state as well as private white actors who owned land to expel people and tear down their homes without court orders. In effect, most of those whose houses were demolished and expelled had initially settled on the land under an agreement with the owner but once that consent lapsed or was withdrawn for whatever reason, the people automatically would be categorized as squatters and became liable to be evicted. The victims of these racially motivated developments would be damped in the Bantustans or would be moved on to other 'empty land' until the land was needed for another purpose. It is estimated that over 3.5 million people were forcibly displaced under various apartheid laws between 1960 and 1983 (Platzky & Walker, 1985).

It can be argued that the liberation struggle from both colonial and apartheid dominance was based on the need to free all national lands. However, liberation and democracy in South Africa were eventually not attained through armed struggle but through negotiations, which necessitated compromises on many issues including land and agrarian issues. While many Africans anticipated that after apartheid land would be acquired to meet various pressing needs, land distribution has not been effective (Gumede, 2014). Restitution, redistribution, and tenure reform are the three pillars of land and agrarian reform which were meant to assist in deracializing the rural economy; ensuring democratic and equitable land allocation and

promoting equitable land use across race, gender and class; and also sustaining food production to ensure food security in the country.

The restitution component required that persons or communities whose lands were wrenched after the notorious Native Land Act of 1913 as a result of racially prejudiced laws are entitled to restoration of that property or to equitable redress². The range of restitution and its prospective for transforming land distribution and ownership in South Africa was however limited due to its 1913 cut-off date which excluded many potential land claimants whose lands were grabbed before 1913. Arguably, the cut-off date was itself a compromise reached by those who negotiated the independence on the basis that leaving the right to restitution open-ended would have entailed many problems, as also documented in the White paper on Land Policy (i.e. “In South Africa, ancestral land claims could create a number of problems and legal-political complexities that would be difficult to unravel”³). To ensure certainty for existing landowners, a deadline of 31 December 1998 was also imposed by the Act for the lodging of claims. The date was however adjusted to 2014 during the Jacob Zuma administration. The imposition of the deadline presents a particular challenge as it has disqualified some prospective claimants who did not get to know in time that they had a right to restitution (Hall, 2007) or being under the patronage of the land owners as farm workers were afraid to make claims (Rugege, 2004). As early as 2003, the Commission for Restitution of Land Rights (CRLR) had already acknowledged that the problem imposed by the deadlines, but rejected calls for the reopening of the lodging of claims (Gwanya, 2003). The democratic government has not achieved much in terms of land restitution as evidenced by the unchanged agrarian structure as discussed later.

In terms of redistribution, the government sought to acquire land for purposes of distribution to the landless or to those who have inadequate access to land. The land to be acquired is mainly that in the hands of whites who acquired it through the apartheid policies which were tilted in their favor. Land redistribution is provided for in Section 25(5) of the Constitution (i.e. “The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to foster conditions which enable citizens to gain access to land on an equitable basis”). This provision imposes an obligation on the government to enhance land accessibility, and creates a socio-economic right for the poor and the landless to call on the government to act and make

² Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 200 of 1993, sections 8(3)(b) and 121.

³ Department of Land Affairs, 1997, White Paper on South African Land Policy par 4.14.2.

land accessible. The government's responsibility to engender land accessibility is, however, not absolute. First, it is only required to take "reasonable legislative and other measures" and secondly, it is only obliged to act "within available resources" to generate conditions that enable citizens to gain access to land (Lahiff & Rugege, 2002:287).

Tenure reform was intended to give secure tenure for those living on "other people's land" for a long time and yet without secure rights. The targeted beneficiaries included farm workers (current and former), sharecroppers and labor tenants. The policy also aimed to protect those living on communal land without secure rights. Due to the segregation and apartheid policies that denied Africans access to land, many of them migrated to the cities or to commercial farms in search of employment. These people never acquired land or other secure rights on land and lived on land on the basis of a government permit or permission to occupy or with the consent of the landowner. Such permissions were, in most cases, withdrawn, thereby making dwellers to be squatters. This eviction of these people was often ensured through the Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act 52 of 1951 which consequently move them to the crowded homelands. In the communal land areas, people land was held under customary law which did not permit individual land ownership. Instead, people had use rights under customary law, which although conventionally protected, could be arbitrarily seized by traditional leaders. With the dawn of democracy, it was crucial to improve security of tenure for all helpless occupiers of land as part of an effort towards the realization of resolving the country's land and agrarian challenges.

Since its ascendancy to power in 1994, the democratic government in South Africa has, relying on the concept/principle of 'willing buyer, willing seller', deployed various land reform mechanisms to address socio-economic challenges. In 1994, South Africa had about 82 million hectares of prime agricultural land which was exclusively in the hands of whites. The democratic government pledged to reallocate 30 per cent of this land (about 24.5 million hectares) to the formerly deprived (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2014). By the end of 2009, the government had acquired only about 6.7 million hectares which was 26 per cent of the targeted 24.5 million hectares. An estimated further 1.25 million hectares were redistributed since 2009, taking the total to 7.95 million hectares; which is only about two fifths of 24.5 million hectares by 2012 (Kirsten, 2012). It has also been noted that about 4 813 farms have been transferred to about 230 886 blacks between 1994 and 2013 (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2014:255). It is therefore not surprising that the land question remains a critical issue in South Africa.

Land and Agrarian Structure in South Africa Today

As indicated above, land reform in South Africa was introduced in the 1990s as part of an effort to redress the racially-skewed land ownership that characterized the apartheid government's accumulation by dispossession economy (Gumede, 2014). With the collapse of the apartheid project, 87 per cent of the rural land was controlled by about 50,000 white commercial farmers as the entire populace had been condemned to homelands (White Paper on Land Reform, 1997). Land reform was therefore aimed at reconfiguring the agrarian structure which was promoted by racial discrimination. It was aimed at achieving equity (in terms of ownership and access of land) and efficiency (in terms of improved land use), while at the same time contributing to the development of the rural economy.

However, the pace and magnitude of land reform by the democratic government elected in 1994 has not been implemented to expected levels. Attempting to redress colonial land injustice while at the same time focusing on the need for economic continuity threw up deep-seated contradictions in policies related to land and the agricultural sector. Seemingly, the more the new administration settled, the more it aligned land and agrarian reform to productive use therefore bolstering the dominance of agribusiness at the expense of the rural majorities in the countryside. It is also not surprising that the democratic government has avoided to address the question of what kind of farming would be ideal for South Africa (as argued in Gumede 2014).

Furthermore, there has been the new Constitution which benefited landowners by protecting their properties. Land and agrarian reform processes therefore recognised the protection contained in the Constitution, and thus, and the agenda that emerged was to acquire land through the 'willing buyer, willing seller' principle which sustained the integrity of private properties. Thus, the protection of private property empowered landowners and private capital to influence the pace and direction of land and agrarian change simply by choosing whether to sell or not and for how much, and thereby continued to accumulate at the expense of the vast poor and landless majorities located in the periphery.

In this context, land and agrarian reform in South Africa has been very slow and perceptibly biased towards agricultural production by a small but highly productive patch of white capitalist farmers (Cousins, 2015). A small number of 'resourced' black farmers have also accessed land for commercial farming while in the countryside some few households have also

received land, and yet it is argued that when considered generally, large-scale farmers and agribusiness have emerged the major beneficiaries of land and agrarian change in South Africa (Greenberg, 2013). While this reflects the unsatisfactory performance of land reform, it also speaks to new government's commitment to promote large corporations as well as some few black owned enterprises (built around the Black Economic Empowerment) which are considered as the bases of the economy. This commitment was more discernible around 1999 when the government started deliberations on how land redistribution could be combined with productive use (e.g. need for the creation and supporting of a commercial farming class of Africans which would compete with established large-scale commercial white farmers). These efforts, however, did not result in any structural change of property ownership given the social and economic structure throughout the agri-food system (Aliber, 2013).

South Africa's agricultural sector has also been integrated into global markets; a process which has generated intense competition, reduced its protection levels, and affected the development of successful business. According to Genis (2013), success within this adversely competitive environment has been secured through the deployment of intensive farm management systems, attention to markets, mechanisation and innovations in technology. This is a change to which the large-scale and well-resourced commercial farmers have readily switched to while their small-scale counterparts are still trying to come to terms with. Larger farmers have also negotiated their survival and growth both by scaling up into profitable businesses such as the sale of farm inputs (e.g. seeds, fertilisers, chemicals, etc.) and machinery and also by moving downstream (i.e. marketing, agro-processing and distribution) (Kirsten, 2011). These developments have, however, resulted in loss of employment as most farming units have cut back their labour requirements as they adopt new technologies. The most affected has been farm workers particularly those who are unskilled much to the strain of their fragile livelihoods.

Therefore, the agrarian structure in South Africa should be the focus of policy, and an understanding of its principal dynamics is crucial in thinking through interventions. The country is undeniably dominated by large-scale commercial farmers, and this arrangement generally dislocate peasant households from geographical spaces that are conducive for agricultural activities. For example, it is reported that South Africa's 43,000 large scale commercial farmers controlled about 80 percent of all the agricultural land area in the 2000s, and also that their average farm sizes had doubled to 2,000 hectares since 1980, regardless of land reforms (Moyo, 2016). It is also reported that during the same period, about 11 million African families eked for a living mostly on less than one hectare each in the former rural

homelands (StatsSA, 1999). The ratio of land ownership between households and large scale commercial farmers was 1:100 hectares. Similarly, in Namibia, as reported by Moyo (2014), 4,456 large-scale farmers held 45 percent of the prime land in 2010, while households held largely semi-arid land. Namibia introduced a land tax in 2016 to be paid by commercial farmers – the land tax was meant to raise funds for the Namibian land reform programme. South Africa could explore this kind of an intervention, depending how it has unfolded in Namibia.

Also in the context of communal areas, the agrarian structure has largely remained unchanged. The rural folk remains largely land disenfranchised, and those who have sustained their farming systems are doing so in family gardens rather than farms as they either do not have them, or their fields are far from their own places of residences and or the pieces of lands they have do not have protection from both wildlife and livestock. Production, in these conditions, is very minimal and is therefore largely meant for household consumption with surpluses only sold to neighbours and passers-by and rarely in the formal market. Some of these households also own livestock and flocks (sheep and goats) (StatsSA, 2011), albeit, in very limited numbers.

According to Binswanger-Mkhize (2014), in 2013, about 6,6 per cent of households in the countryside used land for complementary or primary income and only about 45 894 households depended on agriculture as a source of income. If these figures are viewed in the context of Aliber et al. (2006), indicating that 13.9% of those lobbying for land also look forward to using it as a source of income, it can then be noted that the rural households in South Africa are the most vulnerable section of the population. Production in the countryside is important mostly for ensuring individual households' food security, while the rest of the households will have to depend on markets for requirements. This makes most of the households very vulnerable and food insecure. Cousins (2015:8) posits that “the uncertain economics of labour-intensive, small-scale maize production, in a market dominated by large-scale producers, along with severe practical constraints such as lack of fencing, are probably the main reason for the decline of cropping”.

There are also two categories of a small number of black small-scale, market-oriented farmers in the countryside of South Africa. The existence of these categories question the view that the peasantry has been completely proletarianized and that proletarians lack the capacity, the skills, and the aspirations to engage in agricultural activities in South Africa (Beinart & Delius 2014; Cousins 2013). Evidence shows that both rural and urban dwellers in South Africa engage in agricultural activities, and that land is being occupied today both for settlement as well as for

agricultural activities such as in Zabalaza where land is occupied for livestock production (Jacobs, 2018).

The first category of smallholder farmers in South Africa comprises of smallholders who are located in communal areas where agricultural activities are either their main or extra source of income. Their clients are mainly individual households, vendors and other small fruit and vegetable outlets mainly located by the roadside, taxi ranks and in a few designated areas. For these reasons, the activities of these farmers are rarely documented due to these unclear value chains. These farmers are also under the risk of having their land be confiscated should a land audit on performance be conducted as there is some evidence of underperformance. The other category comprises of a small number of 'emerging' black farmers who are operating on private land some of which acquired through land reform, and are market-oriented farmers. While most of these farmers might be still relying on household labour on the farm, most of them are doing well, and supply their products within controlled value chains, and thus, their activities are noted and recorded by policy-makers.

There is also a category of small to medium-scale commercial farmers who operate on private land. Most of these farmers are white although a significant number of some extroverted Africans who continuously call for affirmative action and the redistribution of resources have also come on board. It would seem that most of these farmers do not operate on full-time basis. They combine either paid employment in the formal sector, engagement in other small businesses in the informal sector or pursue careers in politics, and only engage in farming as a hobby rather than a full-fledged business nor as a means of survival. This category represents the long-term tendency of capital accumulation to reproduce a working class with dual features. This capital accumulation tendency, by both disfiguring and shattering down the conditions for flourishing peasant growth and by its failure to provide the conditions basic for the emergence of an established proletariat has, according to Jacobs (2018:885), "resulted in the formation of a class of direct producers that combine social characteristics from two extremely different classes, the peasantry and the proletariat".

There are also some medium to large-scale commercial farmers who are operating on private land. Most of these are white and currently feel insecure in the context of the 'land expropriation without compensation' debate. A good number of these farmers succeed; some operate under strain while a considerable number appears unable to survive on farming alone. There exists a considerable percentage of underperforming farmers in this category, and a good

number are likely to lose land for redistribution in cases where a land audit is implemented to verify performance.

The most envied category comprises of large-scale farmers most of whom are white and operate on 'private land'. These are well-resourced farmers who make use of complex, specialised, capital-intensive farming systems, and who produce for export or for agro-processing and large distributors and they always produce in bulk. In many discussions, this category is viewed as the backbone of the country's agricultural sector.

Reforming Land and Agrarian Structure

One of the challenges confronting South Africa is lack of clarity regarding land reform policies. This has prompted some land experts to call for a review and reconsideration of the existing agricultural policies. The first step, of such a huge project would be, as argued by Cousins (2015), an analysis of past experiences, both of South Africa as a country and of the land reform experience itself as a project with much emphasis being placed on understanding the socio-politico-economic dynamics that underlie agrarian structure. There were a number of farmers who thrived on state support for agricultural activities during apartheid. With the collapse of this notorious project, these farmers have become disenfranchised, and although they still own land, they have become so marginal and most have already taken up other sources of income to complement what they get from agricultural activities.

There are also some black farmers who owned land and yet have for long relocated into towns and cities to pursue other opportunities. They still have one or two workers on the farm or have left the farm in the custody of an aging family member and only come on the farm once after a few months. Some of these lands are located in agro-ecological zones where crop production is not sustainable except under irrigation and under the use of expensive inputs such as fertilisers and specialised seeds. The lands of these farmers constitute an important resource for land redistribution. Some of the lands are already under irrigation, albeit, the need for specialised inputs which are too expensive for such farmers and therefore, render them underperforming. If the government should target this land, it could be acquired relatively cheap and easy as most of these farmers are likely to be willing to dispose land, exit from farming and relocate in urban centres where they can pursue other economic opportunities other than farming.

There is a category of the medium-scale farmers most of whom are white and operate on 'private land'. This category should not be made to immediately lose its lands in land redistributions as doing so will not only result in the disruption and shattering down of their livelihoods, but it will also undermine food security as most of the country's locally consumed fruits and vegetables are produced by this category. Instead, these farmers should be mobilised to make cooperatives with emerging black farmers so that they can also gain experience before they can take over. Timeframes should be set in consultation with the various structures that oversee political and economic transformation projects in the country.

There is also a group of high producer farmers who use specialised farming and seem to be highly productive. Most of these are into horticulture and also specialise in products that can be exported. Several of these farmers operate as cooperatives although others as individuals. Although some of these cooperatives are dominated by whites, a few resourced Africans have also been accommodated as part of transformation efforts and also to include some black faces in order to boost leverage in the lobbying for state support. It is crucial that, in the meantime, these farmers be left undisturbed in order to stabilise export production and also to ensure that there are enough products for the country's growing urban population. This will also enable that the country continues to produce enough food for its population without importing basics. This would be in consistency with Ndhlovu (2018), Cousins (2015) and also with Gumede (2014:14) who argues that while "land and agrarian reform must represent a radical and rapid break from the past [it should not] interrupt agricultural production and food security." Sender (2014) suggests that this category of farmers, instead of confiscating their lands, they should be mobilised to make a contributory role in the land reform process through providing supportive mechanisms such as training small and medium scale farmers, and also by improving the wages and conditions of their farm workers.

The beneficiaries of the South Africa land reform should be the black smallholder farmers who already produce various crops types and livestock for consumption and for sale in markets and among themselves. In the case of Zimbabwe, there is increasing evidence which shows that these small farmers, whether considered hectare for hectare or overall, they produce more than large scale farmers (Scoones, Morongwe, Mavedzenge, Murimbarimba, Mahenehene & Sukume, 2011). It has also been found that smallholders produce more grain crops which are recorded by the Grain Marketing Board more than what the previous large-scale producers produced in Zimbabwe (Ndhlovu, 2018). In this view, smallholders have the prospective to

begin a process of ‘accumulation from below’, in which accessibility to more agricultural land and other resources, and as well as well-designed state or private sector support could provide the basis for increased production by these farmers. Most of the smallholder farmers currently sell their products (crops and livestock) to informal traders or sell their produce by the roadside in bakkies or to each other, and avoid complex value chains such as those presented by supermarket chains and formal markets. These farmers therefore need various types of capital as support, both in the production and in the marketing of their produce.

In the context of South Africa however, a marked failure by smallholders has been widely reported with only some pockets of success being recorded especially in horticulture (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2014). Despite the pace of land reform itself being dismal, Cousins and Aliber (2013) indicate that those who received land are still active on only 40 per cent of all the land that was given out. There have also been reports of declining agricultural production (Lahiff & Li, 2012) and deteriorating livelihoods for the beneficiaries of projects (Binswanger-Mkhize, 2014), and the argued is justifiable that land reform in South Africa has failed in the first 20 years when juxtaposed against the objectives of land reform since 1994.

Natural capital in the form of these goods is critical for smallholder households to engage in meaningful production. The natural capital would provide smallholders with free services and free goods (fertile soil, water for human and animal consumption, and for crops, etc.). Financial capital in form of personal savings, loans and credit to smallholders have the prospective to generate substantial amounts of financial capital. The most important form of physical capital, which should come from the state and especially local municipalities, should be the physical capital which is in form of transport, roads, markets, water supply, education and health facilities. In most cases, smallholder production is often undermined by lack of adequate physical capital including lack of markets and bad roads.

The state should also assist that market-oriented smallholders be contracted to supply public institutions as part of an effort to ensure that they have reliable markets. Over time, as these farmers will gain experience and as their farms become more capitalised, they will gain entrance to formal markets and some complex value chains and thus begin to compete with and eat into large-scale farmers. This will then engender a gradual, smooth and transparent transformation in the agricultural sector without disrupting and undermining food sovereignty. The government could also consider putting in place enforcements that promote the purchase of smallholder products by supermarkets. Smallholder farmers should also be mobilised to

form groupings that will give them leverage when lobbying for support from the state and that will also enable them to purchase products in bulk and also to market collectively, and thus reduce the high transaction costs of their agricultural activities. Conditions for smallholder farmers to form linkages with medium and larger commercial farmers should also be created – business linkages play a big role in capacitating smaller players in an economy.

It is important that the government be innovative in ensuring conducive environments that can boost production for smallholders. With most of them located in former homelands, and largely operating on dryland and also largely focused on maize production, the government should consider the provision of irrigation facilities as well as extension services. While operating in their current conditions, smallholders cannot be expected to develop as a business, and neither will they, at any time, be able to compete with medium scale producers or with large scale farmers. As observed by Cousins (2015), taking into account that the prospects for smallholder-oriented agrarian reform are largely limited to the drier regions of the country, the call by the National Development Plan that irrigation services need to be put in place are not only relevant, but should be accelerated as part of the much-needed intervention for smallholders. This will enable them not to only depend on rain-fed crops, but can also grow a variety of crops across all the seasons of the year. The installation of irrigation services will boost employment opportunities in farming, boost livelihoods development and also ensure that smallholders operate within situations that can allow them to learn and to development rather than remaining as subsistence farmers.

In most rural areas particularly in black communities, it is mainly women who engage in crop and vegetable production. Even where the family owns a farm, it is still mostly women: the mother of the farm owner, his wife or eldest daughter, that run the farm while the men will be in urban areas pursuing other income opportunities in order to supplement what is obtained on the farm. Women in communal areas grow crop, mainly tomatoes, spring onions and leaf vegetables in gardens within the homestead to produce extra food for household consumption. In view of this, land and agrarian reform should aim to strengthen their household food security. This can be through the provision of inputs, fencing facilities, water tanks and training. Female producers could also be made to benefit from a variety of networks – including political and communal connections and cooperatives predicated on cultural beliefs and other social attributes (Ndhlovu, 2018). These networks are particularly important in the sharing of both farming and social knowledge, exchanging experiences and facilitating farming cooperation

among households. In addition, there is also need to ensure that female small producers have secure tenure as most of them are located within patriarchal setups.

Considering that the success of the South Africa land reform is predicated on the country's ability to adopt and dovetail a complex mixture of sound policies, focus should be placed on the design and execution of policies that are not only pro-poor, but also that ensure the realisation of food security in the country. The government, in aiming to redress historical land dispossessions by colonial greed, should increase the amount of land to be redistributed to Africans rather than settling on the mere 30% as this will continue to be a security risk, not only in rural areas, but also in urban areas where sporadic and violent land occupations for settlement are already underway.

It is thus crucial that the government and designated policy-makers be cautious and be sensitive when designing land and agrarian reform policies and programmes that are meant for rural development. Essentially, it is imperative that the current land reform policy be reviewed and that agro-ecological adaptation be considered in the collective efforts of improving the livelihoods and performance of smallholders and also to restructure the current agrarian structure. The department responsible for land and agrarian issues need to develop and source funds for an action plan to develop and diversify agricultural activities for smallholders and emerging black farmers.

The country's agrarian land reform also requires a significant change in implementation. Arguably, this should however be not carried outside the Constitution as was the case in Zimbabwe. The reform should be based principally on family farmer models from complementary food production to small commercially oriented household farms. It should also be based on involvement by the beneficiaries in identifying, planning, implementing and financially managing their projects. This would enable officials to focus on identifying land to be acquired, and investment plans, and the supervision of the financial management and implementation of the projects, thereby greatly relieving their capacity constraints.

There is also an important need for the provision of start-up capital to land reform beneficiaries. The government, both at national and local level, should provide support in the establishment of various finance institutions and input and technology suppliers to support emerging farmers. Consequently, emerging farmers and smallholders should be accorded an opportunity to pay affordable prices for the agricultural inputs and equipment. Financial support to beneficiaries

should range from production to marketing facilities. The aim of such funding will be to advance, support and finance practicable and productive agricultural and farming activities on land which is suitable for such purposes. Such funding is imperative in kick-starting and maintaining production activities through the acquisition of production inputs, and therefore, is likely to reconfigure the current agrarian structure in a meaningful manner.

Training on both subsistence and commercial farming should be provided at all levels of community development structures particularly for government officials who are directly involved in the design, planning and implementation of rural development projects. The planning and execution of land reform processes always require that the high magnitude programmes be carried out with proper planning. Planning must avoid disorganised and chaotic settlement happening within game and wildlife areas where crop production has been proven to be not viable such as was the case in the south eastern part of Zimbabwe in the land reform of the 2000s. The planning of such projects should take into consideration the need of beneficiaries for such important facilities as health and social service delivery systems.

One of South Africa's challenges with regard to land and agrarian transformation since 1994 has been limited state capacity; including weak political will, lack of a decisive political vision, skills, etc. There is therefore a need for political mobilisation across all government structures to support land and agrarian reform. This should also be accompanied by an improved budget for land reform. There is also a need for the training of officials and those who provide extension services so that meaningful assistance can be given to farmers. Regarding state capacity, government has to have requisite capacities and be appropriately organized in order to be able to handle much needed, if not overdue, land and agrarian reforms.

In the pursuit of all the proposed efforts and commitments, the creation of 'sovereign programmes' which are agricultural-oriented is imperative. This refers to programmes [to be] initiated by South Africans and other Africans, for South Africans and Africans, and which are free from the manipulative tendencies of the global capitalist system. Industrialisation must be the goal of sovereign projects. This should be part the continued journey towards industrialisation without which development cannot be realised. The development of agriculture itself is impossible without efficient modern industries to support it. The South Africa government should be able to walk on this path by itself, and should shun the intentions to manipulate often through aid by Euro-North institutions or by so-called agencies of agrarian development.

Prospects for Food Sovereignty

South Africa is generally considered a food-secure country but it is reported that one in four people experiences hunger, and more than half of the country's population particularly those located in the countryside are at risk of severe hunger (Oxfam 2014). It would seem that the situation has been worsened by the 2007/8 global economic crisis which has led to increased demand for land and other natural resources – the economic recession has undoubtedly made things worse. Much of the country's lands have been redirected into the production of crops that can be exported for foreign currency while the production of grains and crops that could ensure food security has been negatively affected. The 2007/8 global crisis and other Euro-North pressures, arguably, continue to undermine, discipline and frustrate the country's efforts towards making decisions on what is best for it in terms of agricultural activities. In the context of southern Africa where South Africa is located, the global economic crisis was accompanied by land grabbing by Euro-North governments and private capital (Chambati, Mazwi & Mberi, 2018). This has greatly affected households whose livelihoods are dependent on agricultural activities (Patnaik, 2011).

As such, there have been calls for justice by the landless, by small-scale farmers, by farmworkers who are now increasingly finding it difficult to sustain livelihoods, and by small-scale fishers whose rights at sea are increasingly being reduced. South Africa currently experiences food protests often times linked to 'service delivery issues.' It was in this context that a two-day convention (i.e. Food Sovereignty Assembly) was convened by various institutions and activists representing the hungry, the landless and the exploited of the country on 28 February to 1 March 2015. The Assembly drew together organisations involved in agrarian, water and land transformation, small-scale farming, and activists against food price increases in Johannesburg to initiate the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign and Alliance.

South Africa has entered a tricky phase. The accumulation of land by the peasantry is already underway, for instance. The proposal for land redistribution without compensation features as part of the collective and broader project of land and agrarian reforms that seeks to ensure that all people, particularly those located in the countryside, and who are dependent on land can put

their labour to productive use in farming and improve the livelihoods. This could translate into the household food security.

The emotive issue of expropriation without compensation should be considered against food sovereignty. Gumede (2014:14), among others, made a point that while “land and agrarian reform must represent a radical and rapid break from the past [it should not] interrupt agricultural production and food security.” Government could consider an option of expropriation with compensation. The challenge is determining the amount of compensation. There is also a political argument that funds that will go to compensating farmers are the very same funds that should be used for advancing wellbeing in South Africa. It might very well be that a national dialogue on the envisaged land and agrarian reforms could help deal with these complex issues. South Africa should look closer to Zimbabwe and Namibia, among other countries. Zimbabwe is compensating farmers for the work done on the land – not for the value of the land. South Africa can factor in the colonial and apartheid injustices in determining what to compensate some of the farmers for as and when land is expropriated with compensation. A possible lesson from Namibia could be the land tax levied on large scale commercial farms in order to raise funds that can be used in the land reform processes.

Conclusion

While the majority of South Africans may not be depending on agricultural activities for incomes and for livelihoods as is the case in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Namibia, it is crucial to recognise that there are some pockets of communities located in the remotest countryside which have no other means of survival, and to which land is life and blood. To those communities, land is important in many important ways including consumption (of fruits, mushrooms, game and honey), grazing for livestock, collection of firewood and cultural ceremonies. It is therefore important that a reconfiguration of the current agrarian structure be implemented in a manner which can enhance the emancipation from oppression and poverty for these communities.

The proposed interventions in dealing with the land and agrarian issues should be engaged with, at minimum, both in the context of food sovereignty and in dealing with the historical injustices. In all the efforts, the countryside should be taken into account – the works of the late Sam Moyo emphasized the importance of the countryside, also in the context of the national question. It is in this context that the paper takes a pragmatic approach than a rigid

ideological position. Various options should be pursued and given time to assess results of the various interventions. It might however be late for that because the emotive nature of the land question often does not give room for manoeuvre.

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