FEATURE

THE LAND IS THE ECONOMY

Revisiting the land question

LLOYD SACHIKONYE

This article revisits Zimbabwe's land question from the vantage point of having been written five years after the 'fast-track' land redistribution programme was launched. Without belittling the accomplishments of land reform in the first 19 years of the country's independence, it is generally clear that the sweeping programme of 2000-2003, the most comprehensive of its kind, created a new paradigm. Clearly, the consequences will take many years to work themselves out through the country's political, economic and social fabric.

The article briefly defines what may be termed 'old' and 'new' versions of Zimbabwe's land question before outlining the salient aspects of the reform process itself. It then assesses the outcomes of the redistribution, the apparent lacuna between 'land' and 'agrarian' reform, and the debate that the reform process itself has kindled. Transforming land distribution into qualitative agrarian reform has proved an Achilles heel in the arguments put forward by the proponents of the fast-track programme. Finally, recommendations are provided as to what is necessary to secure land and agrarian reform in the short, medium and long term.

Introduction

Struggles over access to resources historically have constituted the stuff of politics, and continue to do so in modern societies. In Southern Africa, one of the most profound causes of such struggles has related to the ownership and control of land. This question assumed its most acute form in former settler-colonies, and it was in one of them, Zimbabwe, that contestation over land took its sharpest form between 2000 and 2003.

The 'old' and 'new' land questions

In Southern Africa, the historical 'land question' centred on the forms and consequences of unjust expropriation of land by colonial states. In most instances, the best-endowed land was owned and occupied by white farmers, while some of the indigenous people who had previously lived on it were evicted and assigned inferior land. The patterns of land allocation under colonial rule were thus defined in terms of conquest. Zimbabwe was no exception to this pattern. For instance, under the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, some 51 per cent of land was reserved for white settlers (who numbered about 50,000), 30 per cent for African reserve areas (for about 1 million blacks), and the remainder for commercial companies and the colonial government.[1] When what was then Rhodesia, gained independence in 1980,

LLOYD SACHIKONYE is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the University of Zimbabwe.

the pattern of land ownership was as follows. Some 6,000 white farmers owned 15.5 million hectares; 8,500 black farmers operating on a small scale held about 1.4 million hectares; and approximately 4.5 million communal farmers eked out subsistence livelihoods on 16.4 million hectares. Most of the communal land was located in the drier ecological regions where the soils were poor.[2]

Against this background, the principal elements of the land question were focused on historical injustice and inequity. Inevitably, the demands of the colonised and dispossessed revolved around redress in the form of land redistribution, and fairness in the form of equitable access to sufficient resources to make the land productive. These demands continued to be made after independence, because the pace of land reform was slow. The focus on the land question was thus narrowed to recovery of land from white commercial farmers, for redistribution amongst communal farmers who were landless or lacked sufficient land, and to a smaller extent to unemployed farm workers. Promoting access to land for the majority of the indigenous people was expected to create stability in land property rights.[3]

For the first decade of independence, the land question thus revolved around how funds could be mobilised to purchase farms for the resettlement programme. Much of the academic and policy discussion related to the effect of the Lancaster House constitutional constraints on land redistribution, especially in the form of the 'willing seller, willing buyer' principle, and the amount of British funding provided for resettlement.[4] The narrative and debate arising from writing on these matters will not be reviewed here. The observation may be made, however, that this narrow perspective on the land question (that is, an exclusive focus on resettlement of farmers operating on a small scale through the 'willing seller, willing buyer' approach) was inadequate to respond to other, growing, pressures for reform. These included the black bourgeoisie's aspirations to own land; pressure for tenure reform; and the imperative to link land reform to a broad development strategy. More generally, the desire for historical redress through restitution continued unabated.

Against the background of economic structural adjustment in the 1990s, and the economic hardships associated with it, the pressure to broaden the ambit of the land question (and the means of its resolution) intensified. This took political form in the demands increasingly made by the war veterans and the black economic empowerment groups. The backlog on resettlement also remained considerable. About 90,000 of a projected total of 162,000 remained to be resettled, although funding for this purpose had more or less dried up.

In the 1990s there was a discernible shift in how the land question was interpreted. In an attempt to redesign its land policy, the Zimbabwe government indicated that the promotion of 'emergent large-scale black farmers' would form part of its thrust to address the land question. There were some 500 such farmers in the mid-1990s, and perhaps about 800 (compared with 4,500 white farmers) by the end of the 1990s. There was clearly a growing number of blacks who aspired to become members of a new agrarian middle class and who supported the type of land reform that would release resources to them. Another new element was an emphasis on land tenure reform. In general, land redistribution was expected to enable the country to attain both self-sufficiency in domestic food production and a balance between equity, productivity and sustainability.[5] As can be seen, the parameters of the land question were being significantly extended in the last decade of the 20th century.

The fast-track reform programme (FTRP) that began in 2000 was the catalyst for what became a new land question. The programme entailed a comprehensive redistribution of land that was accomplished with considerable chaos, disorder and violence. As about 11 million hectares changing hands within a three-year period, it was the largest property transfer ever to occur in the region in peacetime.[6] The new elements it introduced to the land question arose from several factors.

First, there was a replacement of nearly 4,000 white farmers whose land had been transferred by the state to 7,200 black commercial farmers and 127,000 black recipients of small

farms by October 2003. The stage was thus set for a new large-scale farming class under the A2 model and a household-based small-scale farming class under the A1 model. A1 and A2 are models for land reform introduced during the fast track land reform programme that was instituted in the year 2000. A completely new set of social relations were to emerge as a consequence. In due course, there would be struggles and conflicts over ownership of this newly acquired land.

Second, there was massive displacement of farm workers as an accompaniment to the eviction of white farmers. The fate of the approximately 200,000 farm workers was to constitute yet another element of the new land question. Disputes over land and housing rights were to develop between these displaced workers and the new farming classes.

Third, the resumption of production on the newly acquired farms would pose a challenge whose outcome would reinforce or undermine the case for fast track reform. The collapse of the levels of productivity is probably the most important issue the FTRP programme has raised. The link between agriculture and other industries, and the challenge of resuscitating the communal areas are two further questions that need to be considered.

The outcomes of the fast-track programme

A considerable amount of literature on how the FTRP was implemented between 2000 and 2003 already exists; its scope ranges from commissioned official reports to early independent analytical assessments.[7] In addition, there are interesting blow-by-blow accounts of the process by some of farmers who were affected.[8] There are also useful evaluative accounts that cover the later stages of the FTRP.[9] There is therefore little need to revisit the narrative on the programme except where it contributes to the argument of this article.

To put it schematically, the first phase of the reform process, the onset of the 'land occupations', started soon after the referendum on the government-sponsored constitution in February 2000 and continued in the build-up to the June 2000 general elections. In this phase there were no officially defined targets or any clear direction to the occupations. The elements of orchestration, coercion and violence created a concoction of disorder and lawlessness that was ill suited to a reform process. There was considerable tension between the executive and judiciary branches of the state over the undermining of the rule of law during the land occupations. In the two years that followed some judges were forced to resign because of a restructuring of the judiciary. This process resulted in the appointment of judges who were more sympathetic to the government's position on land.

In the period between July 2000 and the end of 2002 violence and lawlessness continued to disrupt production and undermine human security. From July 2000 onwards, the government defined the parameters of the land distribution process (also termed *jambanja*) more clearly. It was to be implemented at an accelerated pace through a fast-track programme, under the provisions of which 1 million hectares would initially be acquired to resettle 30,000 households. Thereafter another 4 million hectares would be expropriated to accommodate about 120,000 households within three years.

However, the target of the programme soon grew exponentially: from 5 million hectares to 9 million, and then to 11 million in the following two years. It was now envisaged that altogether 300,000 households and 51,000 black commercial farmers would receive land under the A1 and the A2 models respectively. In reality, however, only about 127,000 households and 7,200 commercial farmers had been allocated land by mid-2003.

Although the government announced that the programme would be complete by August 2002, this was not to be. Land occupations continued until mid-2003, and then on a diminished scale in 2004. Although the government began to instil some order and regulation into the fast-track process from mid-2003, intermittent occupations of farms and evictions of farmers continued, even into 2005. This last phase of the process included the 'land grab' by the black elite, in contravention of the government's 'one person, one farm' policy. There was considerable resistance to this policy.

Conflicts between the new commercial farmers and settlers on small farms also broke out from time to time during this phase.[10]

Against the background of this controversial and turbulent land reform process the author attempts to assess its outcome in terms of land ownership, production patterns and emerging social relations.

Clearly, the land transfers resulting from the occupations were substantial. As was observed above, this was the largest change in ownership of property in the region, and it happened extremely rapidly. Ninety per cent of the 4,500 white commercial farmers were evicted from their land under new land legislation. Very few of them had received compensation at the time of writing. While some began to farm in Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Nigeria, most of them have stayed on in Zimbabwean cities and towns. Meanwhile, as already noted, under the A1 model an estimated 127,000 farmer households were allocated small parcels of land that amounted to 4.23 million hectares. Some 7,200 black commercial farmers received 2.19 million hectares under the A2 model.[11] As Tables 1 and 2 show, the extent of land redistribution has been quite significant by any standard. By July 2003, the amount of

Table 1 Land distribution prior to the FTRP, 2000

Category	Area (million ha) June 2000	%
Large-scale commercial	11.8	30
Small-scale commercial	1.4	4
Communal area	16.4	41
Resettlement area	3.7	9
National and urban parks	6.0	15
State land	0.3	1
Total	**39.6**	**100**

Source: Utete Report, 2003

Table 2 Land ownership patterns after the FTRP, 2003

Category	Area (million ha) June 2003	%
A1	4.2	11
A2	2.2	4
Old resettlement area	3.7	9
Communal area	16.4	41
Large-scale commercial	2.6	6
Small-scale commercial	1.4	4
National and urban parks	6.0	15
State land	0.3	1
Other	2.8	7
Total	**39.6**	**100**

Source: Utete Report, 2003

Table 3 Allocation patterns and take-up rates per province

Province	Model A1	Model A2	Number of HH* beneficiaries		Take-up rate	
	ha	ha	A1	A2	A1	A2
Midlands	513,672	181,966	16,619	229	90	48
Masvingo	686,612	753,300	22,670	773	95	79
Manicaland	195,644	77,533	11,019	463	92	42
Matabeleland South	683,140	191,697	8,923	271	100	100
Matabeleland North	543,793	142,519	9,901	191	120	94
Mashonaland East	302,511	250,930	16,702	1,646	93	45
Mashonaland West	792,511	369,995	27,052	2,003	97	50
Mashonaland Central	513,195	230,874	14,756	1,684	89	73
Total	4,231,080	2,198,814	127,192	7,260	97	66

**HH = households
Source: Utete Report, 2003

Furthermore, a new land law stipulated maximum sizes for farms per agro-ecological region. Although these sizes have not always been fully adhered to, these were as follows.

Table 4 Natural regions and maximum farm sizes

Natural region	Maximum farm size (ha)
1	250
2a	350
2b	400
3	500
4	1,500
5	2,000

land used for large-scale commercial farming had shrunk to 2.6 million hectares, from 11.8 million in 1999.

In sum, the FTRP involved a very radical and wholesale transfer of land from one class of owners to a new class of black farmers, whether their new land holdings were small or large. To that extent, land-ownership patterns underwent a massive change.

What alteration was there in production patterns under the FTRP? To what extent has the allocated land been utilised for production of both food and industrial crops?

A distinctive trend in most agricultural production since redistribution has been a decline in output over the past four years, although there have been one or two exceptions. For example, maize production declined from an average annual output of about 1.7 million tonnes in the mid-1990s to between 0.9 million and 1 million tonnes in 2000-2004. Between 2001-2002 and the present, the country has needed to import maize to meet its population's nutritional requirements. From being a regional breadbasket, Zimbabwe has become a food importer. Similarly, wheat production has fallen by about 20 per cent from the average annual output in the mid-1990s. Declines in the production of soya beans and groundnuts have also been reported.[12] In industrial crops, from an average annual output of about 200 million kilograms, tobacco production plummeted to

65 million in 2003-2004.[13] There was also a smaller drop (of about 10 per cent) in the cotton output of both large-scale and small-scale farmers during this period.[14] Significantly, the production of sugar, tea and coffee has generally remained steady since the beginning of land reform in 2000. Finally, there appear to have been small increases in the production of paprika, citrus and vegetables between 2000 and 2004, as well as in floriculture.[15]

This overview of production trends provides a much more mixed picture than is often painted of the impact of the land reform programme on agricultural production. While there has been a collapse in some sub-sectors, not all of them have suffered big declines, despite the chaos that accompanied the implementation of the reform. This phenomenon needs to be explained. The drop in maize and tobacco yields is partly because of contraction in the numbers of white commercial farmers engaged in growing these crops. Also, their intensive farming methods, which were aided by irrigation, have not yet been replicated on black farms, whether large or small. Few of the new farmers have the financial resources and technical skills required to cultivate tobacco and maize with equal success. This is not the case with cotton production, because small farmers produced the bulk of the crop even before the reform process began. In consequence, yields of cotton have been only marginally affected under the FTRP. Accurate production figures for horticulture are not easily accessible, so little can be said about that aspect of agriculture.

The explanation for the sustained levels in the production of sugar, tea and coffee is that these crops fall mainly under the domain of large corporate plantations. Although some of their land has been listed for state appropriation, the day-to-day operations of these plantations have been very little affected by land reform.

It would appear that the productivity levels of farmers who are active on a small scale are still relatively low. These levels may be compared with those of white commercial farmers recorded in 2001. The yield per hectare for the following crops grown by resettled people with small farms in 2003 is shown in Table 5.

Clearly there is a huge difference between the productivity levels of the white farmers operating on a large scale, who have now largely been expelled from the farms, and those of the resettled farmers who are working smaller farms. The comparison cannot be extended to include the productivity of the resettled 7,200 black farmers operating on larger-scale farms, because the information was not available to the author at the time of writing. However, the production levels of the new owners of large farms are likely to be a fraction of those achieved by the evicted white farmers. In sum, the land that was taken now produces much lower yields per cultivated hectare. The larger number of new farmers (occupying 130,000 small-scale and 7,200 commercial farms, as previously stated) has not made an immediate positive impact on production levels. Lack of skills, experience and financial resources hamper the productivity of new farmers. It is likely to take many years before the productivity levels achieved by the white commercial farms can be attained.

Another significant outcome of the FTRP is

Table 5 Productivity per hectare on resettled farms and large-scale commercial farms

Product	Small resettled farms in 2003 (kg per ha)	Large commercial farms in 2001 (kg per ha)
Maize	596	4,809
Wheat	1,032	5,741
Flue-cured tobacco	888	2,811
Cotton	507	2,232
Soya beans	421	2,505

Source: Central Statistical office, 2002, 2004

an emerging rearrangement of social relationships in the agrarian sector, caused by the massive scale of land redistribution. Admittedly, given the short time frame of five years, the present situation is still fluid. The predominant relationships before the resettlement programme began were those between the 4,500 white farmers and 320,000 black farm workers. These have now been replaced by relationships between the resettled farmers who have been allocated large and small farms and the remaining farm workers (estimated as numbering between 80,000 and 90,000) and 200,000 workers no longer employed on farms. By and large, the resettled farmers have been the primary beneficiaries of land reform; but this has tended to happen at the expense of the farm workers. It is ironic that the government authorities see the 'success' of reform as consisting in the creation of 127,000 small farms and 7,200 large ones, while apparently paying little attention to the 200,000 farm worker households that have been displaced by the process.

As observed elsewhere, the relationship between the occupiers who wish to become farmers and the farm workers was uneasy during the 'land grab' between 2000 and 2003.[16] Farm workers were viewed as standing between the aspirant farmers and their goal, which was seizing ownership from the white commercial farmers who employed the workers. In some instances, clashes between the two groups occurred. The occupiers had a vested interest in disrupting production on farms so that the white commercial farmers would leave, or share their farms with them through subdivision. During the occupations, therefore, they viewed the farm workers as representing a buffer between the white farmers and themselves. At the same time, the farm workers were hostages to the situation: they might have wished to stake a claim on land, but they could not agitate for it openly except through their union, the General and Agricultural Plantation Workers Union (GAPWUZ). However, some farm workers did join in the occupations, although not on the farms on which they were employeded.[17] For most farm workers, however, this was not the preferred option. They hoped to retain their jobs, or to be provided with land for resettlement in their own right.

Those farm workers who have continued to live on the farms find themselves coexisting in an unequal relationship with the resettled farmers. They provide labour to the new class of landowners, particularly black commercial farmers in the A2 category. In the course of one survey, it was observed that "the new farmer looks down on ex-farm workers. These workers are not, in any way, getting paid better than before".[18] On some of the farms, the compounds that originally housed farm workers were appropriated by the landowners and the workers expelled. On others, the new farmers torched the houses of farm workers in a bid to evict them *en masse.* Where the workers were not evicted, the number of jobs declined significantly because of a downscaling of operations. This forced workers to use their compound houses as dormitories while they went searching for employment from farm to farm. The picture of the farm worker class that is emerging is therefore characterised by such descriptions as 'itinerant', 'poor', and consequently 'unstable'.

This perception is reinforced by a recent survey of living conditions of former farm workers in the Mazoe farming district in Mashonaland Central province.[19]

The survey offered five key findings. First, it was found that farm workers' rights to housing on the farms were threatened by the new farmers. Their insecurity was compounded by a lack of government policy on the situation of former farm workers who continued to live on the farms where they had been employed. The authors observed that apart from the threat of eviction, these people were denied access to essential services such as water and electricity if they failed to comply with the dictates of the new owners.[20] Instances of verbal, physical and sexual abuse of farm workers were reported.

Second, for those farm workers who were given employment, jobs were offered mostly on a contract, casual or piecework *(maricho)* basis. Moreover, underpayment was widespread; and some farm workers had had to go for several months without pay.[21] It was scarcely surprising that the new farmers were experiencing a labour shortage. In contrast, the survey found that the few remaining farms under the management of white producers offered better working conditions for farm labourers

in terms of wage levels, leave conditions, accommodation and other incentives. Third, relations between farm workers and the new farmers were still characterised by mutual distrust. This contrasted with the situation on the 'old' and the remaining white-owned farms, where relations were generally good.

Fourth, those who were employed on the new farms and those that had lost their jobs were all in a vulnerable situation that forced them to supplement their incomes through fishing, petty trading, theft and prostitution.[22]

Finally, other types of relationships besides those between the new farmers and workers may yet evolve. Besides providing wage-labour, some farm workers may become new tenants or sharecroppers, especially on underutilised farms. Some resettled farmers may find it necessary to supplement their crop incomes through sub-contracting their labourers to more productive farms that are short of workers.

Relations between the owners of small-scale and large-scale farms have been marked on occasion by mistrust and tension. The eviction of smallholders in 2004 and early 2005 from large farms points to a continuation of conflicts over access to land. (The main reason that was given for the evictions, especially in the three Mashonaland provinces, was that the small farms were on land that had originally been designated as belonging to the A2 model.)

This type of inconsistency is also shown by the instances in which political influence was used to gain access to prime land. The problem of multiple farm ownership by prominent political figures, in contravention of the 'one person, one farm' policy, remains unresolved. Clearly, the Zimbabwe government has been indecisive in its handling of an avaricious but powerful section of the new black landed elite, which includes ministers, parliamentarians, army and police chiefs, and senior civil servants. After five separate audits of land ownership, the government has offered no satisfactory answer to the question of multiple farm ownership. This problem is likely to provide the basis for land-based conflicts in the future.

To illustrate the point that the land redistribution issue has not been solved once and for all, the government has stated that 249,000 people remain on the waiting list for A1 model and 99,000 for A2 model land.[23] If this information is correct, then well under half of those who have applied for land have received it. The problem of land shortage will therefore persist.

The debate over fast-track reform

Surprisingly, perhaps, until recently there has been no major analytical debate over land and agrarian reform in Zimbabwe. Somehow the dominant position has been that it was not a question of whether there should be reform, because the need for it was widely accepted across the political and social spectrums. Even the Commercial Farmers' Union (CFU) recognised and accepted the need for reform, as did the donors from the international community. The only contentious issues concerned the mode, scope and pace of implementation of the reform. In retrospect, it is amazing that, in spite of general recognition of the need for large-scale land redistribution, the issue should have become so polarised in 2000 that the FTRP should have been adopted in an atmosphere of extreme disorder and violence.

It was the mode of implementation of the FTRP that sparked an interesting, if narrow, debate among some scholars. One of the main contributions was by a researcher who has written extensively on post-independence agrarian issues in the country.[24] Sam Moyo made several observations and assertions regarding the land occupations that sparked the FTRP. First, he noted that by the early 1990s a political and social vacuum existed in what has been termed the leadership of the land reform agenda. However, while civil society groups failed to rise to the challenge, the war veterans were able to do so in 1997. Second, the land occupations themselves should have been viewed as a mobilisation process towards "expanding the social constituency of land occupiers and creating political legitimacy for the formalisation of compulsory land acquisition".[25] Third, while Moyo conceded that the widespread occurrence of violence was a negative feature of the land occupations, he argued that its scale had been exaggerated. He added that the violence had not been a contributing factor to maintaining the hold of the ruling ZANU-PF

party over the rural electorate. Fourth, whatever negative consequences had resulted from the occupations, Moyo predicted that they would be of relatively short duration when set against the long-term benefits of "assuaging historical grievances and addressing a problem that has been neglected for 20 years by a model of reconciliation which did not include justice or reparation".[26] In an argument supporting the ends justifying the means, he contended that the authoritarianism that accompanied the FTRP might later yield "a framework for democratisation".[27] Finally, he argued that land transfer would make the agricultural sector more efficient, because many more people would be engaged in producing for the economy. More generally, land distribution would increase the possibility of participation in the economy for a wider range of people, rural and urban, whether they belonged to the poor or the middle classes.[28]

The analytical responses to Moyo's arguments defending the FTRP have focused on the issues of violence and the productivity potential of the new farmers. It is difficult to understand his equivocations over the scale and effects of the violence that accompanied the reform programme. His assertion that violence was not used as a political tool in the elections in 2000 and 2002 is not credible in the light of events. This is why scholars have expressed concern that Moyo's position regards state-sponsored political violence and other perversions of democratic practice as epiphenomenal, or secondary to the issue of radically restructuring the economy.[29] Similarly, Moyo's dismissive attitude to the fate of farm workers under land reform is worrying, especially in view of his own previous work on the workers and the empathy he displayed towards them in the past.[30] While liberal democracy and neo-liberalism have clear limitations in the context of equity and redistribution, authoritarian nationalism of the kind asserted in Zimbabwe during this period was a dangerous development, because it could open the way to corrupt, abusive and exclusionary practices in the implementation of land reform.[31]

Another analyst has observed that while there has been a 'retro' revolution in land redistribution, it is nevertheless 'a genuine revolution'.[32] Chitiyo is aware that there are strong rationalist arguments that the revolution was 'chaotic' and 'unsustainable' and that, far from being a developmental project to promote poverty alleviation, it was essentially a political gimmick that was likely to result in the destruction of the national economy. However, he offers a counter-position: that the revolution was essentially one of agrarian empowerment, not agrarian rationalism, and as such could be termed successful.[33] In sum, this position acknowledges the central role played by violence in the land reform process:[34]

> [T]he state's desperate need for political allies created a tripartite 'survivalist' alliance which gave unprecedented empowerment to hitherto marginalised groups, peasants and war veterans, through the coercive apparatus of the state. The aims were symbiotic: to ensure regime survival … Each project depended on the other, with violence or the threat thereof being the common medium …

This analysis appears to provide a more convincing explanation of the events attendant on the implementation of the FTRP than those that seek to minimise or sanitise the high levels of violence and chaos.

Finally, it is still debatable whether the division of large farms into many small ones will contribute to higher productivity. It has been argued that such a claim is historically contentious.[35] The binary opposition that marks the debate over an inverse relationship between farm size and productivity, and between small and large farms as paths towards development, should be treated with some scepticism. As Bernstein argues:[36]

> [I]n the Southern African context, it cannot be assumed that or simply asserted - as it often is on behalf of redistributive land reform - that land in large agrarian properties is generally (in empirical terms) or necessarily (on deductive grounds) 'underutilised' or otherwise socially 'inefficient'.

Earlier in this article, wide differentials in yields

and productivity on large and small farms after land reform were demonstrated. These statistics undermine the uncritical assumption that small farms are necessarily superior in productivity to large ones.

Conclusion: Towards the future

This article has described the trajectory taken by, and the limitations of, the FTRP. Five years after it was launched, the weaknesses and gaps in the programme remain glaring. However, it is now becoming possible to make a sober review of the programme, free of the heated emotions and flamboyant rhetoric that were unleashed to generate support for it at the time. In the author's view, at least ten sets of issues will need to be addressed, as a matter of urgency, to redress the current shortcomings of the programme. Successful implementation of the recommended measures will depend on a return to political normality, legitimacy and the rule of law by the government.

Legal transfer of land

The continued uncertainty over the legal status of land that has been seized by the state and transferred to individual settler producers under the A1 and A2 models undermines confidence in the land reform process. Delays in the legal transfer of the land affect the resettled, the displaced and the remaining white commercial farmers. This is likely to have a detrimental effect on productive use of the land.[37] There are as yet no clear mechanisms to ensure security of tenure for farmers under either the A1 or the A2 models. Unless clarity is reached on this issue, the new farmers may not be prepared to make substantial investments in their properties and production capacities. The granting of clearly defined land rights and responsibilities would unlock the value of their land, and enable it to be used as collateral for loans that would allow new farmers to develop their land to its full productive potential.[38] The Presidential Land Review Committee has acknowledged that the absence of some form of title for A2 model land was one reason for the low take-up rate,[39] because the resettled farmers could not secure loans from financial institutions owing to the mandatory requirement that they produce collateral support in one form or another. Uncertainty persists over what form of tenure security will be offered: 99-year leases are one option.

An explicit land policy

Astonishingly, in spite of the comprehensive reach of the FTRP, there is no clearly articulated government land policy. Instead the government's actions on land reform and related issues have been characterised by ad hoc and unsystematic interventions. These do not amount to a coherent land policy. Any discussion of matters such as the distribution of land, the allocation of areas for specific land use, land tenure and ownership, and use of the environment should be guided by a fully detailed and ratified national land policy.[40] Such a policy should be debated in appropriate forums before being finalised and adopted. In the meantime, the existing policy documents on land do not anticipate the reach, depth and accelerated pace that characterised the way in which the FTRP was carried out.[41]

Payment of compensation

The issue of payment of compensation to large-scale commercial farmers whose land and equipment were seized has not been addressed systematically. While a small proportion may have received compensation, most have not. Concerns over compensation are in many ways concerns about justice. It has been observed that some donors and other members of the international community may not be prepared to support the land reform process in Zimbabwe financially unless fair compensation is seen to be made to those farmers who were evicted from their land.

At the very least, compensation should be awarded for improvements that the evicted farmers made to the land and for property seized or damaged during the farm occupations. Compensation levels need not be excessive, according to some analysts.[42] Meanwhile, the Utete Report recommends that A2 model

farmers pay for all improvements made by the previous farm owners, such as housing, irrigation facilities, tobacco barns and other infrastructure.[43] They should also pay for standing crops at the time of the transfer of land. If this were to happen, it would lighten the burden on the government to some extent. It would also resuscitate the goodwill of the international community.

Rebuilding skills

Skill levels (which are essential if productivity is to rise) are relatively low on most resettled farms, as was observed in a previous section. Clearly, a significant number of resettled farmers do not have adequate farming skills.[44] Extension support has not been provided for the large new class of growers. The more intensive production processes require skills that government extension services are ill equipped to provide at present. Some organisations have suggested that a programme should be introduced to recover a major portion of the skills that have been displaced by the FTRP.[45] For example, they propose that a package of incentives should be offered to persuade displaced farmers and former farm workers who possess farming experience and skills to move back into agriculture. Such a package would combine a restitution of property rights, and the offering of soft loans and grants. It would also offer opportunities to former farm workers that would improve the productivity levels of commercial agriculture.

Rebuilding infrastructure and services

The infrastructure that is urgently needed in the agricultural areas includes roads, bridges, irrigation facilities, livestock dipping tanks and marketing depots. In addition, the new farmer households need schools, clinics and housing. Currently, much of the existing infrastructure is woefully inadequate or in a dilapidated state.

There is also a pressing demand for credit and inputs such as seed and fertiliser. A major weakness in the land reform process has been the inadequate provision of these essential requirements for new farmers, which has led to the current low production levels. The challenge of building an adequate input supply chain should be addressed as a matter of urgency. However, the manufacture and distribution chain for farming necessities must be sustained by a financial structure that affords credit facilities to all farmers. The current system appears to favour the interests of large commercial farmers; it has not been sufficiently responsive to the needs of farmers resettled on small properties. The founding of an agricultural bank would go some way towards meeting these needs. Even so, such a bank would have to make a special effort to cater for those operating on small farms.

There is consensus among analysts that greater competition should be encouraged in the input supply sector, especially for tillage, seed and fertiliser distribution. At present, parastatals such as the District Development Fund (DDF), the Agricultural and Rural Development Authority (ARDA) and the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) dominate the market.[46] The ministries responsible for land and agricultural affairs should consider reviving the input procurement and distribution stakeholder committee, which once played a major role in forecasting and monitoring the availability of various inputs, and in recommending pricing, import and procurement measures. Finally, a United Nations Development Programme study[47] has recommended the setting up of an independent trust fund that would provide resources for the resettlement process including basic infrastructure, equipment, tools, training for capacity-building and technical assistance.

Food security

The land reform process has contributed to the undermining of food security in Zimbabwe. Although drought conditions in 2001-2002 were a factor in the reduction of the grain harvests, the FTRP was largely responsible for destabilising food production, especially in the large-scale commercial farming sector. By 2003, that sector was producing only 10 per cent of the amount of maize that it did in 2000. As a consequence about 50 per cent of the population depended on food aid between 2002 and 2003. In 2004-2005, this figure dropped to about a third of the population. It is imperative

that the government introduce measures and incentives that will restore food production. Only by adopting a more realistic approach and providing pragmatic support to food producers can the government achieve food security for the country's inhabitants and make Zimbabwe not only self-sufficient but a food exporter once more. The government will have to overcome its 'denial syndrome' over the food question if it is to accomplish this. It will have to abandon wishful thinking and propaganda, such as its claims that it was anticipating a harvest of 2.4 million tonnes of maize in 2004.

The issues of productivity, relatively easy and rapid access to credit, and inputs for the owners of large and small farms should be addressed in relation to food security. Pricing incentives could have a vital role to play in encouraging growth in the number and effectiveness of food producers. Furthermore, the country must build strategic grain reserves.

Mediation and participation

Earlier in this article, an allusion was made to the growing number of land-based disputes and conflicts between the owners of large and small farms, and between farmers and farm workers. These disputes could undermine the land reform programme. Therefore, the African Institute for Agrarian Studies has recommended that urgent steps should be taken to establish dispute resolutions institutions.[48] This would require certain preconditions. First, the capacity of the Administration Courts to handle wide-ranging land disputes and conflicting claims to ownership must be strengthened. Second, a new, democratised village and district court system that works with, but is independent of, local government, traditional leadership structures and land administration committees would be required.[49]

In the same vein, mediation structures should be established at local level. These would involve representatives of all the interested parties. Such a structure could adjudicate conflicts and serve as a non-partisan forum for regular consultation on matters of mutual interest, for example access to water and other natural resources, the provision of social services, and various means of earning a livelihood from the land. As far as possible, local committees should work out the format and scope of these forums. The latter are recommended as a means to open dialogues on various policy, legislative and administrative matters, and to make negotiations between government and key stakeholders possible.[50]

Farm workers

The plight of the approximately 200,000 farm workers who lost their jobs as a result of the FTRP should be addressed more urgently than has been the case since 2000. Most live under extremely difficult conditions and some have become destitute. As observed earlier, farm workers who are jobless, landless and without homes in communal areas have tried various coping strategies. Piecework on the farms where they live is often temporary, insecure and badly paid. Some earn income from informal trading in agricultural produce and second-hand clothes, and in craft materials in local markets. These activities should be supported by the setting up of market stalls and depots for buying and selling their wares in nearby towns and communal areas. Assistance in developing distribution networks and services would boost the growth of small craft industries using local raw materials.

Female workers who are no longer employed on farms should be supported by helping them to start income-generating projects such as rearing poultry, sewing clothes and uniforms, baking and jam-making. The skills that farm workers have acquired in crop production, the use of agricultural machinery, the repair and maintenance of equipment and the use of agro-chemicals should not be wasted. As suggested above, a programme should be introduced to tap into their skills and use them effectively. There is a concomitant need to identify specialised skills among former farm workers and to initiate a programme of certification of such skills. The compilation of skills databases that are accessible to new farmers, whether their land allocations are large or small, could benefit both the farmers and the skilled workers.[51] Finally, there is a strong case for providing land to those farm workers who have lost their jobs

and have no other means of earning a living.

Comprehensive agrarian reform

As this article has shown, the Zimbabwe government has adopted a piecemeal approach to the land question. The redistribution of land has not been integrated into a wider agrarian and development strategy.[52] There is one other glaring weakness in the FTRP: in its quest to deal with the land question, the government did not address the critical issues of land use, agricultural production and land administration.[53] However, there is growing realisation that certain conditions are essential to agricultural transformation including sustainable growth in productivity. Such growth is largely dependent on the successful development of key partnerships and alliances between government and private stakeholder groups; strong institutional arrangements; research and development; market linkages and improved human capacity.[54]

Some analysts believe that agrarian upliftment should be tied to a vision of industrial transformation.[55] The structural evolution of the economy requires that an increasing percentage of employment and contribution towards the gross domestic product (GDP) should come from industry rather than agriculture. Only as the engine of industrial growth gathers momentum will people migrate from the countryside to urban centres, reducing the pressure on natural resources and freeing up land for farmers who wish to expand their operations and incomes.[56]

An institutional framework for reform

In order to implement the recommendations that have been outlined in this section, a new institutional framework must provide a structure that will oversee the land and agrarian reform process. Proposals for such a structure have suggested it be called a Land Commission or a National Land Board. One argument is that since the process relating to the FTRP is complex, highly centralised and opaque, a Land Commission should be established to simplify decision-making and to delegate more power to local authorities.[57] The commission would be responsible for settler identification and placement, planning for infrastructure and services, monitoring and evaluation of the programme, and marketing and outreach services.

One of its immediate tasks would be to conduct a land audit that would focus on the current distribution of land ownership and the legal status of the acquisition process. In this way information on "how, when and which farmers lost their land and how, when and by whom the land was taken over"[58] could be assembled.

The Zimbabwe government appointed a Land Board in late 2004 that had a much more restricted mandate than that described above. There is no broad representation of interested parties on the board, and it has little autonomy. There is therefore a need seriously to consider the concept of a Land Commission as outlined above. It would stand a stronger chance of earning legitimacy in the eyes of national stakeholders and the international community. This is a prerequisite for a much broader and more sustainable programme of agrarian reform in Zimbabwe.

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