SHIFTS IN THE LAND AND AGRARIAN QUESTION IN AFRICA

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About the Author

Tendai Murisa is a development practitioner and researcher in the areas of agency, social movements, philanthropy, NGOs and pro-poor development across Africa. He is currently the Executive Director of SIVIO Institute. He has over 15 years' experience working across Africa. Tendai holds a doctorate in Sociology from Rhodes University in South Africa. He has published extensively on agency, agrarian reforms in Africa (especially in Zimbabwe), citizens and civil society, financial inclusion, social entrepreneurship and social policy.

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Preface

The book offers a powerful and unflinching analysis of Africa's agrarian crisis, framingland as both a site of global power struggle and internal elite exploitation resulting indispossession, dehumanisation, and conflict at colonial-era levels. The poor remaintrapped between predatory land deals and corrupt national systems, leading todispossession, conflict, and violence reminiscent of colonial times. Rooted in thecoloniality of power within land tenure and agrarian policies, he argues that this crisisisn't driven by cultural factors, but by systemic failures that demand structural overhaul.Murisa charts the evolution of land grabbing from colonial to modern times, linking it toglobalization and misplaced development priorities. These land deals often prioritizemining, tourism, or export-oriented agriculture, sidelining local food security and rural development. He situates the current agrarian crisis within a historical and policycontext, arguing that Africa's food insecurity and rural poverty are deeply rooted inunresolved land questions, inadequate reforms, and external pressures. He argues thatAfrica's reversal from food self-sufficiency to heavy import dependency results frominsecure land tenure, policy inconsistencies, and underdeveloped financial systems—not from a lack of effort. The book underscores that agriculture was once seen as the cornerstone for economic transformation, but this vision has faded, with rural development and land reform falling off the policy agenda. He critiques short-term interventions and emphasizes the need for holistic transformation through equitable land reforms, investment in smallholder agriculture, and a shift from food security to food sovereignty. Through a meticulous political economy and historical lens, Tendai Murisa underscores the critical role of land and agriculture in transforming economies, reducing inequality, and addressing global food insecurity. He calls for research-informed policies, participatory democracy, and long-term solutions that confront bothhistorical and present-day injustices. Ultimately, the book serves as a powerful call to reposition land and agrarian reform at the heart of Africa's development agenda, viewing them as essential pillars for sustainable economic transformation and social justice.

Brian Tamuka Kagoro
Managing Director, Programs
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Introduction

When Africa attained independence, it was self-sufficient and even a net exporter of food products (almost 1.3 million tonnes a year between 1966 and 1970). As of 2021, Africa's total value of food imports registered roughly US$100 billion against exports of US$60 billion. The main contributor to the continent's food imports was cereals and preparations, with an import value of some US$40 billion. Fats and oil exports stood at roughly US$16 billion. What happened? Did the people of Africa become lazy? Could it be policy inconsistencies or a global conspiracy against Africa? From the outset, we acknowledge that the food question cannot be analysed in isolation from its constituent parts - land and systems of production. It is in this context that we pose the question of whether there is still a place for land and agrarian reforms in the twenty-first century. The International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty (2006) asserts that agrarian reform "can put an end to the massive and forced rural exodus from the countryside to the city, which has made cities grow at unsustainable rates and under inhuman conditions".

Furthermore, the development of agriculture was expected to lead to Africa's economic transformation. Many have stated that the recovery of Africa's agriculture should be the first integral part of the broader shift towards economic transformation that is urgently required on the continent. Transformation entails the change over time in the sectoral composition of output (or Gross Domestic Product [GDP]) and that of the sectoral pattern of the employment of labour as an economy develops (Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), 2011b:5). The pattern of economic transformation, experienced in other countries, suggests that as the real per capita income of an economy increases over the long term, the share of industry and its manufacturing subsector, as well as services, rise, as does the ratio of average productivity in non-agriculture to agriculture, at the same time, the share of agriculture in GDP and the employment share of agriculture in total employment decline (ibid: 5). Such a transformation is only achievable when there is a significant boost to agricultural production over a period sustained. The surplus value extracted from increased agriculture performance should be reinvested in a local industrialisation project.

However, the efforts aimed at reviving African agriculture have not been adequately supported. In many instances, these initiatives have not devoted adequate attention to the land policy-related challenges in Africa, especially insecure tenure and inadequate or underdeveloped financial markets. The focus has been on enhancing the utilisation of land and maximising production. The African Union has since 2003 sought to resolve the persistent failure of many countries to achieve food security for the majority and to ensure that the sector contributes towards driving overall economic growth. Unfortunately, these efforts have taken place in the midst of rapid changes in the climate. Since the turn of the century weather patterns are becoming less favourable in many instances, increasing the volatility of crop and livestock yields. These increasingly unpredictable and erratic weather systems on the continent have placed an extra burden on food security and rural livelihoods. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of 2007 estimates that Africa will be the most vulnerable to climate change globally, due to the multiple stresses of poor infrastructure, poverty and governance. Temperatures are likely to increase by between 1.5 – 4.0 °C in this century. The changes in our climate and the ongoing deepening of globalisation in agricultural production have neutralised the various reform efforts. In some instances, African countries are worse off than they were before the turn of the century.

In the meantime, land and agrarian reforms have fallen off the development radar. The world has moved onto new postmodern fascinations and Africa's problem is now mostly viewed as to do with a corrupt and inept leadership. Colonial-based injustices rarely feature in policy debates anymore. When they occasionally do, the analysis is dismissed as blame-shifting or making excuses for ineffective and corrupt post-colonial regimes. Rural development features in policy debates haphazardly, for many, urbanisation is inevitable, and the rural is in the past. In the process, classic assumptions about a rural development agenda driven by a national transformation strategy are either weakly framed or no longer exist. The rural remains as a relic of the long past with very limited investments in modern infrastructure. The agriculture carried out mostly by smallholder farmers without any technological sophistication has all but been reduced to subsistence purposes. When governments provide support through subsidies, the objective is very short-term in nature - mostly aligned with securing votes. Very few governments are committed to long-term strategies of transforming smallholder agriculture into an economic activity with the potential to address questions of unemployment, increased productivity, and diversification into lucrative export value chains. In many instances, the drivers of smallholder-based innovations are development partners usually in the form of local and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). However, the scale at which these development actors function is always limited.

Furthermore, the agenda for resolving land tenure-based constraints remains mostly unaddressed. There were some notable attempts at land titling in places like Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. However, these measures have mostly been inadequate. In fact, there is an ongoing and renewed process of removing communities from their land to make way for investments in mining, ecotourism and large-scale (usually foreign owned) farms. Communities that access land through customary tenure have mostly fallen victim to these new forms of investments. The rural area remains a site of stagnation, and the desperation leads to out-migration into the urban and eventually out of the country.

There does not seem to be a consensus on whether rural poverty is the problem or just a symptom of a bigger structural problem. Many of those involved in poverty reduction-focused initiatives prefer to deal with the visible problem (nutrition gardens, school fees for the poor, cash transfers, etc.) and a lot has been spent on these. These are nice to do, with good opportunities for photographs, but tend to disempower communities and create cycles of dependency. There is a growing tendency towards band-aid-like interventions. Unfortunately, many NGO/Embassy/Foundation budgets are spent on this. Most external donors in the form of NGOs and Official Development Assistance partners tend to avoid confronting structural (and coincidentally historical) issues. NGOs/Donors keep away from these. They have no stomach for the politics that comes with it. The unfair distribution of the means of production (especially land) in post-settler colonies (Zimbabwe, Kenya, South Africa and Namibia), for instance, does not come up in various explorations on how to address rural poverty. (See Issa Shivji, Silences in NGO Discourses, 2006). Yet, there is evidence that inaccessibility to land is one of the fundamental determinants of poverty, and land redistribution is a powerful weapon against poverty (Sharma and Jha, 2018).

There is evidence of a positive relationship between improved access to land and poverty reduction from other regions. Sharma and Jha (2018) argue that a one-time redistribution of assets (land) can, in an environment of imperfect markets, be associated with permanently high levels of growth. Countries like China, South Korea, Taiwan and Vietnam implemented land reforms accompanied by an adequate supporting framework. These have managed to build a semblance of equitable growth and reduce rural poverty. Sharma and Jha (2018) argue that history shows that countries with greater equality in asset holding have grown faster, for example: Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and China. Zimbabwe is the only country to have embarked on land agrarian reforms in Africa in the 21st century. The country is yet to robustly demonstrate the impact of these reforms on livelihoods. The chapter on Zimbabwe in this book provides evidence on agricultural performance in the aftermath of land reform.

There are a few instances where a case for land reform is made and when it is done it is mostly on the basis of correcting historical injustices, an example from outside Africa being the Vietnam story. The country used to be a rice importer, and today it is the second biggest exporter in the world. How was this achieved? 'The take-off started with agricultural land reform, entailing the de-collectivisation of property and the opening to fertiliser imports (use of which tripled due to lower prices) allowed food production to increase exponentially. (Oxfam, 2010, 25-6). Public support to smallholder agriculture was an important factor.

Structural issues to do with land ownership, tenure and trade-related constraints are rarely discussed. It is a widely known fact, for instance, that smallholder coffee farmers in Africa receive 10% of aggregate coffee wealth globally. Whilst West African farmers only receive 7% of total global cocoa proceeds despite producing 75% of the world's cocoa beans. The African agriculture sector is subordinate to the global supply chain and does not set prices for most of the primary commodities produced. The middlemen in agriculture commodity chains have enormous power and are mostly in the form of multinational corporations. According to a report by The Guardian, only two companies control 40% of the global commercial seed market, compared with 10 companies controlling the same proportion of the market 25 years ago, according to the ETC Group, an eco-justice organisation. Agricultural commodity trading is similarly concentrated, with 10 commodity traders in 2020 dominating a market worth half a trillion dollars (Harvey, 2022).

There are 11 key industrial "agrifood" sectors: seeds, agrochemicals, livestock genetics, synthetic fertilisers, farm machinery, animal pharmaceuticals, commodity traders, food processors, Big Meat, grocery retail and food delivery. These sectors are controlled by a few companies. These companies wield enormous influence over markets, agricultural research and policy development, which undermines food Security (Shand et al., 2022).

The figure below illustrates the extent of corporate power in agricultural value chains. It is important to note that those who have market power can raise prices above what's considered fair market value. The current levels of market concentration are unprecedented. They undermine efforts to achieve food sovereignty.

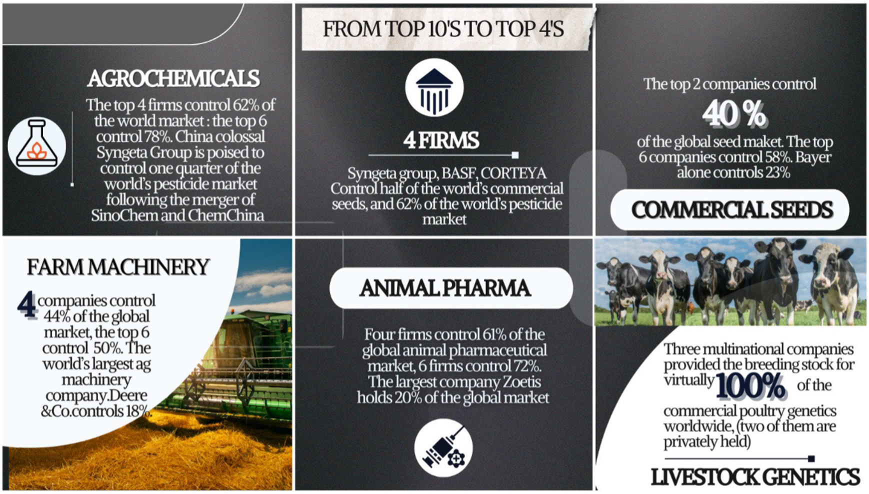


FIGURE 1-1: ILLUSTRATION OF CORPORATE INFLUENCE IN AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAINS

These multinationals compete unfairly against local production. For instance, the liberalisation of many African economies has led to the invasion of cheap agricultural imports that literally devastate small producers. Smallholder producers compete with the international agro-industrial heavyweights. The latter are extremely competitive from a price perspective, mostly because they benefited – and still do – from policies of generous subsidies and/or the profits they could count on, in the agro-industrial sectors of the emerging countries, from the low wages and diminutive property taxes – if they existed at all – as well as huge extensions of agricultural land. Furthermore, liberalisation had unintended consequences. For example, it doubled the dimensions of the food problem: "by creating huge numbers of 'urban unemployed' who relied on cheap imports to feed themselves and by depriving the rural areas of a peasantry that could have reduced the bill for those imported goods and created an internal market by raising the purchasing power of the peasant masses" (Brunel, 2008).

1.1 A Weak and Incoherent Global Policy Architecture

Agricultural policymaking has mostly been reactive in responding to the looming crisis of food shortages, riots and possibilities of increased migration from the underdeveloped to the more developed regions. Prior to the 2007 - 2008 food crisis, global policy-making processes were ambivalent towards the peasant/smallholder production systems. Many African governments had, through structural adjustment programs reduced the spending on agriculture to less than 5% of total annual budgets. The 2007-2008 sudden, though foreseeable surge in prices plunged nearly 124 million or more people into extreme poverty and 75 million of them into a state of under-nourishment. These changes led to what is generally referred to as the 'food crisis'. It was a manifestation of a deeper agrarian crisis associated with the long 20th century food regime, and its reproduction of capital's labour force via cheap food provisioning (McMichael, 2013: 3).

There have been several global and Africa-specific attempts at resolving challenges within the agriculture sector. Most of the global interventions have mostly focused on (i) increasing financing towards agriculture, (ii) improving trade and (iii) modernisation. The interventions have been led by the rich countries concerned about global food insecurity, the multilateral agriculture and food network, philanthropy and civil society organisations. For instance, in the aftermath of the food riots in North Africa in 2008, global leaders meeting as the G8 in L'Aquila hastily drew a plan to fix agriculture, especially smallholders. They produced a Joint Statement on Global Food Security commonly referred to as the "L'Aquila Food Security Initiative" (AFSI). It sought to respond to the increasing number of undernourished people and inadequate levels of investments in agriculture. They committed to mobilising US$20 billion over three years through the L'Aquila Food Security Initiative in support of rural development in poor countries (L'Aquila, 2009).

The G8 heads of state recognised that longstanding underinvestment in agriculture had affected food security. Price trends of food combined with the economic crisis had at that time led to increased hunger and poverty in developing countries. The number of those in extreme poverty had grown to 100 million. As of today (2025), the number of people living in hunger exceeds 1 billion. The G8 partners (now G7) committed to invest US$20 million over

3 years to encourage rural development of poor countries. The declaration led to the establishment of a new multi-donor trust fund, the Global Partnership on Agricultural and Food Security. The fund was managed by the World Bank. The objective of the initiative was to improve food security and incomes in low-income countries through assistance to agriculture. It was meant to provide support to country-led initiatives. In Africa, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) was roped in to support the preparation of country-led investments, strategies and plans in the context of the omprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). The fund was designed to provide both public and private sector financing in the form of grants, loans and equity investments. The Fund supports programmes/initiatives that link farmers to markets, reduce risk and vulnerability, improve non-farm rural livelihoods and provide technical assistance and capacity development.

A few support mechanisms such as the Global Partnership on Agriculture and Food Security (GPAFS) were established to keep agriculture at the core of the international agenda and improve the coordination and efficiency of aid. Furthermore, since the crisis broke out, the United Nations (UN) and its specialised agencies have continually appealed for the refinancing of the agricultural sectors in the global South. Scorned for three decades, public agricultural policies made a return to policy space and were discussed extensively by many UN agencies. Alongside the L'Aquilla-related processes, the United Nations' High-Level Taskforce on Food Security came up with the Comprehensive Framework for Action (CFA) in 2008 to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The framework amongst other things sought to "boost smallholder farmer food production: through providing productivity-enhancing safety nets to poor smallholder farmers by supplying critical inputs such as locally adapted quality seeds, fertiliser, small irrigation pumps and veterinary medicines and services, rehabilitating both rural and agricultural infrastructure; reducing post-harvest crop losses and improving village-level stocks; linking small-scale farmers to markets by reducing constraints to domestic trade throughout the food chain; improving animal health services". (Comprehensive Framework for Action, 2008).

The CFA comprised of the 22 UN agencies and Bretton Woods Institutions in response to the hunger revolts. It established a framework for addressing the immediate threats generated by the crisis. For the first time, there was recognition that the declining investment in agriculture was the main driver behind the crisis, and they proposed to improve food and nutrition support whilst also strengthening food and nutrition security in the long run by addressing the underlying factors driving the food crisis.

1.2 The Enduring Peasantries/Smallholder Economies

Approximately 50% of the peasants/smallholders live off plots that are very small or of poor quality and 20% are agricultural labourers or landless (Golay, 2009). In the meantime, the peasant/smallholder-based production systems contribute 34% of the food consumed globally (Ricciardi, Ramankutty, Mehrabi, Jarvis and Chookolingo, 2018). In the late 1960s all the way to the early 1980s, there was a consensus around a smallholder-driven take-off. It was argued that efficient and productive small farms would produce sufficient food to eliminate food insecurity, provide opportunities for labour, and form the basis for broader-based rural growth (cf. Mellor, 1966; Lipton, 1977; Ellis and Biggs, 2001). Others (see Neocosmos, 1984) wrote about possibilities of accumulation from below in reference to what seemed to be a peasant-led miracle in post-independence Zimbabwe. At the time, governments were allocating more than 15% of their budgets to agriculture. However, the intervention of droughts (especially in Southern Africa), structural adjustment, growing poverty and the waning influence of the rural voters led to a dramatic disinvestment from smallholder agriculture. During the 1990s smallholder agriculture was totally abandoned. Others, for instance, the governments of South Africa and partially Zimbabwe persisted with a large-scale dominated agricultural sector. At the same time, the policy focus shifted towards strengthening export capacities within the large-scale sector and even promoted the development of new land use patterns. Rural poverty worsened.

Bingu waMutharika, President of Malawi from May 2004 until April 2012 engineered an agriculture-led boom in Malawi, one that pointed a way for Africa to overcome its chronic hunger, food insecurity, and periodic extreme famines. Under his leadership, the government gave subsidy vouchers to "smallholders to buy a small amount of fertiliser and seed so that they could access improved seed varieties and achieve a liveable crop from their small farms. In 2005, a year after expanded subsidies kicked in, Malawi harvested a grain surplus of half a million tonnes. In subsequent years it exported grain to Lesotho and Swaziland, as well as 400,000 tonnes of maize to Zimbabwe (Tafirenyika, 2013). By 2009, the government was spending 16% of its budget on subsidies, the highest share of the budget in the sub-region. The Malawi smallholder miracle spurred other governments into action, especially around the adoption and implementation of the Maputo Declaration of 2003.

Yet there is a case to be made for smallholder agriculture. Several studies have demonstrated through global case evidence that smaller-sized farms tend to use their land more productively, in terms of higher unit yields and the use of labour (Moyo, 2003b). The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (2020) in its article *'Reasons IFAD is putting small-scale farmers at the forefront of food systems'*, argued that small-scale farming is often more productive than other types of agricultural businesses, including industrial farms. Land productivity on small farms has been shown to be higher in many contexts, because of the advantages associated with family-based labour and management. Family workers are more motivated, have more specific knowledge of the land, and are prepared to withstand shocks that would send corporate-managed farms out of business. Wharton (as cited in Valdes, Scobie, and Dillon, (1988: 168) reports that "about half the world population is dependent on subsistence farming, about 40% of total cultivated land is worked by small scale farmers, 60% of all farmers are small".

1.3 The Enduring Crises of Rural Livelihoods

In 2009, for the first time in human history, over a billion people were officially classified as living in hunger. Across Africa, poverty remains concentrated in rural areas. Poverty is predominantly rural, with an estimated 79% of the world's poor living in rural communities (Suttie, 2019). According to the United Nations (2019), the poverty rate in rural areas in Africa is 17.2%, which is more than three times higher than in urban areas, at 5.3%. Many of these rural areas are remote, with poor infrastructure and limited service provision, and they are far from the centres of power and decision-making (Scoones and Wolmer, 2003). The development strategies in the Global

South were shaped by a growth model inspired by the linear modernisation theories derived from the historical experiences of the Global North. This model emphasises a gradual transition from a rural economy to an industrial and urban one. There is a widely shared consensus that Africa did not benefit from the adjustment period, but rather, it is now worse off. However, the failure of the industrialisation project across most of Africa has accelerated rural-to-urban migration without the adjustment to full-time employment or proletarianisation, but instead, the majority have also kept their rural plots as part of a survival strategy leading to what Moyo and Yeros (2005) referred to as semi-proletarianisation. Without a radical reform of the food and agricultural system, the situation can only worsen. Consequently, agricultural yields have decreased and there is an irreversible loss of large extensions of land because of global warming – in the regions that are most sensitive to climatic vagaries and water shortages.

1.4 Inclusive Pathways out of the Stagnation - The Food Sovereignty Path

Food Sovereignty is conceived as 'the right of nations and peoples to control their own food systems, including their own markets, production modes, food cultures and environments...as a critical alternative to the dominant neoliberal model for agriculture and trade' (Wittman et al., 2010, 2). At its core, food sovereignty is comprised of a set of goals whose aim is that of protecting the community, livelihoods and social and environmental sustainability in the production, consumption and distribution of nutritious and culturally appropriate food. The food sovereignty community is global, it was conceptualised by La Vía Campesina (a global peasant movement), it is a deeply grounded idea embodied initially in the lives of peasants, indigenous peoples and farmers in the North and South and later reworked in interaction with urban-based groups. It is mostly seen as a more sustainable vision than that of food security. Whereas food security is focused on availability and affordability, the food sovereignty school is more focused on local production of staple foods in a sustainable manner. This is a critical difference, the capacity or lack thereof to buy food, is often, the result of relations of production (who gets what) across contemporary capitalism, not the result of any shortfall in aggregate world food production (see Altieri and Rosset, 1999).

Food sovereignty is seized with questions of equitable access to land, seeds and other necessary nutrients for the crops. The use of 'nutrients' instead of fertiliser is equally significant because the food sovereignty movement aligns mostly with the agro-ecology movement that discourages the use of synthetic fertiliser preferring more natural ways of growing food including the use of organic fertilisers, mulching and other good agricultural practices that do not include the use of chemicals. Furthermore, others argue that food sovereignty goes much further than food security and the right to food because it places questions of what food is produced, where, how, by whom, and at what scale at the centre of public debate and raises similar questions about food consumption and distribution (McMichael, 2009; Patel, 2009; Wittman et al., 2010; Desmarais, 2007). Perhaps the biggest contribution of food sovereignty is that it offers a series of alternatives to the neoliberal monopolistic development model. Furthermore, the food sovereignty framework acknowledges the importance of agrarian reform. The International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty (2006) states that "…in the context of food sovereignty, agrarian reform benefits all of society, providing healthy, accessible and culturally appropriate food, and social justice."

The food sovereignty movement privileges peasant agency in a programmatic approach to restoring the viability of the countryside for farming and addressing a new form of domestic food security. In the process, challenging previous arguments about the backwardness of the peasant and their resistance to change. For the first time, peasants are at the centre of a global discussion on how to rescue food production systems from the dominant corporate model. The global peasant movement called for, '…. exchanging[removing] the industrial agro-export food system for a system based on food sovereignty, that returns the land to its social function as the producer of food and sustainer of life, that puts local production of food at the centre, as well as the local markets and local processing… (La Via Campensina, 2012). The food sovereignty movement is not shy to confront power, it involves far more than producing food. It entails a radical change in the way society is organised so that power is taken away from local elites, who are so often aligned with corporate capital and restored to the people. It is an integral part of the process of constructing participatory democracy.

However, while there is a growing body of literature on food sovereignty at a global level, much less is known about what food sovereignty movements look like in specific places and how their expression is largely shaped by local dynamics. On the other hand, McMichael (2013) raises an important issue that while the origins of 'food sovereignty' lie in a peasant response to a sharpening agrarian crisis under the neoliberal project, the movement's political calculus has been governed by the demands of the historical conjuncture rather than a conventional peasant demand for agrarian reform per se.

1.5 About This Book

Land and agrarian studies are on the decline across the continent for a variety of reasons, one of them may be the fatigue arising from the lack of movement on this subject. Most of Africa should be seized with the challenge of the land and agrarian question but very few are earnestly doing something about it. Platforms dedicated to discussing land and agrarian issues are very few, where they exist their focus is on new challenges such as climate-related changes. Yet Africa's inclusive take-off is dependent upon ongoing reforms to land and agrarian policies. The land debates have mostly been restricted to former settler colonies without realising that the tenure challenges cut across most, if not all African countries. The purpose of this book is to present new evidence on shifts in the land and agrarian question and to challenge many in development including policymakers, academics and practitioners to revisit prevailing assumptions about rural development. The whole book is preoccupied with mapping the new challenges or dimensions that have emerged largely due to changes within the global economy and the climate. The subject matter contained in the book is also meant for those seeking a quick introduction to the challenges of Africa's development from a land and agrarian studies lens.

2

The Land Question in Africa

2.1 Introduction

Is there any purpose or reason for land reform in the 21st century? Is equitable access to land an important condition for Africa's development? In other words, does land still have a role to play in ensuring Africa's development? The argument has already been made that the continent is rapidly urbanising. The number of people living in urban areas has been growing steadily since 2000. Is this growth relatable to what happened in the 19th century Europe- the emptying of the rural area into the urban due to rapid industrialisation? The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report argues that since 1990, Africa's rapid growth in urbanisation has been driven primarily by high population growth and the reclassification of rural settlements. The difference is significant. Africa's rapid urbanisation has nothing to do with the growth of formal sector jobs but rather due to rapid population growth, collapse of rural economies especially small-scale agriculture and land scarcity. The continent, especially Sub-Saharan Africa, is not currently pursuing a coherent or accelerated industrialisation project to suggest the declining importance of the rural economy or land-based livelihoods. Furthermore, the recent industrialisers such as China, India, South Korea and Taiwan have demonstrated the resilience rather than collapse of the rural economy. The percentage of people living in the rural areas has declined to 38% in China and in India, it has remained high at 65%.

Pressure and demand for land from the bottom remains across Africa, especially in customary tenure areas where plots have been subdivided to accommodate the growth of families. Furthermore, land in both customary and state-based tenure areas has become a playground for large-scale land-based investment. The discussion in this chapter revisits the nature of the land question in Africa by focusing on its different dimensions. Furthermore, the chapter explores the differences between customary and freehold tenure as part of efforts to re-open debates on Africa's path in resolving policy related constraints.

2.2 The Significance of Land

There are many meanings attached to land in Africa. First, to many in Africa land is a **storehouse of nature** for reproduction of future generations. Second it is an **agricultural production** tool for subsistence and commercial production of food and exchange incomes and where possible re-investment. Third, it is a **receptacle** of water, wood fuel, medicine, fruit, housing, game meat and through it communities have guaranteed access to a myriad of natural resources. Fourth it is a **potential investment** for trading of products, water development for irrigation, tourism and woodlands enterprises. Fifth, it is **social territory** providing social safety nets and social reproduction by ensuring that norms are practiced, and customs are upheld. Finally, it is **political territory** where struggles over control of the means of production and broad community participation take place. Moreover, studies of other regions have arrived at the conclusion that ownership of land and equity in holdings has a much favourable and permanent impact on the economy than any other asset distribution (Sharma and Jha, 2018).

2.3 The Land Question

Land is a conflict-ridden resource, and, due to its many meanings a sensitive issue in Africa. Disputes and conflicts about land occur at all levels: Conflicts between neighbours about field boundaries; between men, women, and generations about their respective land rights; between pastoralists and farmers; between states and indigenous peoples; between companies and local populations about rights to exploit mineral and other resources. The question about rights to land and territories has also been the source of civil wars as well as wars between nations. (Lund et al., 2023). African land systems are complex and at best demonstrate hybridity or a fusion between past traditional practices and attempts at modernity. Davies, (2010) argues that the various reform efforts in land governance have led to the uncomfortable coexistence of different precolonial, colonial and post-colonial legal systems simultaneously applied over the same geographical areas, which is also known as 'legal pluralism'(Davies, 2010). However, the legal pluralism or co-existence has led to reduced transparency for all land-related actors and augmented the risk of conflict (Fenrich et al., 2011b). Likewise, it has led to competition between traditional authorities and state officials around decisions on land in Africa (van Leeuwen, 2014). Furthermore, legal ambiguity sometimes allowed local elites to interpret or use the legal system to their own advantage (Haller et al., 2019).The legal pluralism has promoted ambiguities and varieties of land questions across the continent. At times the outstanding land related challenges (distribution or ownership) are influenced mostly by the type of colonisation that a particular country experienced. There are four dimensions to consider when discussing the land question and viz (i) distribution patterns, (ii) security of access, (iii) governance and (iv) utilisation. The table below provides detailed discussion of the schematic framework.

TABLE 2-1: DIMENSIONS OF THE LAND QUESTION

Dimension of the LQ	Description	Challenges	Examples where problem is prevalent
Distribution	Land is owned by a minority. Usually, minority whites who have large-scale farms/estates.	Limitations to developing an inclusive rural development strategy. Wealth is owned by a privileged few.	Former settler colonies such as Namibia and South Africa
Security of use and access	Land ownership arrangements are not clearly spelt out. There are various laws over the same land. Mining laws override any other form of access.	Existing land tenure arrangements are subject to various interpretations. In some areas land is not considered as a tradable property. Negatively affects prospects for increased investment.	Cuts across many African countries
Land Governance	Weak to non-existing institutional framework for managing access and use of land. No databases on who owns land.	There is no land registry in many countries. There is no way of measuring extent to which existing arrangements are optimal for all. Very few competent land courts.	Cuts across many African countries
Land Utilisation	African agricultural systems remain underdeveloped with limited financing arrangements.	Limited contribution of agriculture/land to rural livelihoods.	Cuts across many African countries

The ***distribution challenge*** is at times reduced as the only facet of Africa's land question. Furthermore, it was initially framed as a manifestation of colonial and race-based policies which favoured the colonisers. The land question was thus mostly associated with post-settler countries especially, Kenya, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Sam Moyo (2003a) noted that some scholars query the assumption that Africa has a classical land question except for the former settler colonies given the absence of a history of extensive land expropriation (Mafeje, 1999; Amin, 1972), and the attendant restricted proletarianisation processes which occurred at the start of the last century (Arrighi, 1978). Whilst predominantly a feature of the settler type of colonialism there are post-independence land grabs which have happened and inform today's distribution challenge of land. Furthermore, elites across African countries have contributed to varying forms of land grabs, taking advantage of unclear land ownership patterns, especially common property regimes that are overseen by traditional authorities. In summary Africa's land distribution problem today is as a result of growing inequalities in access to and control of land in relation to the increasing concentration of land among elites in varying degrees across the continent and, in relation to demographic pressures, the scarcity of fertile land and the continued stagnation of agricultural technological advances which would allow for the intensive capitalisation of less land. Boucha and Nene (2024) argued that, inequality in land distribution is attributed to market led policies that favor large-scale farming models. Consequently, the growing disparity in land distribution affects overall economic growth especially in communities where agriculture is the main economic activity. Inequality in land distribution also results in skewed distribution of social power and income (Khan et al., 2011). Azard and Vanhaute (2011), observed that "…outdated land regulations, insecure land tenures and institutions with slow or unstable land management can limit private investment, weaken good governance, and reduce local governments' ability to raise taxes." Furthermore, systems that promote biased patterns of land ownership and means of access to land based on gender or ethnicity tend to limit market capacities for land use and reduce economic opportunities for disadvantaged groups."

Security of access and use usually refers to the challenges within the existing tenurial arrangements. Land tenure systems distribute formal or informal rights to use, control, and transfer land during a determined time frame and under specific conditions. They regulate how individuals and groups gain access to land and other natural resources and determine the rights and duties associated with land use and ownership. Land tenure has been usually described and limited to the mechanisms for determining access to and control over agricultural land. Shipton and Taylor (2015) argue that definitions of tenure should move beyond the legal and the economic to include a wider array of concepts, taking real access, attachment, and mobility into account, in order to capture the new practices and institutions for recording land-use patterns that arise locally or are produced by diverse directed tenure reforms

However, and even more important is the need to build our understanding of tenure on particular theories of property which originate from African practices. In many analyses the predominant views of property are always loaded with the values of Western materialism. The African concept of land was that all land belongs to the people, and all have a right to the use of it. However, that has added a layer or layers of complexity. Land, like air and water, is not owned by anyone and is held in trust for the dead by the living for the unborn. There was no ownership of land in the Western sense, and it could not be bought or sold. Certain traditional authorities had rights and responsibilities for allocating usufruct and of adjudicating disputes. These traditional concepts differed sharply from the Western concept of land tenure, whose fundamental feature of legal security and rights of disposal were held to be necessary to provide the incentive required for the real improvement of land. Even the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) concedes that customary land tenure systems include a diversity of specific land rights that often involve several actors (FAO, 2002). Notably there is a growing consensus within legal systems to recognise customary tenure. To date a considerable share of communal land in the world is organised under informal but functional customary tenure systems (LandMark, 2022).

Okoth-Ogendo (1989b: 7), argued that the perception of what constitutes property at any point in a people's history is invariably the product of the total milieu in which they live, rather than of any single aspect of it. Instead, rather than looking at ownership the analysis of tenure should direct itself to 'rights' bestowed within a system. Okoth-Ogendo (1989a), suggests that this line of inquiry should include the ways in which rights are generated, allocated and vindicated. In other words, how does one secure the right to claim a certain piece of land, what systems allocate and direct ways of use and finally how are the rights defended? The next table provides a framing of rights-based approach to analysing land tenure.

TABLE 2-2: RIGHTS WITHIN CUSTOMARY TENURE

Category of Rights	Type of Right/ Actual Rights	Application
Generation	Identity-Belonging	Land is secured by virtue of belonging within a specified community
	Gender based rights	Inheritance of land is determined by gender
Allocation	Right to access specific land for private family use in perpetuity	Community acknowledges the right of use of land by a family
	Right to make independent production decisions	There are no communal decisions on what to produce
	Right to common property for grazing and water rights	The right to grazing lands is widely accepted and those who have access are known
Vindication	Right to be heard in conflicts	Local courts ensure that these rights are realized
	Right of protection	
	Right to fair treatment	

Across Africa much of the land is held either under customary tenure or new forms of permissory tenure except in former settler colonies like Namibia and South Africa where most of the land is yet to be redistributed. In Zambia, for years only 6% of the land was considered state land and the rest (94%) was customary tenure land.

The land policy in Senegal is similar to other African countries and deeply rooted in belonging within a clearly defined lineage groups and several ancestral practices are used to affirm access. Land was acquired in clans; villages and the first male were responsible for its governance. The arrival of the colonial system witnessed a shift from control by communities to a singular land policy which was debatably unsuitable. Between 1900 -1906 local customary rights were converted to land titles for colonialists, the 1925 decree allowed indigenous people to convert customary rights into titles and the 1932 decree revamped the land system replacing all other previous decrees until its repeal in 2011. Various schools of thought argue that despite efforts by the colonial government to privatise land, they failed. By 1960 when Senegal attained its independence only 2% of the land had titles signifying the persistence of the Senegalese people to stick to traditional systems of governing land. In 1964, the country adopted Law 64-46 which allocated land based on developmental ability rather than lineage. The African Food System Forum Report (2023), posits that land in Senegal is governed by three legislations namely, Law 64-46 of 17 June 1964, Law 76-66 of 2 July 1976 and Law 2011-07 on land ownership of March 2011.

There are variations of customary tenure but in many instances, it is defined by a structural relationship within a lineage grouping and an ethnic clan. Customary tenure is based on what was once perceived as the dominant form of rural sociability in rural Africa, that is, a pristine structural relationship within a lineage grouping and an ethnic clan (Murisa, 2022). The clan asserts political and ritual rights over land, followed by the lineage which establishes concrete claims over land supported by actual ties of consanguinity and corporate interests, and finally use rights conferred on the household in most instances through the male household head. Only the products of social labour – crops and livestock are objects of appropriation (Mafeje, 2003b:3). Recognition of certain clan domains makes it easy for lineages to maintain a steady pool of land to control any influx of strangers (non-kinspersons). Thus, the lineage framework provides a mechanism of cooperation and fosters mutual sharing. The distribution system encapsulated within the lineage framework functioned as a method for reconciling the individual's total interests with those of the community (Adholla, 1962:22).

However, customary tenure is no longer as pristine as presented above. There have been a number of attempts to change customary tenure systems across Africa. While customary authorities are still effective in regulating land access, the collegiate bodies that used to oversee their work are not; the result is a breakdown in accountability and a privatisation of common lands (Cotula, 2007:2). Yeboah and Oppong (2015), argue that values of transparency and accountability appear to be eroding at local level affecting the effectiveness of customary tenure in Ghana. The absence of land governance structures in several states is further reinforced by high level of corruption, weak state institutions, and non-adherence to issues of fundamental human rights, particularly of local farmers and indigenous landowners (Afolabi, 2021a). It is also instructive that land reforms have not solved many of the problems, conflicts, and crises associated with land in Africa partly because of the absence of effective land governance laws and the ineffectiveness of land governance laws and structures where it exists. There has been a shift or dilution in the efficiency of traditional leaders overseeing the management of land (Yeboah and Shaw, 2013). Instead of ensuring mutual community benefit local chiefs have become the major beneficiaries of local natural resources such as land (Ubink and Quan, 2008). Issues of equitable access and distribution are affected by customary processes that do not follow non-discriminatory principles. Secondary land holders who depend on others are most likely to be disadvantaged especially when land comes under pressure (Cotula, 2007). Yaro (2010), describes customary tenure systems in Ghana as under siege, arguing that in rural communities, customary tenure systems are crumbling slowly while in urban cities the system has become unpopular in favor of commoditised one. The harmonious land relations in Northern Ghana are gradually becoming a thing of the past as peri-urban developments has resulted in high demand for land and its consequent translation into monetary values has generated conflicts between chiefs, clans, kinsmen and family members (Mahama, 2003).

The shifts that have taken place since the end of colonialism have, in many cases, failed to comprehensively ensure functional customary tenure systems. They have instead created 'complimentary' and at times 'competitive' sites of administrative power which have further complicated the smooth running of customary tenure. In many countries customary land is under traditional authorities who are expected to work and align their practice with modern local authorities. There have been tensions whenever land is allocated to outsiders. Furthermore, land is vested in the office of the president. The President can override local decisions over land. In the aftermath of a very brutal HIV/AIDS pandemic there was an increase in women headed households across most of rural Africa. However, customary laws and tenure ensure that land is passed from one male member of the clan to the other. Cases of increasing gender-based land alienation have prompted a rethinking to the patriarchy-based system. In a study on customary tenure in Zimbabwe, Paradza (2010) found that many traditional authorities were bending tradition and allowing for widows to inherit land.

Most smallholders in Africa are women. Most African countries recognise the significant role played by rural women in agriculture and yet little attention is paid to tenure systems that discriminate against women. There is a growing consensus that women's access and control of land as a resource is important to drive their social and economic well-being. However, Ngwafor (1993) is of the view that, if there is anything universal about customary tenure systems is that women are not associated with land ownership. Traditional systems of land governance in Africa favor males as compared to their female counterparts. Legal and patriarchal systems often discriminate against women resulting in obstacles for women to acquire and retain land (Berh et al., 2023). In 2012 the World Bank argued that, improving women's access to land is not something that will happen on its own but there is an urgent need to educate women on their land rights and for land governing institutions to protect women's property rights.

The Kenyan Institute of Policy Research (2024), highlights that there has been a decline in women's land ownership in Kenya. In 2014, 61.3% of women aged between 15 and 49 did not own land and it rose to 75% for agricultural land and 93.3% for non-agricultural land. Data produced by the Kenyan Land Alliance (2018) report showed than only 10% of the 3 million title deeds processed by the government between 2013 and 2017 were issued to women. Despite legal frameworks existing like Articles 40 and 60 (f) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 which provide for the right of all Kenyans to hold and own property rights. The problem of exclusion in land benefits for women is not only limited to access but also encompasses control over it and security. In 2022, 62% and 44% of the women who owned land in Kenya did not have title deeds on agricultural and non-agricultural land. The widening gender led inequalities on land in Africa raises a question of effectiveness of legal frameworks to support women as landowners.

Widows in some African countries still face challenges of evictions from their marital lands after the husband passes on. Even for those who succeed in acquiring the land, GROOTS Kenya argue that they face unending stigmatisation from community members. Data from the 2022 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) showed that the percentage of divorced women owning land is lower compared to married women and widows. Widows in Kenya are protected by the Customary Land Act which does not allow the selling of land without their knowledge. Still, the requirements of the act require a marriage certificate which becomes a challenge for customary marriages. Land ownership for women in Kenya improves with age and this is because there are few governing laws on land ownership by the youth and investing in land is costly and takes years. As argued by Behr et al. (2023), in theory women may have access to land but contextually this depends on their relationship to a man, either a brother, husband, father or male relatives. There seems to be a weak link between legal frameworks and their implementation.

It is important to note that similar tendencies of widening gender gaps in land ownership also cut across most African countries. In Nigeria, only 8.2% of women reported to having sole ownership of land compared to 34% of men. In some countries like Ethiopia there has been improvements, women with sole ownership of land is 14.4% compared to 32.3% for men (Gaddis, Lahodi and Li, 2018). Bayeh (2015), notes that before the 1974 revolution Ethiopia had a complex land governing system comprising of religious and customary practices. The rule of the Derg regime in 1974 led to the adoption of the new Land Proclamation of 1975 abolishing private ownership of all rural land, however the provisions of the act did not cater for gender provisions. After the decline of the Derg regime state ownership of land was reinstated into the 1995 Constitution including specific rights of women and land ownership. In a study conducted in Namibia by Nakanyete et al. (2020) on widows and land rights revealed that the majority (83%) - had not been evicted from the respective lands they occupied with their late husbands. The high proportion of widows remaining on their matrimonial land and home is a significant reflection of the improved protection of widows' land rights in post-independent Namibia. It also reflects the fact that statutory laws like the National Land Policy, the Communal Land Reform Act of 2002 and Namibia's overall move towards greater gender equality is yielding positive results.

Way back in 2005, Geobel argued that the question of land in Zimbabwe was no longer simply a racial or political question but rather, a gender issue. In rural areas of Zimbabwe, gender has generally determined access to resources (Kurebwa, 2013). This notion has been further supported by Hindin (2002) who posits that access to resources defines women's identity, position as well as power. Furthermore, Paradza (2010), observed that gender-based inequality in access and control of land is a hindrance to the sustainable management of natural resources and socio-economic development. Women are mostly used as access points and conduits to resources which they do not fully benefit from (Stewart, 2010). In a study conducted by Muleya (2020) in Binga, one participant highlighted that land is only allocated to a family man, regardless of age, if a son is not married, they are considered immature and cannot be allocated land. However, daughters are not included on the allocation of land on the basis that they are temporary members of the household and would get married. In solving land dispute cases in the traditional way, Muleya argues that there is lack of legal knowledge which is essential for solving disputes. For example, it has been observed that traditional leaders fail to distinguish between civil and criminal cases. The study raised an important issue highlighting that women can be users of land but cannot be the owners.

However, in some cases (for instance, Kenya) today, the number of the poor is rising more rapidly in the African region than elsewhere. According to the World Bank, by 2019, 57% of the world's poorest lived in Sub-Saharan Africa. Data provided by Statistica in 2024 showed that some African countries including Nigeria (11,3%) DRC Congo (9,6%), Mozambique (3,2%) and Uganda (3%) had the highest proportions of people living below the poverty datum line in 2024 in Africa. The global multi-dimensional poverty index (2024) found that 84% of all poor people live in rural areas. Rural areas are poorer than urban areas in every world region.

There is a need for the *opening up of debate on the issues* and allowing time for critical reflection to develop an acceptable and secure tenure framework. Currently, the debate on land tenure has been caught up within two competing ideological frameworks; market-based vs state-based frameworks. Yet an examination of existing practices of inheritance within the peasant/smallholder customary tenure areas could probably more light. The way in which means of production customarily reverts from generation to generation reflects peasant social and economic organisation and is often removed from the inheritance laws of industrial societies (Habakuk, 1955; Shanin, 1972).

Governance challenges relate to the inadequacy of the existing institutional framework to ensure equitable access, perpetuity (or clear duration) of use and recourse when these rights are impinged. Land in this instance has to be seen as a site of production and reproduction for a variety of economic and social uses. The quest for investment in mining, tourism, forestry and bio-technology markets suggest the need for a robust land governance that does not prejudice existing owners but also creates a transparent system for accessing land. Furthermore, the Framework and Guidelines on Land Policy in Africa (F&G) shows that although the continent has made significant progress in allowing for political participation in the last decades, the struggle for land and natural resources remains one of the constant factors fuelling instability in Africa. The land governance problem in Africa has escalated due to several reasons. First, land tenure arrangements that confer land ownership to communities or autochthonous groups are subject to abuse especially by elites within and also by outsiders taking advantage of lack of documentation around ownership and boundaries. Furthermore, there are very few African countries with complete cadastral databases. Second, weaponisation of land for political reasons. Access to land in countries that have carried out massive redistribution exercises remains prone to abuse by political elites. Land has been used to reward or punish political behaviour. Rather than fixing prior injustices redistributive land reforms have created new challenges of partisan based access to land. Meinert (2016) notes that during the 2016 elections in Uganda, politicians in the Gulu, Kabong and Kampala used land in various strategies to mobilise votes. Politicians mobilised votes by raising questions of authority in land governance, land grabbing, forms of tenure and questions around ethnicity. In some cases, politicians who might not have had easy access to resources with which to buy votes directly, or with which to make credible pledges for improved service delivery, would appeal to voters by promising them land. The traditional authority in Mozambique called régulo is the gatekeeper for communal lands, as it is responsible for customary law according to the Land Law of 1997 (Serra, 2014). However, the role of the régulo has been highly politicised and used by the state as a political tool for rural governance since the colonial period.

Similar trends have also been noted in Zimbabwe. Govo et. al., (2015) conducted a study in Gutu, and their findings demonstrated the extent to which traditional leaders are subject to political manipulation which negatively affects their capacities to effectively execute their mandate in land governance. The stipends and salaries chiefs are getting have made a number of traditional leaders to side with the state even if some of the policies are detrimental to their communities. Third, despite the recognised importance of good governance in land, there is limited 'active participation of citizens in all processes of land administration'. The formulation of land laws, the primary instruments for governing land inclusive of tenure systems, land use regulations, dispute resolution remain the preserve of few governing elites. An inclusive land governance framework should ensure high levels of participation by non-state actors in formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation process. The land policies developed should lead to the establishment of decentralised decision making. There has been some instance of best practice in countries such as Tanzania and Mozambique where non-state actors have been consulted in the development of land laws. The 1997 Land Law in Mozambique gained attention because of its democratic and open drafting process. The process included public hearings throughout the country and the recognition of customary law (Tanner, 2002). The African Land Policy Centre report (2020) on Southern Africa, argued that, in some countries the level of consultation was very high (Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique and South Africa), while in others it is limited or changed over time (Zimbabwe and Namibia respectively).

Land governance in Africa battles widespread corruption. The Transparency International Report (2019) on land corruption in Africa revealed that one in every five people in the world has to pay a bribe for land services and in Sub-Saharan Africa the number increases by one in every two people. Based on this, those who have the capacity to pay extra for a service or to speed up the various land related processes which are usually slow in Africa tend to benefit ahead of others. In such cases then, the gap between those who have and those who do not have widens leading to repeated cycles of land inequality. In 2023, the African Union (AU) launched its Land Governance Strategy, which recognises corruption as one of the challenges in land administration and service delivery. It describes corruption as a "multi-faceted problem" which manifests in many forms, including "hidden deals between private investors and local authorities". Other given examples of corruption include sextortion and payment of bribes for land services. In a survey conducted by Transparency International Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission in 2021, 62.7% of respondents highlighted the selective enforcement of the law as major challenge in the fight against land corruption. In Siera Leone, Transparency International noted an increase in the forging of land related documents and fake measurements of land.

2.4 Customary Tenure vs Freehold Tenure

In contrast to communal land under customary tenure, private property systems with formal titles are often believed to increase tenure security and foster economic development through enabling credit and land markets (Atwood, 1990; Binswanger et al., 1995; Borras, 2003; Pereira, 2021). These arguments date back to Garret Hardin's 1968 essay aptly entitled *'The tragedy of the Commons'.* The essay played a major role in shaping neoclassical policy prescriptions on land tenure from the 1970s well into the 1980s. In brief, Hardin argued that a shared village grazing pasture would tend to get overused and eventually destroyed because more people utilised the common grazing ground without paying for the cost of maintaining it, a phenomenon known in Economics as 'free riding'. This view inspired a variety of land reforms with a general trend toward market-oriented access to, and the privatisation of, land through private entitlement. The premise was simple: individualised tenure offers the best certainty in land rights, which provides incentives for sustainable use and facilitates access to credit for investment in agriculture and natural resources, hence contributing to increased productivity and improved natural resource stewardship (ECA, 2004, p. 15). Hernando De Soto, referred to by others as the genius of property rights also weighed in by claiming that many resources in the developing world are literally 'dead capital'. He argued that 'the major stumbling block that keeps the rest of the world from benefitting from capitalism is its inability to produce capital. Capital is the force that raises the productivity of labour and creates the wealth of nations' (DeSoto, 2000, p. 5). His argument is compelling. He proceeds to state that…

> *…the poor already possess assets they need to make a success of capitalism. But the only problem is that they hold these resources in defective forms: houses built on land whose ownership rights are not adequately recorded, unincorporated business with undefined liability, industries located where financiers and investors cannot see them. Because these assets are not adequately documented, these assets cannot readily be turned into capital, cannot be traded outside of narrow local circles where people know and trust each other, cannot be used as collateral for a loan and cannot be used as a share of against an investment.*

The opposite is true in the West; every parcel of land is represented in a property document, the title deed. He concludes by recommending legally integrated property systems that can convert their work and savings into capital. One of the ways of doing this is through titling programs. DeSoto's argument is more nuanced than Hardin's tragedy of the commons or free rider problem. It makes a compelling argument based on the true observation of entrepreneurial capabilities amongst the poor.

However, the assumptions of the allocative efficiency of freehold tenure have also been challenged; for instance, the World Bank (1991, 1995) in its technical studies on land in Zimbabwe revealed that land underutilisation was mostly practiced by large-scale farmers – only 65% of commercial farmland was under productive use. Meanwhile, in Kenya, a study carried out by Rutten (1992) in one of the three Maasai districts, where the individualisation of title was pursued through the establishment of group ranches, with funding from the World Bank and the United Kingdom'sDepartment for International Development (DfID), showed that grazing land had diminished by well over 40% over the period 1982–1990, leading to increased vulnerability and destitution of pastoralists, and it had also led to accelerated wanton environmental degradation. Land titling in Rwanda gained prominence as a case where land titling works. In a report prepared for the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) on the relationship between property rights and rural household welfare the study found that there is no evidence to support the expected outcomes of the conventional economic view on the link between stronger property rights and investment gains (Henley, 2013). The same report argued that there is a weak association between land rights and incentives than previously postulated. Security of tenure may be unimportant compared to other constraints faced by rural households. Other studies by the World Bank have demonstrated that while improved security is essential, this does not have to be achieved through asserting private property rights and indeed other forms of tenure including common property but also a range of registration systems can achieve the same end.

In 2009, the Nobel Peace Prize Committee awarded the prize for Economics to the now late Elinor Ostrom, Professor of Development Economics at Indiana University, together with Professor Oliver E. Williamson. Professor Ostrom was being recognised for her work on common property regimes; could this be a signal of a paradigm shift from the Hardin-inspired period? Essentially, Ostrom (1990) argued that far from a tragedy, the commons can be managed from the bottom-up towards shared prosperity, given the right institutions. She forcefully argued that other solutions exist instead of privatisation, and these entail stable institutions of self-governance which can be created if certain problems of supply, credibility, and monitoring are solved. Furthermore, it has been observed that when indigenous communities have secure land titles and sovereignty over their territories, those lands generally have more intact forests and improve conservation outcomes compared to other land ownership arrangements, including national parks.

In terms of land tenure, the argument seems to suggest the rethinking of customary/communal forms of tenure with an adequate institutional framework to address challenges of supply, production, and preservation. The current discussion on land tenure security is timely, it benefits from the outcomes of the various land reforms carried out across the continent including the land titling efforts in Mozambique and Zambia and the Zimbabwe redistribution exercises and the consequent ongoing re-arrangements to land tenure.

The Zambia National Land Titling Program was conceived in 2014 to create a comprehensive cadastral map of all the land in the country. At the time almost 80% of the land was not registered. There were only 14,200 land title certificates (Tembo, Minango and Sommerville, 2014). The program sought to guarantee the security of tenure, reduce displacements, promote internal security and increase the revenue base and investment into the country. Prior to titling the government of Zambia had passed the 1995 Lands Act which allows for conversion of land out of customary tenure. Tembo et al., (2017) argue that a significant but unknown portion of customary tenure has been converted to statutory tenure both by individuals and the state. Going and Mulenga (2015) argue that the percentage of land is approximately 60% of land implying that state land is now around 40%. Zimbabwe embarked on a program called Fast Track Land Reform starting in 2003 as part of an attempt to formalise widespread land occupations that had earnestly begun in 2000. The formalisation was through the introduction of a combination of leasehold and permissory tenure arrangement. Instead of private ownership the land, for a moment belonged to the state and beneficiaries were issued with leases and permits valid for 99 years. Several safeguards were built into these state-based tenures including the recognition of family (joint) ownership of land, clarity on inheritance and conditions of disposal. Since 2003 the number of those evicted from their land has been less than 5% of the total number of beneficiaries. However, the majority of the resettled have been unable to secure private sector financing for agricultural production and as of December 2024 the government of Zimbabwe announced plans to shift towards private tenure.

It has been argued that strengthening of tenure (through freehold and titling) will lead to increased access to credit. However, the evidence on the efficiency and equity effects of both land titling programs and the associated emergence of land markets and credit markets is ambiguous. Furthermore, very little has been said about eventual land concentration amongst a few owners due to private sales of land. Cases of freehold tenure related land concentration have been observed in an earlier study of resettlement (Murisa, 2009b). For instance, Dunstan farm in Goromonzi, Zimbabwe was established in 1902 and had been owned by the Calinan family ever since. The Deeds office records the previous owner of the farm as the Dunstan Estate Private Limited. From the 1950s to the early 1980s the farm expanded through the acquisition of neighbouring farms into the Dunstan Estate which measured 6 000 hectares at its peak in the 1980s. The farm expanded through the direct purchase of adjoining farms; Banana Grove, Fordyce, Dinhiri, Danab, Xanadu, Glen Avon and Brook Mead farms. It has also been recently reported that in the United Kingdom that half of the land is owned by 1% of the people.

Advocates for customary tenure argue that the long-standing focus on private ownership and land markets tended to neglect the importance of communal land tenure arrangements and the fact that individual private access to land could be relatively more secure under customary communal tenure. Furthermore, they argue that customary institutions regulate individual and communal access to land, and thus its distribution within communities. Land allocation is usually the responsibility of local authorities, which are often older male members who belong to the most powerful groups or ethnicities in the community (Antonio and Griffith-Charles, 2019, Fenrich et al., 2011a). The allotment of plots, their area, and location are highly specific to each community. In some cases, land allocation may only be seasonal for transitory crops or grazing (Chimhowu, 2019). In other cases, there are no clear boundaries and land allocation simply depends on the capacity of recipients to exploit the land and the current necessities of the community (Haller et al., 2019, Sward, 2017).

However, both arguments discussed above do not adequately deal with the existing land governance challenges confronting many African communities. The customary tenure school exaggerates the equilibrium created by the overlapping institutions and oversimplifies the role and capacities of traditional authority. In practice traditional authorities (rural elites) have colluded with outsiders to facilitate land transactions where a 'market' does not exist. Furthermore, in many countries customary land is held in trust by the President, which suggests stability but in practice politicians have also signed off land to private investors without adequately consulting with communities (see for instance Murisa and Nobela, 2022). The absence of an active land market has led to collapse and decay in some communities. Unlike their urban counterparts, rural communities cannot leverage their properties to secure investments for their plots and they do not have an exit option. They cannot sell their land or investments on the land at market prices to enable them to diversify into other non-land-based livelihood activities. The challenges of private tenure have been exhaustively discussed. Is there a hybrid to consider? These are some of the issues that will be discussed in the final chapter of the book.

2.5 Policy Considerations in Resolving the Land Question

There are various strands of ongoing land reform policy debates. First the debates have focused on the identification of the best model of land ownership to optimise land use, could it be private vs *group title*? Should the title be formal or informal? Second, many African countries are struggling with the appropriate way of attracting foreign investment into agriculture. Should they develop *large-scale or small-scale agriculture*? Third, is the political question; how do countries democratise land access and use- legal institutions vs legitimacy in practice. Fourth, Social and Administrative Capacity: what is the most effective institutional framework for the governance of land? Could it be central or local government? Fifth, what should be the role of the state in land? Should the government be the owner or confine itself as a regulator? Sixth (and perhaps more controversially) is it still necessary to talk about land reform?

3

Land Grabbing: From Colonial Times to the 21st Century

3.1 Introduction

There have been four rounds of land alienation across Africa since the final decades of the 19th century. These land alienations have mostly been shaped to conform with the dominant patterns of capitalist accumulation. The first wave of land alienation was during the onset of colonial rule, followed by the agro-fuel frenzy at the beginning of the 21st century. The agro-fuel frenzy was short lived it soon gave in to the large-scale investments for food production. The latest round is colloquially referred to as the period of 'green grabs' based on the recent discovery of 'carbon markets', an innovation which allows for environmental polluters to buy 'unused forests' in Africa. The phases are not distinct from each other, they overlap and are largely driven by an imperial capitalist framework which has always viewed Africa and other developing regions as sites of accumulation for the Global North.

The discussion in this chapter provides a more detailed sketch of the four phases of land alienation mentioned above across Africa. In the process it examines the impact of these land alienation on African agriculture, rural livelihoods and the bigger question of democracy. The chapter makes it clear that Africa is yet to achieve the requisite policy autonomy to decide and align land policies and laws to emerging challenges of increased rural fragility and uncertainty. The failure to resolve the land question(s) has impacted negatively on prospects to sustain the twin post-independence projects of development and democracy. Implied in the argument is that the resolution of Africa's land question is synonymous with the achievement of democracy and development. At some point the Zimbabwe African National Union's (ZANU-PF), a political party, campaign mantra was, 'the land is the economy, the economy is the land' perhaps as part of an attempt to demonstrate the importance of access to land in driving and achieving economic growth. However, it is also noteworthy that every political party makes similar connections between access to land and economic growth. There is no clear consensus across Africa on the relevance of land to economic development.

3.2 Land Grabbing

Land grabbing has been a predominant feature of capitalist expansion since the late 19th century. Access to vast tracts of land across the continent to produce for the home market played a huge role in what is generally referred to as the scramble for Africa and the promotion of modern patterns of capitalist expansion. The demise of trans-Atlantic slavery opened a new frontier of colonial expansion and development. At the beginning of the industrial revolution, labour was concentrated in rural areas under feudal labour relations. Industrialisation was a liberating project. Many peasants (and at times serfs) were now free to abandon working conditions and migrate into urban areas with the hope of securing and selling their labour on better terms. The industrialisation project in Western Europe initially had the capacity to absorb this labour. However, it soon ran into problems of surplus labour. There were more labourers than firms could absorb. The nascent industrial growth was in a state of imbalance and faced prospects of riots across emerging cities like Manchester. Furthermore, the rapid growth of industry in England and eventually all of Europe created demand initially for raw materials such as cotton (from India) and eventually for land beyond the shores of Europe. This marked the beginning of a different form of imperialism, the occupation of colonies. As Cecil Rhodes, one of the chief architects of the colonisation project, remarks as quoted in *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism:*

> *"I was in the East End of London (a working-class quarter) yesterday and attended a meeting of the unemployed. I listened to the wild speeches, which were just a cry for 'bread! bread!' and on my own I pondered over the scene and I became more than ever convinced of the importance of imperialism… My cherished idea is a solution for the social problem, that us, in order to save the 40 million inhabitants of the United Kingdom from a bloody civil war, we colonial statesmen must acquire new lands to settle the surplus population, to provide new markets for the goods produced in the factories and the mines. The Empire, as I have always said, is a bread-and-butter question. If you want to avoid civil war, you must become imperialists." (Lenin, 1977:225)*

3.3 The Scramble for Africa

The colonisation project entailed alienation of vast tracts of land from the locals. Countries such as Kenya, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe went through settler colonialism and more than 50% of their arable agriculture land was alienated. The alienation led to an extremely skewed distribution of land-ownership. It was most excessive in South Africa, where 60,000 white South African farmers, who form only 5% of the population, owned almost 86% of the farmland and 68% of the total surface area at independence in 1994 (Lahiff, 2002; Thwala and Khosa 2007; Moyo 2000a). The average amount of land held per person in South Africa is slightly more than 1 hectare for blacks and 1,570 hectares for whites. In Zimbabwe, until 2003, approximately 4,500 white commercial farmers controlled 31% of the country's prime land, or about 42% of the agricultural land (under freehold tenure), while 1.2 million families subsisted on 41% of the country's area (Moyo, 2005). In Namibia, some 4,000 white settler freeholders own 6,400 farms, totaling 36.5 million hectares with an average farm size of 5,700 hectares. On the other hand, smallholder farming covers 34 million hectares and supports 140,000 families or about 50% of the population.

There is a misrepresentation in some literature that there was no significant land alienation in non-settler countries. Vast amounts of land were expropriated to establish tea, coffee and sugar estates in Malawi, Uganda and Zambia. Furthermore, Moyo (2008) notes that while tropical Africa may not share Southern African's history of settler colonialism, it has undergone colonial and post-colonial integration into generalised commodity production and has experienced the typical pressures of land alienation and concentration of landed capital (Moyo, 2008b). Common land problems across sub-regions include insecurity of tenure, land subdivision and informal land markets, and land dispossession and concentration. These challenges are further compounded by externally imposed land use changes and undemocratic, patriarchal local government systems that adjudicate and administer land disputes (Moyo and Yeros, 2005a). For instance, countries such as Tanzania and Malawi have undergone significant land subdivisions in the past fifty years, to such an extent that actual landholdings (averaging 0.2 hectares per family) are inadequate to support a typical family of at least four members.

It is important to note that independence from colonial rule did not necessarily lead to a reversal of the colonial land grab except in a few instances such as Zimbabwe. Instead, new constitutions in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia placed all land or substantial fractions of national territory under the control of the state without recognising the claims of local communities (Haller et al., 2019). One must remember that the post-colonial state was not about connecting with the pre-colonial but rather it built upon the colonial order. The pre-colonial era was in many instances characterised by numerous kingdoms which exercised self-rule over smaller territories than what emerged in the post-colonial era. The post-colonial land tenure system is usually a fusion of a corrupted customary tenure system with notions of a centrally controlled modern state. Many governments in the post-independence era widely acknowledge customary and community land rights, but unfortunately very few have taken the necessary steps to establish strong legal protections needed to secure these tenure systems. Consequently, smallholder communities across Africa and Asia are losing their land to governments and corporations for economic development and commercial investment purposes.

Post-independence land grabs have been promoted by governments leaning more or favouring investors at the expense of the communities affected. National development plans like the Plan Senegal Emergent (PSE) adopted in 2014 are to promote large-scaleinvestments in land. This plan aims to transform the economy and create industrial hubs for export growth and job creation. Currently, four Special Economic Zones (SEZs) covering nearly 1,000 hectares have been established. However, SEZs dispossess communities of their customary land and introduce other challenges, not limited to environmental impacts and low local labour absorption (Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa Senegal, 2023 Report). These acquisitions are often justified as development and investment initiatives but usually result in the displacement of local farmers and rural dwellers without compensation or restitution (Elhadary and Obeng-Odoom, 2012). Similar experiences can be noted in countries like Togo where existing laws such as the Togolese land code which does not allow foreigners to acquire land unless they have special authorisation. Despite the existence of such land governing laws, several foreigners have large land holdings acquired through the back door. One paradox of land governance in most African countries is the failure to adhere to their laws.

Abubakari (2018) argues that the combination of communal ownership of land and lack of individual land rights documentation have led to the weak tenure security of the African people, as their land rights are not officially protected by law. In Zambia most land grabs that have occurred between 2000 - 2020 were connected to the Farm Block Development Program (FBDP), which was initiated by the government of Zambia. Foreign actors (e.g., investors and companies) took parts of land, especially within the FBDP, resulting in the displacement of the local people. Other land-grabbers include ‘insiders’, such as the government of Zambia, the Ministry of Lands, and the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operative. In addition, it was found that individuals using off-farm income, especially those from the public sector, acquired large tracts of emergent farm areas. This group, usually from urban areas, does not have any previous farming experience, but acquired land titles in emergent farm areas. Zambian ‘elites’ like their counterparts in other African countries have become land-grabbers as they push local farmers away from emergent farm areas by acquiring land titles (Sitko, 2014). In some instances, land grabbing in Zambia has been framed as 'accumulation by dispossession,' a concept associated with Harvey (2003) and also used to describe Zimbabwe's Fast-Track Land Reform Program (FTLRP). The customary land rights of the ordinary Zambians are weak and insufficiently protected by the law. The government has on several instances leased land to foreign investors without consulting the local people.

However affected communities are organising themselves to resist land alienations (GRAIN, 2016). Responses toward land grabs 'extend far beyond "resistance" in its many manifestations – to demands for compensation, insertion and even counter-mobilisations against land deal resisters' (Hall et al., 2015, p. 467). Communities are more informed, and they are taking action like never before. There are numerous coalitions and campaigns against land grabbing operating at local, national and regional levels. In many places, these struggles are converging, bringing together farmers, migrant groups, fisherfolk, indigenous peoples, pastoralists and others. These movements are developing new strategies to challenge corporations and governments and build international solidarity. Resistance is also growing as barriers between different frontline struggles are breaking down. In Senegal, for example, farmers' organisations are supporting pastoralists who are the first affected by certain projects. GRAIN (2016) notes that in Mali, urban groups displaced by industrial development projects are now the first to travel to rural areas to help farmers defend their lands. Resistance against land grabs is at the forefront of many of today's struggles for social, political and economic transformation, putting corporations and governments colluding complicit with land grabbing on the defensive.

The resistance stems from conflicting claims over land and territories and arises as companies tear down forests, dig up burial sites, fence off pastoral zones and pollute the air and water. It grows as security forces clash with communities and as lawyers harass civil society, activists and journalists. In Senegal communities have taken a stand against land grabs. The African Food Report (2023) argues that the inadequate response is based on lack of information on available processes to claim back land or that communities cede to their fate without resistance in fear of potential reprisals. The Africa Food Systems (AFS) Forum Report on Senegal, highlight that citizens affected by land grabs are not just bystanders they have actively collaborated movements reclaiming their land in various ways.

3.4 What are the Drivers of Post-independence Large-Scale Land Grabs?

Back in 2011, we (Murisa and Helliker) wrote that Africa is under siege from a phenomenon of land grabs. We were not alone to make the same observation. Cotula et al. (2009) writing for a commissioned International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) study had made similar observations. Moyo and Yeros (2014) in 'Reclaiming the Nation' renamed this process into what they called a 'new scramble for Africa'. The earlier scramble happened at the end of the 19th century culminating in the Berlin conference (see above). Cotula et al. (2009:3) observed that, since 2004, a total of 2,492,684 hectares of land have been allocated to foreign investors in Mali, Ghana, Madagascar, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Furthermore, Afolabi (2021b) notes that land grabs have emerged as a point of focus in shaping past and present dimensions of food security, poverty alleviation, and responsible agricultural investment, all key objectives of land governance. While land grabbing is recognised as a global phenomenon, it is particularly prevalent in Africa due to the continent's favourable physical resources compared to other continents (Anseeuw, 2013; Cotula et al., 2014). Land deals, defined as "transactions that entail a transfer of rights to use, control or own land through sale, lease or concession" (Anseeuw et al., 2012b, p.1) have become quite common across most of Africa. These land investments or deals were characterised by the demand for huge tracts of land; for instance, one investor in Mali was allocated 100,000 hectares of land for an irrigation project. Unlike the earlier scramble for Africa, this phase was driven in the main by corporate investors, although many had the backing of their mostly 'Western' governments (with Middle East and East Asian state involvement also on the rise). There is also dramatic irony to all this. African countries have successfully carried out important policy reforms to allow for large-scale land investments, and many are now considered a safe foreign direct investment destination. The new posture assumes that there is enough land in Africa. It was and still is assumed that Africa is home to vast tracks of arable but unused land. In addition, there are some cases of African countries such as Egypt and South Africa, that were seeking new farming land as a response to threats of food insecurity and to accommodate mostly minority large-scale commercial farmers. At the centre of the dramatic rise in land acquisitions across Africa and elsewhere were three main drivers, which are reflected in the term 'the triple-F crisis': food, fuel and finance (Hall, 2015).

3.4.1 F for Fuel-A Bromance with Agro-Fuels

Persistent fossil fuel price increases on the global market, coupled with the negative impact of carbon emitted from these fuels and the real decline in available stocks, have led to a concerted search for sustainable alternatives. Biofuels produced from crops suddenly became a popular alternative. Several Western governments set consumption targets (in the European Union (EU), for instance) and financial incentives for diversifying into bio (agro) fuels. The EU set a target of 10% renewable content in its fuel stocks by 2020, and this constituted a very substantial demand for renewables. These incentives became a key driving force for large-scaleland investment of agro-fuel expansion into other underdeveloped regions such as Africa. Furthermore, it has been argued that Africa has a big potential to produce bioenergy since it accounts for the largest share of the world's estimated non-protected grassland and woodland areas potentially suitable for the main biofuel feedstocks (maize, cassava, soyabeans, jatropha) and large areas of Africa's cultivated land are also potentially suitable for biofuel crops (Giovannetti, 2013).

Specific data on land devoted to agrofuels and the number of displaced smallholders was not readily available. Giovannetti and Ticci (2013) argue that between 2001 and 2012, Sub-Saharan Africa attracted about 57% of worldwide large-scale land deals to cultivate only crops that can be used as biofuel feedstocks, covering almost half of the global targeted area for this purpose (i.e. 12 million out of 26 million hectares). Large-scale land deals for biofuel production in Africa once covered 18.8 million hectares, which corresponded to 66% of total land acquisitions on the continent for all targeted sectors (industry, other agricultural commodities, mining, forestry, and tourism) and to 50% of global land deals for biofuel crops. Giovannetti and Ticci (2013) argue that between 2001 and 2012, Sub-Saharan Africa attracted about 57% of worldwide large-scale land deals to cultivate only crops that can be used as biofuel feedstocks covering almost half of the global targeted area for this purpose (i.e. 12 million out of 26 million hectares)

In Tanzania, 18,000 hectares of land was leased to Sun-Bio-fuels of the

United Kingdom and 10,000 hectares to PROKON of Germany; and in Kenya, 93,000 hectares was leased to Bio- energy International of Switzerland (Thompson, 2008). Significantly, in Uganda, attempts to clear 7,100 hectares of Mabira Forest by the Sugar Corporation of Uganda Limited (SCOUL) to grow sugar for ethanol production were actively opposed by pro-conservation civil society-based activists who argued that the project could endanger the reserve's hydrological cycle and a considerable number of people living around the reserve (Masiga, 2009). At the peak of the rush to agro fuels in 2009 the World Bank found that 21% of land deals were for biofuel production, while the International Land Coalition's (ILC) more updated figures put this higher, at 44%. However, it seems that the rush to grab land for biofuels has significantly slowed down and in some instances, land has been repurposed for other uses.

Expanding biofuel production can lead to increasing competition and pressures on water, land and forest and competition with uses of these resources. Besides the land insecurities associated with the land grabs, the new land-use patterns deriving from these investments negatively affect the environment. Scientific evidence shows, for example, that some crops necessary for agro-fuel production require very large amounts of organic fertilisers and water. Engaging in large-scaleenergy-crop plantations may require significant trade-offs between lower food security and higher exports of energy crops which, in the end, may undercut the viability of petty commodity producers. Finally, the United Nations (UN) Committee on World Food Security, for instance, concluded that: "Large-scaleinvestment is damaging the food security, incomes, livelihoods and environment for local people (p. 8)" (HLPE, 2011). Furthermore, it was argued at the time that biofuels production would like to compete with food crops and have significant negative impacts on food security – the so-called "food versus fuel" debate. The competition between biofuels and food, as an end-use of the same crop (e.g. maize, sugarcane) or as alternative land uses (e.g. oil palm versus food crops), usually increases food production pressures (Cotula et al., 2008).

However, and fortunately the decline in oil price from the highs of 2008 dampened enthusiasm for biofuel investments. Since then, technology has shifted towards solar or electric powered vehicles which may suggest the end of biofuel-related large-scale land investments in the future. According to the 2021-2023 Land Matrix, a platform supported by the International Land

Coalition, there are only 8.8million hectares of land dedicated to biofuels. It is, however, not clear if these figures include the earlier rounds of investments.

3.4.2 F for Food Security

The food price hikes of 2007 and 2008 shook the assumption that the world will continue to experience low food prices. Beginning in 2008 large-scale acquisitions of farmland in Africa, Latin America, Central Asia and Southeast Asia made headlines in a flurry of media reports across the world. Cotula et al. (2009) argued that the land grabbing is fueled by food supply problems and uncertainties created by constraints in agricultural production due to limited availability of water and arable land; by bottlenecks in storage and distribution; and by the expansion of biofuel production, an important competing land and crop use. Hall and Paradza (2012) argue that because of the meltdown of international financial markets, investors considered those markets very volatile and risky hence the decision to invest in land with the hope that rising demand for food would make this a secure investment. Large-scaleagricultural projects are an aspect of global land grab. It is estimated that by 2050, the global population is projected to reach approximately 9.1 billion. To meet the rising demand for food, agricultural production will need to increase by 70% to accommodate the growing population. Many governments that were concerned about the stability of food supplies are promoting acquisition of farmland in foreign countries as an alternative to purchasing food from international markets. Recipient countries, welcoming the new wave of foreign investment, are implementing policy and legislative reforms to attract investors.

Others cited the growth of China's middle class, overall increasing urbanisation and changing diets as also responsible for pushing global food demand. African countries were complicit too. The driving force behind this new scramble seems to be a concern for food security within the investing country, especially in the aftermath of the 2007 and 2008 food crisis and riots. For instance, Egypt is the largest consumer of wheat in Africa; it needs approximately 14 million tons a year but was producing only 8 million tons at that time. In February 2010 it entered into an agreement to rent land from the Ugandan government. Previously, Egypt had acquired land in May 2008 in Sudan for the same purposes, cultivating approximately 809,400 hectares near the border town of Wadi. As well, Egypt currently operates three farms in other African countries: a rice farm in Niger, a vegetable farm in Tanzania and a maize farm in Zambia (Pollock, 2010). The Democratic Republic of Congo leased over 200,000 hectares of land to a South African farmer in a deal brokered by the Zuma government with a provision for a further 10 million hectares. This land has been offered free of charge on a 30 year lease basis, with tax exemptions, repatriation of profits, no export restrictions and possibilities of renewal of the lease (Sharife, 2009).

However, land grabs (large-scaleland investments) for purely securing food security offshore have slowed down. While fewer new deals are added today compared to the late 2000s, large land deals are still being negotiated, concluded, and implemented on the ground with far-reaching consequences for the local population (Lay et al., 2021a).

3.4.3 F for Finance (Carbon Credits)

There is a new trade in town. Polluters, whether countries or corporations can offset their pollution levels by purchasing large tracts of land and ensuring they remain unused, serving solely as carbon sinks. Unlike in the earlier frenzy, in this instance investors are looking to acquire land to not cultivate, but to earn carbon credits. The Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) is an instrument that emphasises the strategic importance of controlling forested land—and most of Africa's savannah can be counted as natural forest for these purposes (Hall, 2012).

There have been roughly 260,000 voluntary carbon deals since 2010. It is estimated that a fifth of the large-scale land investments falls into the category of what is referred to as green grabs. This is land being purchased to offset carbon emissions. Governments have committed vast areas for carbon removal initiatives, with carbon and biodiversity offset markets growing rapidly, valued at US$ 414 billion in 2023 and projected to reach US$ 1,800 billion by 2030. Dooley et al. (2022) notes that the current national climate pledges and commitments already claim an unrealistic 1.2 billion hectares of land for biological carbon removal in the coming decades. Even if only a fraction of all pledges and commitments are put into practice, this could exceed by far the cumulative amount of about 30 to 50 million hectares recorded for large-scale land acquisitions in the agricultural sector (Science Direct, n.d.).

The trade or rather cooperation around offsetting carbon has since 2021 been based on Article 6 of the Paris Agreement which provides a framework on how countries can pursue voluntary cooperation to reach their climate targets. It allegedly enables international cooperation to tackle climate change and unlock financial support for developing countries. Specifically, through Article 6, countries can collaborate in achieving their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by trading carbon credits. Furthermore, the article offers a framework for Global North countries and companies to invest outside of their countries. The first Article 6 deal was between Switzerland and Thailand. This Swiss investment in Thailand is an important milestone. It marks the first time that Article 6 units are transferred internationally (from Thailand) to be accounted for in another country's NDC (Switzerland). Furthermore, at Conference of the Parties (COP 28), Singapore and Papua New Guinea (PNG) signed an Implementation Agreement, setting up a legally binding framework for the development and trade of carbon credits. However, it is important to note that at COP28 countries did not agree on Article 6 in its entirety. Existing carbon offsetting arrangements or investments tend to be bilateral in nature and yet to be registered in the proposed UN Registry. There are currently 19 Article 6.2 pilots (large-scaleland investments) spread across the continent. The table below provides an overview of the participating countries.

TABLE 3-1: PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES IN ARTICLE 6.2 PILOT PROJECTS

Buyer Country	Host Country
Switzerland	Ghana, Malawi, Morocco, Senegal, Tunisia, Kenya
Japan	Ethiopia, Kenya, Senegal, Tunisia, Papua New Guinea
South Korea	Gabon
Singapore	Ghana, Morocco, Papua New Guinea, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal
Norway	Morocco, Senegal
Sweden	Ghana

There are several companies that are active in the Carbon Credit Markets. In the run-up to COP28 in Dubai a company called Blue Carbon was extremely active. The company signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) to develop carbon projects with the governments of Liberia, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Zambia, Papua New Guinea, Union of Comoros, St. Lucia, Bahamas, and Commonwealth of Dominica.

Bureaucratic delays may work in the favor of African countries. According to Article 6 host countries are required to define institutional arrangements to authorise the land deals. There is a need to align Article 6 strategies with broader climate targets and establishing processes to comply with reporting requirements. Many African countries are still in the early stages of developing their domestic frameworks to make the necessary decisions to participate in Article 6. To date only Ghana has managed to produce an authorisation letter for the export of Internationally Transferred Mitigation Outcomes (Article 6.2 units) of a climate-smart rice project to Switzerland (Ghana UN, 2022).

3.5 Land Grabs, Democracy and Livelihoods

Governance of natural resources in Africa has always been controversial. Despite being endowed with productive natural resources as land, historically this wealth has not benefited local communities as it should. Agunyai and Amusani (2023) argue that loopholes in land governance in Africa have partly made the continent appear like a resource cursed region. The failure of governments to control and equitably distribute natural resources has brought with it many challenges from conflicts to widening poverty through the disruption of livelihoods. To date almost 9% of Africa's land has changed ownership since 2000 through these large-scale land investments schemes. Furthermore, these land grabs have devastating impacts on democracy (Juvernics, 2019). Land grabs obstruct democratic participation in land governance. The manner which large-scaleland investments have been negotiated has worsened prospects for improving land governance structures and systems across Africa. The existence of land policies alone is not sufficient if the enforcement and implementation mechanisms are inadequate. Countries like Mozambique have considerably good laws and policies but still face challenges in implementation (Nhatumbo and Salomao, 2009). For instance, consultation records often do not accurately reflect on community opinions. Communities do not receive adequate information prior to the consultation meetings and consultations are dominated by traditional leaders.

Land grabbing in Africa, no matter its justification, affects both the rural and urban, particularly the rural areas where most of the dispossession takes place under the guise of agricultural investment (Kaag and Zoomers, 2014). The 2007 declaration of La Via Campesina firmly declared that,

> *'Our land is our identity, it is not for sale … We need to fight against all forms of expulsion of peoples from their territories and against mechanisms that favor remote, corporate or centralised control of territories … '.*

It is for such reasons that the 'land grab' phenomenon has become an effective framing opportunity to raise awareness around the negative impacts of large-scale land investments (Larder, 2015).

In many instances, land grabs (whether legal or illegal have) have occurred at the expense of human rights, environment and food sovereignty as put by Hall (2015). The analysis made by Land Matrix (2009) suggests that massive land acquisitions are concentrated in countries where there are weaker governance systems. The nature of the deals associated with land investments lack transparency, with most deals taking place behind closed doors. The limited engagement of affected communities during negotiations over land deals was raised as a major concern by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (2009) in their report on land grabs. The report notes the limited participation of communities. Transparency International and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) (2018) highlighted that respect for land legislation depends on strong and effective oversight institutions including law enforcement bodies.

Land grabs have led to loss of human lives. According to the International Land Coalition, from the figures that were released by Global Witness, 227 people were killed in 2020 while trying to protect forests, land and other ecosystems that their livelihood depended on. In December 2018, Human Rights Watch and the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders in a joint report noted that Kenyan police and the military were harassing and intimidating environmental rights activists in Lamu county, Coast Region. The report noted that at least 35 activists campaigning against the region's mega infrastructure and transport projects under the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor Project (LAPSSET) had faced threats, beatings, arbitrary arrests, and detentions. The plight of these activists reverberates with the lived experiences of community-based natural resource defenders in Africa. It signals a pattern of sustained and intensified criminalisation of defenders, regardless of the nature of the land or environmental rights they seek to assert or the formations and platforms through which they find a voice. During an interview conducted by Defend Defenders (2018) in Uganda, one responded remarked that "the moment you start defending people you are a political opponent". These violations cut across many countries.

In Tanzania, Indigenous communities such as the Maasai continue to be criminalised whenever they defend their land rights. According to Defend Defenders (2018), "The Maasai peoples of East Africa have inhabited parts of what are now Kenya and Tanzania for centuries." They are known for their distinctive dress and pervasive pastoralist culture, centred on seminomadic cattle herding. When the Serengeti National Park was gazetted in 1959, many Maasais lost grazing rights in much of the Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater, and at least 50,000 have since been evicted or displaced, according to some estimates. In February 2010, a group of Maasai pastoralists filed a complaint against Tanzanian breweries on the basis that the group, alongside corrupt government officials, had forcibly evicted them from their ancestral land without consent or compensation. It is argued that over the course of the case some defender's homes were deliberately put on fire. Five years later in 2015, the court ruled against the Maasai further paving way for human rights violations and conflict. The violation of will and use of force to enforce decisions is undemocratic and questions Africa's governance in relation to land. During the 77th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (2023) it was established that while laws promise that human rights defenders should operate freely without reprisals, States are creating an environment that is not conducive for their activities. Defenders are being referred to as foreign agents for regime change, the freedoms of association and freedom of assembly continues to be impeded.

In the Tana Delta region of Kenya, for example, more than 25,000 people were evicted from their ancestral land for the Mumias sugar cane project, and in the process subjecting the local community to destitution, deprived of the means of subsistence (McVeigh, 2015). In 2011, 20,000 people were evicted in order to make way for a new plantation run by the United Kingdom-based New Forest Company (Martin-Prevel and Mohammed, 2014). Land grabs have negative impacts on income, undermining livelihoods, the erosion of community-based social security mechanisms, and weaken adaptive capacity and resilience of small holder farmers (Hák et al., 2018). Pollution and environmental degradation can also both affect livelihoods that depend on natural resources and undermine the enjoyment of important human rights including the right to a healthy environment, the right to health, and the right to respect for private and family life. Mckay (2017) posits that, land investments tend to put control of land in the hands of landholding and capitalist elites often to the disadvantage of peasant livelihoods – a condition which food sovereignty movements actively resist.

Weldemichel (2021) argues that land grabs do not happen in a vacuum. People, through long processes of marginalisation, are made to relocate. Local people either relocate themselves because the living conditions have deteriorated due to disinvestments in basic social services or life is made unbearable through impositions of restrictions that make voluntary relocation possible. In the case of Ngorongoro in Tanzania, in 2012, a UNESCO World Heritage assessment committee urged the Tanzanian government to work towards relocating the residents of Ngorongoro 'voluntarily' by 'increasing incentives to relocate' (UNESCO, 2012). There are ongoing preparations to relocate people to areas outside the conservation area. Schools are being built outside the area to accept Maasai pupils who are willing to resettle. Pastoral communities face increasing stigmatisation and disregard of their knowledge, their historic pastoral arrangements are dismantled, and they are left at the mercy of the state and the market (ecotourism) for living.

In Kenya, the Digo and Kamba communities were displaced to pave way for mining activities. The mining of the titanium deposits is accompanied by timbering, road construction, milling, a power generating plant, powerlines and waste piles. Communities were evicted without regard to the fact that their livelihoods are dependent on access to the land since they are bound to the land economically, socially and spiritually. According to the Environmental Justice Atlas (2015), mining activities contaminate soils making them unsuitable for crop cultivation. The large-scale investment projects threaten land tenure security, and in turn livelihoods, since they lead to loss of access to land for small scale farmers who need land for subsistence, food production and pastoralism which leads to loss of access to natural resources, for example, fisheries and forest products such as honey and water.

3.6 Conclusion

The discussion has demonstrated the extent to which the various land grabs have played out across Africa. These processes of land alienation have significantly infringed on the right to development. They continue to perpetuate the patterns initially introduced during the colonial era. Africa remains a junior appendage in the global development process. Many still view it as a site of extractive exploitation. The African elite, active in business and policy making has at times been complicit in either promoting a framework that allows for land grabs or become participants in grabbing land. These processes have led to a deepening of poverty and inequality. Unfortunately land grabs are not part of any government's agenda-as a phenomenon to be stopped. Rather governments have framed these as important large-scaleland investments necessary for Africa's development. There are isolated pockets of resistance in the form of affected communities, social movements and progressive Non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

African countries can draw lessons from others that faced a similar situation. The first policy base should focus on investment in strengthening land governance institutions to serve their original mandate. Whilst others such as the FAO have noted that some of the land deals can be of benefit and ensure that the interests of affected communities are protected, there is need to challenge the idea of globalised forms or approaches to development. How is globalisation influencing the purchase of vast tracks of land and what harm is it inflicting on communities? There is a need to ensure that commercial interests are balanced with local community interest. Furthermore, there is evidence that these large-scale land investments potentially fuel corruption within African governments and even amongst traditional leaders. Perhaps, globalisation in the form of new technology can help counter corporate greed and corruption. In some countries blockchain technology has been revolutionising land administration and titling making it more transparent.

4

The Contemporary Agrarian Question in Africa

4.1 Introduction

Africa is now totally liberated from colonial rule. Yet it remains the most impoverished. The industrialisation project has not taken off and most of its population is rural, engaged in smallholder agriculture. As of 2023 an average of 51.28% of the African population lived in rural areas. Burundi is the most rural, 85.22% and Gabon is the most urbanised with only 8.97% residing in the rural areas. In the place of equitable development and economic freedom, independence has instead yielded monopolisation of property and concentration of power in the hands of a small elite. The concentration of land ownership and economic power in the hands of a small elite has hindered equitable development in many African countries (Obeng-Odoom, 2020). The 'National Question' has been subsumed within cartelised forms of primitive accumulation. There is no coherent vision on what it will take for Africa's economic transformation from a predominantly exporter of primary goods (mostly agricultural and mining). Instead, Africa has been characterised by what Paul Collier (2007) has described as the race to the bottom; a process characterised by removing trade and investment barriers as part of the suite of World Trade Organisation (WTO) recommendations on competitiveness. The results have been disastrous for many of the economies.

Samir Amin raised a critical question way back in the 1980s and we paraphrase it here… ‘is it possible to achieve the next stage of development without resolving the agrarian question?’. Amin argued that the failure of 'development' has been more dramatic for Africa than for any other region. Africa has not yet started its agricultural revolution without which no further stage of development can be considered. It revolves around a discussion on the extent to which the African Union has attempted to carry out corrective measures and address the question of agrarian transformation. It is important to note from the beginning that African agriculture has been subject to various forms of intervention since independence. The most significant being Structural Adjustment Programs(SAPs).

4.2 Background: Africa’s Looming Hunger Crisis

During the 1970s there existed an optimism surrounding the contribution of agriculture towards Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and eventual industrialisation but that dream never materialised. The failure of the industrialisation project is attributed to inefficient policies like Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI). The Borgen Project (2019) argues that ISI may have strengthened the domestic economy, but it weakened the overall product. Countries in Africa that adopted ISI did not expose themselves to international competition, hence their products were not as good as international products.

African countries that were originally net food exporters had by the late 1990s become net importers of food. In 1980, Africa had an almost balanced agricultural trade when both agricultural exports and imports were at about US$ 14 billion, but by 2007 its agricultural imports exceeded agricultural exports by about US$ 22 billion (FAOSTAT, 2011). FAO data show that in 2007, about one-third (19 out of 53) of African countries had enough agricultural export revenue to pay for their food import bills, and the rest had to draw money from other resources or wait for food donations to ensure a stable food supply. FAO in its report "Why Africa has become a net importer of food",,US$ posits that, for countries like Burundi, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Gambia, Sao Tome and Principe and Somalia, total export revenues on all merchandises (agricultural and non-agricultural) were far short of agricultural (including food) import bills.

Projections by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) indicate that Africa's annual food imports will increase significantly by a factor of seven from US$ 15 billion in 2018 to US$ 110 billion by 2025 and by a factor of three from the current US$ 43 billion (ECA, 2021a). Omamo et al., 2006; Diao et al., 2008 have documented the causes of the persistent growth in net agricultural and food imports in Africa and have cited a host of explanations such as low productivity, poor agricultural and trade infrastructure, low internal and external trade capacity, low investment in agricultural resources (human, natural, financial, equipment), domestic and foreign policy distortions, high population growth, and political instability and civil unrest.

Currently most of the sub-Saharan Africa region faces significant economic challenges characterised by limited industrialisation, high levels of unemployment, agrarian constraints made manifest through declining agricultural yields, an increase in food insecurity, and limited uptake of technological innovations, an upward trend in rural-urban migration and increased levels of poverty. Progress against hunger has largely been stagnant in recent years. The Global Hunger Index (2022) suggests that the situation is likely to worsen in the face of overlapping global crises like climate change, conflict and economic meltdowns which are some of the factors which exacerbate hunger. The index showed that countries such as Zimbabwe, Angola, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritiana, Nigeria and Botswana were among those experiencing serious hunger. Latest data shows that Africa remains the region with the largest estimated proportion of the population facing hunger with 20.4%, compared with 8.1% in Asia, 6.2% in Latin America and the Caribbean, and 7.3% in Oceania according to the Report on the Global State of Food Security (2024). It is projected that by the end of the decade, 582 million people will be chronically undernourished and that more than half of them will be in Africa. Based on a recent ECA (2021b) study, 476 million Africans (or about one third of population) were projected to be in poverty in 2024, which is about 50 million more than before COVID. Based on these projections, AGRA (2023) report argues that it would be difficult for Africa to achieve its goal of ending hunger by 2030 – a Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) target and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2.

In 2017, 226 million people which is 28% of Africa's population were chronically hungry (FAO, 2017). While the proportion of the population facing hunger is dropping slightly, the absolute numbers are rising inexorably. Indeed, by 1987 Samir Amin was already raising an alarm bell around the failure of the national liberation movement. He argued,

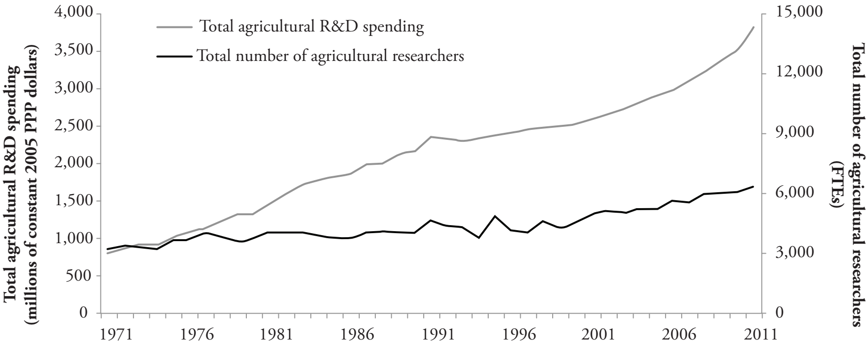
> *"The old movement of national liberation, whose objective was political independence, has exhausted its potential. The [then] 50-state Africa to whose creation it contributed finds itself in a dilemma: of economic development whose contrasted effects are ever more explosive: urbanisation and mass unemployment, agricultural stagnation, soil deterioration, famines and massive imports of food products, growing external dependency" (Amin, 1987b:8).*

4.3 Collapse of Africa's Development for Security Project

The petro-dollar crisis of the late 1970s led to a new economic order for Global South countries. Their challenge in accessing foreign currency and failure to settle debts led to the introduction of adjustment programs. These International Monetary Fund (IMF)/ World Bank (WB) and donor countries' led reform measures were informed by thinking that Global South governments were overspending on money that they do not have. Indeed, many governments were literally broke with limited import cover. The prescription was to reduce government spending by cutting down on bloated bureaucracies, or scaling down on social expenditure, removing subsidies in agriculture and privatisation of state-owned enterprises. The measures were so radical, in some instances governments that were spending more than 25% of their budgets on agriculture were now spending only 2% or less. The results were disastrous. Furthermore, during the same period (1979-2006) the share of Official Development Assistance (ODA) earmarked for agriculture in developing countries dropped from 18% (1979) to 3.4% (2006).

FAO reports that in 2014 donors provided only 5% of total development assistance to projects in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector, down from 9% in the mid-1990s. Odhiambo (2007) highlights that, globally, ODA assistance to agriculture had decreased by nearly two thirds between 1980 and 2002 from US$ 6.2 billion to US$ 2.3 billion. The share of agriculture in total ODA fell from a peak of 17% to only 3.7% over the same period. In sub-Saharan Africa, support to agriculture fell from US$1,450 billionto US$ 713 million dollars over the same period. The reduction in ODA has been attributed to several reasons. Firstly, Odhiambo (2007) notes the shift in donor priorities between 1979 - 2006 to focus on social services like health and education. The report by the FAO (2009) reinforces this argument by highlighting that the share of ODA devoted to the social sector grew from nearly 13% in 1979 to 44% of all ODA in 2007. Secondly, there was donor fatigue. Makamba (2021) in a study to analyse ODA versus agriculture production in Zimbabwe showed that despite the assistance flowing in, agriculture remained a highly volatile market hence it became a less and less attractive sector due to the perceived long-term low yield nature of agricultural projects and perceived high risks.

In the meantime, agriculture production dramatically collapsed. Many governments disinvested in agriculture and cut back on their extension programs. Research and development, the backbone of agriculture literally collapsed. There were no more funds to support these. The chart below shows trends on agricultural research and development spending from 1971 - 2011 in Africa, south of the Sahara. While the number of agricultural researchers increased, research funding was constant.



Source: *Based on ASTI database*

Note: *FTEs = full-time equivalents; PPP = purchasing power parity; R&D = research and development*

FIGURE 4-1: AGRICULTURAL R&D SPENDING AND STAFFING TRENDS IN AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA, 1971-2011

The Agricultural Science and Technology Indicators (ASTI) Initiative (2006) referred to this period as an era of stagnation. The problem was not only limited to unavailability of funds but there was also a mismatch between the budget allocation and the actual disbursements. For example, ASTI (2006) notes that between1992 and 1999, the Nigerian government released slightly more than half of the planned recurrent budget, on average, while only 5% of the proposed capital allocation was disbursed to agricultural research and development. Analysts agree that the number of resources allocated to agriculture is a political question and is the outcome of political decisions on resource allocation at the national level. Games (2007:5) argued that African governments only pay lip service to agricultural development. He noted:

> *"On the whole, governments pay only lip service to agricultural development. Where there are good policies, there is usually lack of implementation. Some governments seem to feel that just having good policies is enough, and once that has been drawn up, they can sit back and allow donors and NGOs to take over".*

One commentator referred to the 1980s as the lost decade due to the dismal performance of SAPs across the continent. Adjustments also included measures to address the pricing of agricultural products. Many economists argued that state-owned agriculture commodity boards stifle production by keeping prices low. In many cases reforms to agricultural commodity markets were undertaken only after state-run systems had become dysfunctional and international donors made further aid conditional on reform (Akiyama et al., 2001). Suddenly there was a new mantra, 'getting the prices right' led by The World Bank. The assumption was that market related/aligned prices would lead to improved production. However, production kept on falling. Perhaps those pushing for aligning or improving prices of agricultural commodities did not adequately consider the ecosystem of agricultural production across Africa, especially the role of government subsidies and services. In most cases Africa's agriculture is dependent upon friendly government policies, especially the subsidy regimes.

4.4 The Different Dimensions of Africa's Agrarian Question

According to Amin (1990) there are three dimensions to the agrarian question in Africa; production, labour, technology and inadequate linkages with the industrial economy. Regarding production he argued that the production and productivity per rural family has been almost stagnant for long and might have even begun to decline in many places. Starting with the 1960s up until the late 1970s, many newly independent African states pursued policies of national self-sufficiency in terms of cereal and other food requirements. During this period, food imports were perceived as both economic and national security risks that had to be avoided (Moyo, 2008c: 6). Both left- and right-leaning governments tended to converge on the need for accelerated modernisation and complete integration into international commodity circuits (Amin, 1990a:10). However, by the 1990s smallholder agriculture systems in Africa began to decline in terms of productivity or remained stagnant except in export products during the 1990s into the first decade of the twenty first century. At the time of decolonisation (of many African countries) in the 1960s, Africa was not just self-sufficient in food but was actually a net food exporter, its exports averaging 1.3 million tons a year between 1966 and 1970 (Djurfeldt et al., 2005 eds). Whilst today the continent imports 25% of its food with almost every country a net food importer (Bello, 2008, p.1).

Africa in its entirety, except maybe for South Africa, has not yet started its agricultural revolution without which no further stage of development can be considered. Smallholder systems have either declined in productivity or remained stagnant except for export products. The possibility of an increase in boosting agricultural productivity and eventually freeing up labour for other productive sectors within the next decade is limited. Food insecurity in sub-Saharan African countries has risen since 2015 and the situation has worsened because of global drivers as well as domestic causes including wars and conflicts (Wudil et al., 2022). The Russia - Ukraine war disrupted global energy and food markets resulting in a surge in prices of agricultural inputs, energy, and food. Russia and Belarus export approximately 20% of the world's nitrogen fertilisers and 40% of the world's exported potassium respectively. Roberts and Tshabalala (2022) note that the impact of the fertiliser prices was also felt during the 2022 harvest. For instance, Zambia's maize production in the 2021/22 crop season declined by almost 25% to 2.7 million tonnes. This drop in production has been attributed to a reduction in the area planted and lower yields because of poor returns to farmers and the high cost of fertiliser relative to low maize prices. Farmers have diverted from planting maize to soyabeans as these require less fertiliser. However, even then the increase in soyabeans production does not equal the reduction that has happened to maize production.

Russia and Belarus produce more than a third of global potash. The sanctions imposed on both countries have reduced the accessibility of potash in the world market (International Fertilizer Association, 2019). The impact of these disruptions in the global supply chain of agricultural inputs, for fertiliser production, has been greatly felt by sub-Saharan African countries that source the majority of their fertiliser supplies from Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. The price of fertiliser has also surged. Hebebrand and Glauber (2023) highlight that prices of nitrogen fertilisers have surged to well over US$ 1,000 from roughly US$ 500–550 in 2021 per tonne.

The world's food system is more interconnected and complex than ever, built upon layers of transnational dependencies. This explains why a war in

Europe can exacerbate a famine in Somalia, a country which imports most of its wheat. It saw its supply of bread all but collapse overnight when exports of Ukrainian wheat ceased. Nhlengetwa et al. (2022) also notes that, sub-Saharan Africa imports 37% of its cereals from both Russia and Ukraine and with the impasse between the two countries, sub-Saharan Africa's food security is compromised. Scholars like Clapp (2013), along with many food sovereignty organisations argued that the global food system needed to be dismantled in favour of more localised systems with shorter supply chains that put small and medium farmers, not multinational corporations, at the centre.

In its current state, smallholder agriculture is incapable of releasing a market food surplus up to the standard of the effective urban demand. At least 50% of the rural population has been persistently food insecure. Rural livelihoods and the patterns of social reproduction worsened in most of the sub-region, attainment of household and national food security was elusive. In fact, the number of the poor rose rapidly across Africa. Essentially the rural development agenda was in crisis.

The number of the poor is rising more rapidly in the African region than elsewhere. The precariousness of rural livelihoods has increased; many households continue to use simple technologies and are dependent on the delivery of farm inputs organised by government agencies (Long, 2001:101) and increasingly by non-state actors such as NGOs. Mwangi and Kariuki (2015) argued that the adoption of technology is vital for improving agricultural production in Africa. Others, like Adenle (2007), have supported this view, citing the exponentially growing African population. They argue that it will be difficult for the continent to support the growth in population without a significant change in the agricultural system, which includes the sustainable adoption of relevant technology. Many studies have already demonstrated the efficacy of using advanced technologies such as precision agriculture to increase crop yields and resource efficiency (see for instance, Africa Agricultural Status Report, AGRA [2023]). Technologies such as remote sensing, drones, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can help with disease detection, crop monitoring, and optimised irrigation.

In 1987 Samir Amin observed that African countries, with very few exceptions, have not begun to enter the industrial age from any viewpoint. There is neither a minimal network of inter-related industries, nor a minimal financial and technological capacity to pursue any consistent industrial policy (Amin, 1987b: 12). Sadly, there is very little change close to 40 years on. This gap in technology perpetuates the superiority of the Global North in terms of production capacities and determining agricultural prices.

What went wrong? Economic and social indicators such as declining growth trends, high unemployment rates, unsustainable rural to urban migration, increased incidences of food insecurity, as well as the prevalence of poverty, vulnerability, and hunger define the continent and make it necessary to rethink the rural development models that have been pursued since independence. The often cited out-village migration is not the result of a relatively surplus population created by some agricultural progress, even if socially unequal, but is a desperate attempt by the whole population to escape from famine. Unfortunately, these attempts to escape from the poverty trap within the rural areas have been overly celebrated as accelerated urbanisation. Samir Amin has, however, reiterated that this kind of urbanisation is different from what has taken place in other development contexts. Whilst in Europe and even North America urbanisation has been fueled by advances in agricultural production and increased levels of productivity the African form of urbanisation is driven by a desire to escape from poverty. Amin has called the African process 'a ghettoised form of urbanisation' especially given the lack of formal sector jobs within the urban areas.

The reasons behind the weakening of African agricultural systems are multi-faceted in nature. They include a weak analysis and understanding of the challenges confronting the sector which has led to the formulation of incoherent policy frameworks, colonially inherited insecure land tenure systems that continue to marginalise smallholder farmers especially women, limited innovation in agricultural technologies and a skewed international commodity trade regime. The sub-sections below discuss in more detail some of the cross-cutting challenges confronting agricultural development in Africa.

4.4.1 Inappropriate Agrarian Development Models

Starting from the 1970s into the early 1980s many newly independent African countries found themselves in a difficult position where they were struggling to repay loans advanced to them by the WB and IMF. Most of the African countries were encouraged to effect economic reform programmes commonly known as SAPs through the enticement of Balance of Payment support (BOP). The prescription for economic reform was standard; deregulation of national currencies and prices, commercialisation and privatisation of previously state controlled industries and public services (Fine, 2000 and Moyo and Yeros, 2005a).

Agriculture suffered the most from structural adjustment; implementing countries were advised to unilaterally withdraw all support for agriculture, implement titling and commodification of smallholder agriculture land. Implementing countries were advised to focus on exports where they have comparative advantages, and this led to a shift from traditional food crops into cash export crops. In countries like Nigeria, increasing the price of agricultural exports through methods such as the removal of subsidies and import bans on certain items led to negative impacts on Nigeria's agricultural sector. The measures led to price hikes for local produce and increased output but reduced profitability for farmers due to subsidy withdrawal and the higher cost of imported inputs. The devaluation of the Nigerian Naira heavily affected its manufacturing sector, which largely relied on imported machines. Unemployment also worsened because many workers lost their jobs due to the downsizing of the public sector, and the private sector growth was generally not enough to absorb the excess labour (Benin, 2023).

The shift towards an export orientation has contributed towards the further insertion of smallholder production into the sphere of commodity production for the already saturated commodity market dominated by Multinational Corporations (MNCs) and heavily subsidised Northern Hemisphere farmers (see below) and in the process affected their food production capacities. The liberalising approach also meant the opening up of domestic markets to global competition leading to significant decrease in the prices of commodities, especially food crops, thus reinforcing the need to capture the elusive export markets.

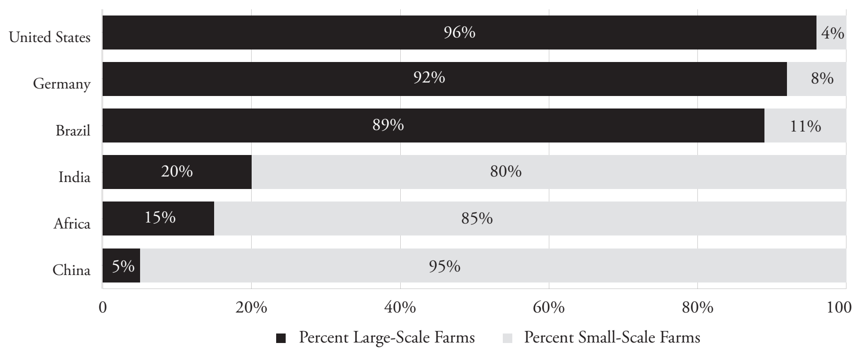
The countryside has borne a huge cost of economic restructuring as the measures have gone far in removing state support for smallholder production and reproduction. These reforms have unleashed the suffocating market forces by devaluing currencies and raising the cost of production. The SAP regimes also generally led to the deflation of incomes/wages in agriculture. Meanwhile the relative depreciation of the wages through currency devaluation and wage restraints has been met by rising commodity prices (Moyo, 2010:304). In fact, others have argued that the development strategies implemented in Africa since independence have neither aimed at achieving the priority task of an agricultural revolution, nor really aimed at any significant industrialisation, but basically extended the colonial pattern of integration in the world capitalist system (Amin, 1990b).

4.4.2 Weak Agrarian Systems

Agriculture, as part of the world food system, has been fully inserted within global capitalism. It is clearly not contributing towards national accumulation and industrialisation. Notably, the smallholder sector has been integrated on the basis of unfair terms of trade (both nationally and internationally) and, simultaneously, is regularly used as a reservoir of cheap labour for other economic sectors. Most of the surplus extracted from agriculture is reinvested in industries located in central economies and does not contribute towards a local industrialisation project but instead leads to a weakening of African economies. In this light, the petty commodity agricultural sector is marked by disparate combinations of wage and self-employment (agriculture and non-agricultural petty commodity production) as (often desperate) reproduction strategies in rural settings. In addition, it may be that agrarian reform needs to be 'delinked conceptually from the classic agrarian question concerns' about industrialisation as the basis for socio-economic development (Helliker, 2006:133). In this regard, Mafeje (2003a:20) argues that industrialisation could not possibly emerge from depressed African agricultural economies.

Nowhere else is the rationale for own production [through small family farms] as highly contested as it is in Africa (especially the southern Africa region). Maybe this contestation is informed by the dominance of the more 'superior' colonially established and technologically advanced large-scale farm sector. The disruption of the large-scale farm sector in Zimbabwe through Fast Track Land Reform (FTLR) was, for instance, seen in many other previously progressive quarters (see for instance Bernstein, 2003; Moore, 2003) as negatively affecting agricultural growth despite the historical injustices associated with the colonially established patterns of land grab by minority whites and dispossession of the black majority. There is very limited knowledge on smallholder capacities and productions trends across Africa. The Malawi maize miracle of the 2008-2015 period has perhaps provided a new impetus towards rethinking the model of rural development, especially agricultural growth.

Furthermore, the most common farm size in Africa is less than 2 hectares (ha). In other words, more than 80% of Africa's farms are small. The continent shares a similarity with China and India, the two have 95% and 80% small-scale farms, respectively. Whilst the opposite is at play in Europe, Brazil and the United Sates where large farm sizes comprise of 92%, 89% and 86%, respectively. The figure below provides an illustration of the different agrarian systems by region.



Source: *Whose Development? (Murisa, 2020)*

FIGURE 4-2: FARM SIZE (SCALE) BY REGION/COUNTRY

Africa faces further land fragmentation as land must be sub-divided to give adult members of the lineage group some land for their families (Moyo, 2008a). These processes are bound to increase given the lack of urban formal sector jobs and the new round of large-scale land investments also referred to either as land grabs or a new form of agrarian colonialism.

Perhaps it is important to reiterate that the majority of Africa remains rural and eking out a desperate existence on these small farms which are mostly rain-dependent, with limited irrigation capacity and mostly relying on family labour. Policy innovations must take into cognisance the limitations that come with small-scale farming which include the difficulty of leveraging bargains from agribusiness; these farmers in their individual capacities do not have economies of scale to influence the prices of inputs or even their produce. The small-scale farmers also have to contend with the tension of producing for consumption and for the market. Policy has not adequately created sufficient conditions for farmers to think in terms of cooperative arrangements in purchasing inputs and in marketing their commodities. Finally, the challenge of fragmented farms is also compounded by precolonial tenure arrangements that do not effectively unlock the value of the land in terms of helping farmers to secure financing for their operations. Most of Africa is under a variety of customary tenure which provides a hybrid of common and private ownership but without clarity on how land transactions can take place. In many instances land transactions in these areas are highly informal and have discouraged capital investments.

4.4.3 Uneven Commodity Markets

The legacy of African agriculture producing for the colonial 'motherlands' continues in its strongly promoted and internationally enforced export orientation and its forced integration into the 'world market' (FIAN, 2009). Since liberalisation in the 1980s agricultural land use patterns have changed to service world commodity markets to an extent that approximately 40% of the world's total agricultural production is now traded across national borders. The rapid growth in international agricultural trade coupled with low world prices for primary exports and increasing competition in agriculture around the world have made it difficult for agriculture (especially the smallholder sector) in most of Africa to compete within this context and this was exacerbated by the hefty subsidies that farmers receive in most countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In 2004, both the United States of America and the European Union produced roughly 17% of the world's agro-exports by value, Canada, Australia and New Zealand together accounted for 15% and the major South American exporters (Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay), 13% (Weis, 2007:21). Approximately 62% of the world's agro-exports in 2004 came from 4% of the world's agricultural population. The large-scale nature of production in these regions has contributed towards a 60% decline in prices of the big three cereals, maize, rice and wheat. FAO (2003:21) notes that 'depressed [commodity] world prices create serious problems for poor farmers in developing countries who must compete in global and domestic markets with these low-priced commodities and lack safeguards against import surges. It appears that, either way, the smallholders will still struggle. For example, when food prices increased dramatically in 2007, 2008 and 2009 smallholders did not benefit because the prices of inputs also increased thereby negatively affecting prospects to increase cropped areas and output.

As already noted, agriculture in developed countries is dominated by huge Multinational Corporations (MNCs) who have over the years positioned themselves to dominate the agricultural downstream and upstream value chains through the use of patents on seeds, fertiliser and pesticides and controlling the distribution networks. The economic muscle of MNCs engaged in agriculture such as Monsanto, Cargill, and Archer Daniels Midland became very apparent when the prices of wheat, corn and rice soared in 2008 leading up to the food crisis. Whilst smallholders and the urban poor were facing the food crisis crunch these agribusiness giants were enjoying soaring earnings and profits out of the crisis. Monsanto reported that its net income for the three months up to the end of February 2008 had more than doubled over the same period in 2007, US$543 million to US$1.2 billion (Lean, 2008). Cargill's net earnings soared by 86% from US$553 million to US$1.3 billion over the same period. Archer Daniels Midland, one of the world's largest agricultural processors of soy, corn and wheat, increased its net earnings by 42% in the first three months from US$363 million to US$517 million (ibid). The price of some kinds of fertilisers also tripled during the same period. The MNCs have managed to subordinate smallholder systems to their logic of production mostly because in many instances official government planning has solely focused on supply-side interventions such as securing improved seed and fertilisers and paid too little attention to where the increased production should go.

At a local level, the absence of state intervention in agricultural commodity markets has led to the emergence of a very exploitative cadre of middle-traders. These are often rural elites with access to trucks and cash, able to buy commodities produced by smallholders. They take advantage of the challenges faced by smallholders in accessing markets and offer below market prices to the producers for onward selling into urban markets. The removal of the state from commodity markets has thus not necessarily led into a 'perfect' market as envisaged by the liberalisation prescription but rather has led to the emergence of colluding actors who mostly pursue super-profits in their dealings with petty commodity producers.

If the situation is not adequately addressed the broad patterns of agricultural trade described here will deepen considerably in the coming decades, with grain and livestock exports from the major producing nations dominating the world market coupled with rising food import dependence in much of the developing world. Compared with the late 1990s average, the grain imports from the developing countries were expected to double by 2020 (Weiss, 2007:24). These patterns point towards the increasing unattractiveness of smallholder agriculture and towards what others such as Bryceson et al. (2003), and Weiss (2007) call the 'depeasantisation' of Africa's countryside. As already observed, this phenomenon is leading to congestion in the cities without any industrialisation.

4.4.4 Inadequate Policy Formulation, Implementation and Monitoring Capacities

Even though the adjustment mantra is waning, most of Africa is yet to recover from the 'technicist' tradition that began at decolonisation but was entrenched by SAPs in policy making processes. In the first decade of independence the supply side of the market for policy research was the exclusive preserve of international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and the UN and the donor community at large (Ajakaiye, 2007:19). Trends have not really changed as current policy reform processes are still dominated by 'policy craftsmen' based in Western multi-lateral organisations and seconded to many African governments. As such policy making in most of Africa is shrouded in secrecy and the entire process tends to be 'rarefied' and is mostly dominated by elite sections of political society. Technical language and jargon are most often used to exclude the majority of other non-state actors. Complex permutations, equations and models are deployed, and these are beyond comprehension of most members of the legislative assemblies with modest levels of education.

It is currently difficult to determine the true value of African (especially smallholder) agriculture especially when the above explanations for the collapse of agriculture are taken into consideration. Compounding the challenge is the lack of adequate planning capacities with African governments. Data on the actual numbers of households engaged in smallholder agriculture does not exist in many African countries. In Malawi for instance, there was no national identification system except for highly prized passports which the majority could not attain until 2015. Lack of basic data such as average size of households, rural income activities, income sources, size of land etc. makes it difficult (if not impossible) to develop suitable plans.

However, others argue that such data is being generated by the fledgling non-state sector made up of NGOs, research institutions (cum policy think-tanks) and the unions themselves. The proliferation of local institutions with policy research capacity has not yet made an impact on policy making. Ajakaiye (2007:19) argues that:

> *"There exists a disconnect between the policy making process and the considerable base that policy researchers are producing that is, full use is not being made of research findings generated in Africa when decision makers formulate policies".*

Policy making is currently ad-hoc in nature driven either by political or donor interests. The envisaged synergies between local policy research organisations and governments' policymaking processes in many ways are yet to emerge.

4.4.5 Technological and Infrastructural Issues

Contemporary challenges include the deceleration of agricultural technological transformation through reduced per capita utilisation of inputs such as improved seed, fertiliser, etc. The majority of smallholders lack access to new technologies. Most of the smallholders in countries such as Tanzania, Malawi and Uganda still use hoes to till the land. In most instances the same smallholders are trapped by rising costs of inputs such as seeds, depend upon human labour and often do not have sufficient or good quality land.

New technologies are not being generated fast enough again because of limited public and private investments, and global markets control. Limited access to financing services is a critical barrier to the adoption of many promising technologies in Africa (Onyango et al., 2021; Mudziwapasi et al., 2022). The inadequacy of investments into rural and agricultural infrastructures, such as irrigation facilities (including dams, field equipment, etc.), rural transport facilities (such as roads, bridges and ports, vehicles), bulk food storage (and grain reserve) facilities as well as ancillary services such as electricity, have tended to limit the expansion of food production and marketing and thus food distribution and access. Whereas prior to economic reforms, research and development was the preserve of the state. It has however been removed from the public domain and services the interest of large-scale agriculture.

Tracking fertiliser usage in Africa serves to demonstrate the negative impact of adjustment programmes. In the period just after decolonization during the 1960s fertiliser use grew rapidly until the end of 1970s and began to stagnant in 1980 as subsidies to agriculture were withdrawn. Currently only about 1.3 million metric tons of inorganic fertiliser are used in Africa representing less than 1% of global fertiliser production (Morris et al., 2007: The World Bank). Based on these figures the actual average rate of fertiliser application is 8 kilograms per hectare. However, a report by the Mckinsey institute claims that Africa's use of fertiliser has increased to 24 kilograms per hectare, but this is only one quarter of the world average (Sanghvi et al., 2011:4). In the absence of viable alternatives most of the continent depends on costly imported fertilisers except for South Africa which has adequate production capacity. The following Chapter will also discuss in more detail trends on fertiliser utilisation.

As already widely acknowledged in the literature, most smallholders are women. Their access to technological inputs, such as improved seed, fertilisers and pesticides is impeded by national legislation and customary laws which do not allow them to share land property rights with their husbands, or because women heads of household are excluded from land entitlement schemes and, consequently, cannot provide the collateral required by lending institutions or just to show documented proof that they have access to land. They are frequently not reached by extension services and are at times excluded from cooperatives, which often distribute government subsidised inputs and vital market information to small farmers. In addition, they lack the cash income needed to purchase inputs even when they are subsidised.

The technological disparities between farmers in the West and those in sub-Saharan Africa have been exacerbated by the agricultural subsidy regimes in the world's richest countries which together spend over US$200 billion subsidising their own agricultural sectors concentrated in the large-scale farm sector (Weis, 2007:25 - The actual dollar figure to rich country agro-subsidies varies significantly with the World Bank's often cited estimate being US$1billion a day). Whilst in contrast, these same countries devote less than US$1 billion a year to official development assistance to agricultural development in the developing world (FAO, 2003).

The preceding discussion has highlighted the multi-faceted nature of the cross-cutting challenges that smallholders face in most of Africa. The issues raised have ramifications for the nation building agenda. Amin (1987a) argued that the agrarian question informed the dilemma of national construction which manifests in three distinct but interrelated ways; first, a political dilemma characterised by imitative democracies which give way to tyrannies, single parties of national construction give place to military and bureaucratic cliques. Second, an ideological dilemma characterised initially by prevarication to a naked form of capitalist liberalism and at times bureaucratic socialism which did not answer any needs of the popular masses. The liberalising approach has also meant the opening of domestic markets to global competition leading to a significant decrease in the prices of commodities, especially food crops, thus reinforcing the need to capture the elusive export markets. Such a policy regime promoted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), led and dominated capital intensive extractive sector and statistics as recent as 2010. This suggests that the pattern has not dramatically changed; fuel and mineral exports account for 64% of Africa's exports whilst agriculture only contributes 10.2% (ECA, 2011: 4). Third, an imitative education system which shows all its dysfunctionality through the imposition of foreign languages of colonisation as a vehicle of alienation instead of a responsive system that caters to the needs of the masses.

5

Exploring African Agency

'Achieving the agricultural revolution should be the priority target for the decades to come'

(Samin Amin,1987)

5.1 Introduction

Agriculture, especially smallholders, suffered major setbacks in the last two decades of the 20th century. The 1980s and 1990s were dominated by structural adjustment which was the leitmotif of development policies, and the share of Official Development Aid (ODA) earmarked for agriculture dropped from 18% (1979) to 3.4% (2006). Governments were forced to cut back their own spending on agricultural services, research and subsidies as a condition of further loans, reducing the share of government expenditure for agriculture in developing countries from 11.3% to 6.7% during the same period.

Under-investment in the agricultural sector dates to the mid-1990s. ODA agriculture decreased by nearly two thirds between 1980 and 2002 from US$ 6.2 billion to US$ 2.3 billion. The share of agriculture in total ODA fell from a peak of 17% to only 3.7% over the same period. In sub-Saharan Africa, support to agriculture fell from US$ 1,450 to US$ 713 million dollars over the same period. Under-investment in agriculture has been linked to many reasons which are not limited to declining budget allocations for agriculture in most African countries, the perceived high risk of agriculture and diversion of funds to other social sectors such as health and education. Fan and Rao (2003), note that government spending in agriculture dropped from 6% in 1980 to about 5% in 1989. The decline has also been associated with a weak demand for assistance for agricultural support due to tight fiscal constraints and inadequate capacities in the ministries of agriculture to bargain for more resources (DFID, 2004).

The food crisis triggered by the food price spike of 2007/2008 was a direct result of the decades-long underinvestment in agriculture. The hunger riots in response to dramatic increases in prices of staple foods tripled in some countries. IFPRI (2008) reports show that, from January 2004 to May 2008, rice prices increased 224%, wheat prices increased 108%, and corn was 89% more expensive. The spikes in prices led to food insecurity worldwide, civil unrest in several nations, and generated appeals for food aid from 36 countries. Other factors that explain the implosion through food riots include the high demand for food, growing population and rapid urbanisation. The effects of the rising demand were amplified by recent droughts, slow supply response, the fall in the dollar, high energy prices, and concerns over increased demand for biofuels. The effects of these factors on food commodity prices were in turn exacerbated by government export restrictions and market speculation (UNCTAD, 2008).

The rapid increase in undernourished people to more than 1 billion helped to forcefully remind global and regional leaders of the importance of agriculture and food security. Global and African policymaking trends since the turn of the century indicate some level of urgency, albeit uneven, to embark on reforms that respond to some of the agrarian constraints discussed in previous Chapters. Furthermore, there is increasing global recognition of the potential of smallholders to contribute towards food security. There have been several platforms dedicated to fixing the problem of production and distribution in agriculture at a global level. The discussion in this Chapter focuses on African led initiatives.

5.2 The African Union (AU) Led Attempts at Transforming Agriculture

In 2003, African heads of states gathered in Maputo committed themselves to refocus on agriculture by allocating 10% of their annual budget and in the process coming up with long term strategies which would lead to at least 6% of growth in the sector through the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP). The CAADP prescription was and remains a hybrid between state led agricultural development and active markets in helping restore production especially within smallholder agricultural systems. It was an improvement of sorts from the earlier rigid SAP-based prescriptions which had led to dramatic budget cuts, especially in agriculture.

Through CAADP a number of African countries developed their own National Agriculture Investment Programs (NAIPs) as one of the pathways of securing funding for the sector. Since then IFPRI has led the provision of technical support to countries in the development of next-generation NAIPs at the request of the African Union Commission (AUC) and NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency (NPCA). The majority of NAIPs sought to; (i) increase small-scale farmer incomes and the number of farmers benefiting from the strategy; (ii) increase the contribution of agriculture to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and value addition; and (iii) reduce the food-insecure population and a reduction in the cost of food. Notably very few NAIPs focused on tinkering with land ownership patterns or the existing tenure regimes. Could it be that the problem of rural production has been narrowly framed around improved access to good quality inputs (seeds and fertilisers), increasing the land under irrigation and improving access to markets? These are the best-known problems affecting small-holder agriculture and they dominate literature. The AU's CAADP has also raised the profile of these issues. Thus, agriculture regained its place on the agendas of the 'donors', after having left it for almost 30 years.

5.3 Significance of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP)

The African Union's CAADP under NEPAD was the first Africa-wide Agricultural Development Plan (ADP) that has been wholly endorsed by both the African states and the international community. CAADP's seven-part vision for agriculture in Africa includes food security, improved productivity of agriculture to attain annual growth rate of 6%, with particular attention to small-scale farmers and women, as well as dynamic agricultural markets and sustainable use of the natural resource base.

TEXT BOX 5-1: FEATURES OF CAADP

Emphasis on African Ownership

The NEPAD-wide emphasis on African Ownership and leadership backed by financial and political commitments by national governments has raised the credibility of the agenda.

Agriculture-led Growth to Achieve MDG1-Poverty Reduction

The emphasis on the centrality of Agriculture to instil dynamism within African economies has contributed to the increasing prominence of agriculture on the development agenda

A conviction that Africa can do better

The philosophy underlying the entire AU/NEPAD effort (including CAADP) is reflected in the conviction that Africa can do better and differently in a more efficient and organised manner.

Consistency and Continuity in Regional and National Development Efforts

This is being facilitated by a specific set of shared long-term growth and investment targets. The processes surrounding the implementation and programme monitoring are supported by dialogues and peer review tools meant to stimulate and broaden the practice of benchmarking.

Partnerships and Alliances

Even though driven by African governments there is recognition of the need for sustainable partnerships with national government and development partners to improve future development outcomes.

Source: *Based on various articles written about CAADP (see* **www.caadp.org** *)*

The commitments outlined in CAADP were subsequently reaffirmed through numerous declarations; (i) the Sirte Declaration on the Challenges of Implementing Integrated and Sustainable Development on Agriculture and Water in Africa (AU, 2004), (ii) the Abuja Declaration on Food Security (AU, 2006b), and (iii) the Abuja Declaration on Fertiliser for the African Green Revolution (AU, 2006a). In addition to reiterating support for CAADP, these declarations added new directives requiring member country compliance. The Sirte Declaration, for example, called for the establishment of a common market, while the Declaration on Fertiliser set a target of increasing fertiliser use from an average of 8 kilograms per hectare to 50 kilograms per hectare by 2015. The Abuja Declaration on Food Security designated specific crops as strategic commodities needing special attention, including rice, maize, legumes, cotton, oil palm, beef, dairy, poultry, and fisheries products at the continental level and cassava, sorghum, and millet at the sub-regional level; the commodities were identified to be the basis of a continental free trade area.

It was envisaged that CAADP would contribute towards the achievement of the first Millennial Development Goal (MDG)- of halting poverty and hunger by 2015. Financially, CAADP required approximately US$179 billion spread over ten years (see Table 5-1). Unlike other development initiatives CAADP acknowledged the multiple and interlocking constraints within African agricultural systems. In the beginning CAADP was designed around four areas (referred to as pillars within the CAADP strategy) to be supported by the increased budgetary commitments into agriculture.

Pillar one was focused *on extending the area under sustainable land management*. The objective of this pillar was to 'build up soil fertility and the moisture holding capacity of agricultural soils and rapidly increase the land area equipped with irrigation capacity' (NEPAD, 2003). The second pillar focused on *improving rural infrastructure and trade related capacities*. The main objective within this pillar was to accelerate growth in the agricultural sector by raising the capacities of private entrepreneurs, especially local agro-dealers, to meet the ever-changing market requirements. The third pillar was aimed at i*ncreasing food supply and reducing hunger by raising smallholder productivity and improving responses to food emergencies.* The second objective within the third pillar was to develop the capacity to respond to the growing frequency and severity of disasters and emergencies. The fourth pillar was focused on *improving agricultural research,* *technology dissemination and adoption.* Its goal was to improve agricultural research systems in order to disseminate appropriate technologies. The CAADP framework identifies some of the conditions necessary as the need for an (i) an enhanced rate of adoption for the most promising technologies to support the immediate expansion of African production through the more efficient linking of research and extension systems to producers and (ii) technology delivery systems that rapidly bring innovations to farmers and agribusiness thereby making increased adoption possible and (iii) renewing the ability of agricultural research systems to efficiently and effectively generate and adapt to new knowledge and technologies.

TABLE 5-1: BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE CAADP PILLARS

Pillar	Targets	Budget Estimate US$
Pillar One- Extending the area under sustainable land management and reliable water control systems	Increasing the area under irrigation (new and rehabilitated) to 20 million hectares	$31 billion
Pillar Two- Improving rural infrastructure and trade related capacities for market access	Improving rural road infrastructure and creations of trade related capacities	$92 billion
Pillar Three- Increasing food supply and reducing hunger	Raising the productivity of 15million small farms through improved technology, services and policies	$42 billion
Pillar Four- Agriculture research, technology dissemination and adoption	To accelerate gains in productivity	$4.6 billion

Source: *Author's Summary/Reinterpretation of CAADP 2003*

When the African heads of state convened at Malabo in 2013 to review the achievements of CAADP they agreed to recommit and to expand upon the initial framing of CAADP to include both the processes necessary for success such as financing and coordination and to include other crosscutting thematic issues such as climate change. Since 2013, the new CAADP is now framed around seven commitments as per the following table.

TABLE 5-2: CAADP COMMITMENTS

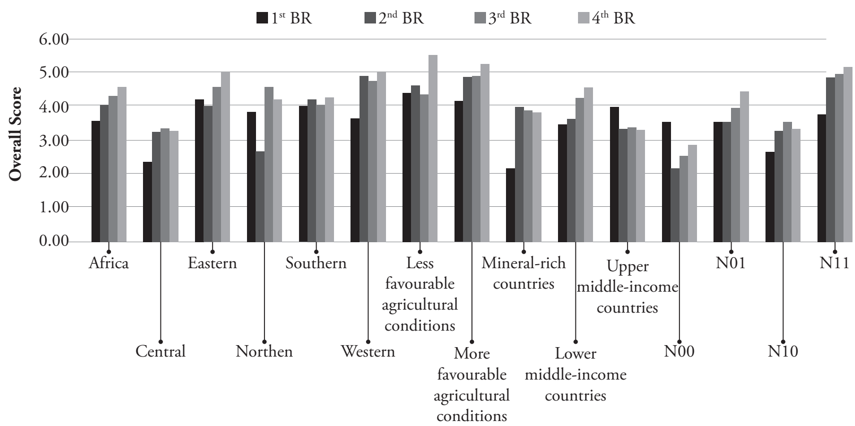
No.	Commitment
1	Recommitting to CAADP Process
2	Enhancing Investment Finance in Agriculture
3	Ending Hunger by 2025
4	Halving Poverty through Agriculture by 2025
5	Boosting Intra-African Trade in Agriculture
6	Enhancing Resilience to Climate Variability
7	Enhancing Mutual Accountability for Action and Results

Source: *CAADP Results Framework 2015-2025*

The commitments approach potentially provides for broadening the CAADP framework and inserting agriculture within broader policy concerns that include examination of mechanisms to do with investment finance, trade and making a deliberate attempt to consider the effects of climate change.

5.4 CAADP After Malabo

It has been slightly more than ten years since African head of states convened at Malabo, where they set concrete agricultural goals to be attained by 2025. The declaration recognised the dire situations that were obtaining regarding Africa's capacity to generate analyse and manage data and information to facilitate evidence-based policy development and tracking of progress of implementation, and hence affirming their commitment to enhance such a capacity. The concern was that a significant proportion of the African population remained vulnerable to the challenges of economic marginalisation, hunger and malnutrition, despite the positive achievements registered in agriculture and economic growth, there was still limited progress made in agro industries and the heavy and growing dependence of African production systems in external factors (weather, global markets) and their associated vulnerabilities. The Biennial Review (BR) Report of 2020 showed that out of the forty-nine (49) Member States that reported progress in implementing the Malabo Declaration during the 2019 biennial review cycle, four countries were on-track towards achieving the Malabo commitments by 2025. While this number is significantly less than the 20 Member States that were on-track in 2017 during the inaugural biennial review cycle, it is crucial to note that 36 countries have made significant improvement in their score from the 1st BR to the 2nd BR. Of the 49 AU Member States that participated in the fourth BR in 2023, not a single country is on track to achieve Malabo commitments by 2025.



Source: *ReSAKSS' illustration based on AUC (2018, 2020, 2022, and 2024).*

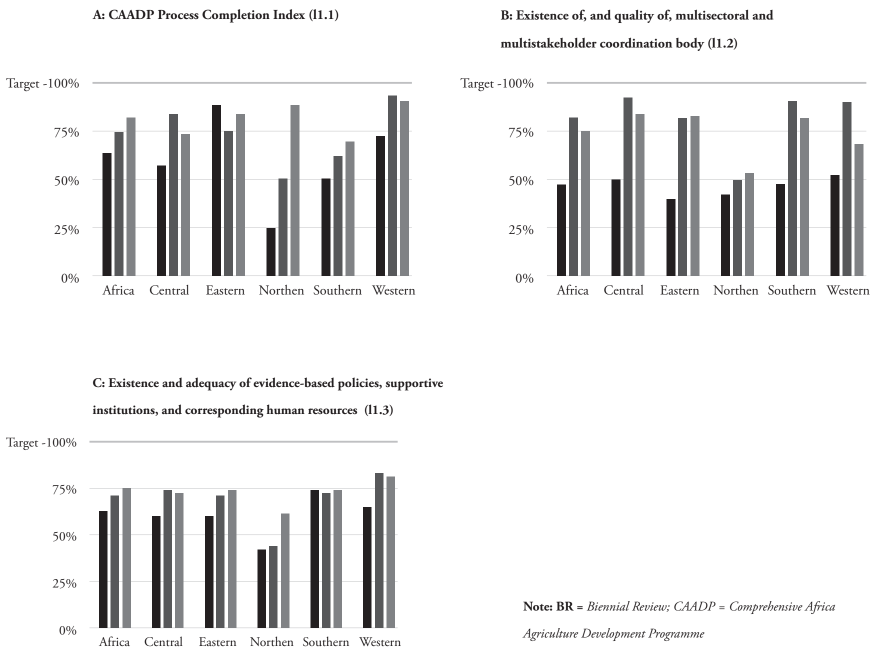
Note: *The N00, N01, N10, and N11 categories refer to the presence or absence of first- and second-generation national agriculture investment plans.*

FIGURE 5-1: BR SCORES FOR IMPLEMENTING MALABO DECLARATION

5.4.1 Measuring Recommitment to the CAADP process

These have been measured using the CAADP Process Completion Index, existence of multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination and evidence-based policies. Ulimwengu et al. (2023) observed that, there have been a continuous improvement in the continent. According to the third Biennial Report (2020) milestone for this indicator was achieved by 31 of the 51 Member States that reported. This implies that five (5) more Member States achieved the target for this indicator in 2021. The average performance of the Member States that did not meet the 2020 milestone was 52.9% (against a target of 100%). For the second indicator, out of the fifty-one (51) Member States that reported, ten (10) Member States (Central African Republic, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) achieved the target of 100%. Another six (6) Member States (Algeria, Benin, Libya, Niger, Seychelles, and Sudan) had a score of less than 50% implying that more effort should be applied in those Member States to achieve this indicator.

The figure below shows performance of the continent across three cycles of BRs extracted from a study conducted by Ulimwengu et al. (2021). The calculations were based on AUC 2018, 2020 and 2022.



Note: BR = *Biennial Review; CAADP = Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme*

Source: *Seven Years of Implementation of the Malabo Declaration: Making Sense of the Malabo Theory of Change,* **2023**

FIGURE 5-2: PROGRESS OF BR INDICATORS ACROSS AFRICA

5.4.2 Enhancing Investment Finance in Agriculture

Share of government agriculture expenditure has remained limited. The average annual growth rate in government agriculture spending was 5.3% between 2003 and 2008 but declined to 1.5% between 2008 and 2014 and fell to 0.4% between 2014 and 2023. Ethiopia and Malawi consistently met the

CAADP 10% budget target throughout the 2008–2023 period. Madagascar and Mali met the 10% CAADP target for the 2008–2014 period. Sierra Leone and Benin achieved the 10% budget target during the 2014–2023 period. Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Sudan allocated more than 9% of their public spending to agriculture, close to the CAADP 10% budget target. Limited efforts in public investment in agriculture is still a challenge to be addressed in Africa. There are several reasons attributed to low financing of agriculture by African governments. For example, Games (2007, p. 5) notes; 'on the whole, governments pay only lip service to agricultural development. Where there are good policies, there is usually a lack of implementation. Some governments seem to feel that just having good policies is enough, and once that has been drawn up, they can sit back and allow donors and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to take over'.

5.4.3 Ending Hunger by 2025

According to the World Hunger Index (2003), 278 million people in Africa suffer from chronic hunger. This number translates to 20% of the continent's population. African countries are still not on track in ending hunger by the end of year. This has been the general trend since the first biennial review reporting, and little improvements are seen. Shocks in the agri-food systems like the persistent outbreaks of pests and diseases (including the negative impact of COVID-19), conflicts and climate change remain key albatrosses towards ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition in the continent. The table below shows six indicators and countries which are on track.

TABLE 5-3: COUNTRIES ON TRACK WITH ENDING HUNGER INDICATORS

Indicator	On track countries
3.1 Access to Agriculture inputs and technologies	none
3.2 Agricultural Productivity	none
3.3 Post-Harvest Loss	Egypt, Gabon, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Namibia, Sierra Leone
3.4 Social Protection	Guinea Bissau, Madagascar, Morocco, Namibia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Zambia
3.5 Food security and Nutrition	none
3.6 Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures	Gambia, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, Togo, Zimbabwe

Source: *Analysis of fourth BR data*

5.4.4 Halving Poverty through Agriculture by 2025

The fourth Biennial Report (2024) shows that African countries have been lagging and are still not on track to halve poverty by 2025. The report shows that in 2024, like in 2021, only Ghana, out of forty-nine (49) compared to Nine (9) out of forty-nine (49) and twenty-seven (27) countries out of forty-seven (47) that were on-track in 2019 and 2017, respectively. The report also showed that on the growth rate of agriculture value added indicator eleven (11) countries in the fourth BR, of the forty-nine (49) Member States that reported on the growth rate of the agriculture value added indicator, eleven

(11) are on-track for consistently achieving at least 6% annual growth rate. These include Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria and Togo. This is a significant decrease from the third BR reporting period (2021), where twenty-one countries were on track. Part of the measure implemented to halve poverty include the empowerment of women in agri-business. Women are recognised as important contributors in agricultural production, yet they are still limited by several factors including access to land. Member states, therefore set a target of increasing the proportion of rural women that are empowered in agriculture to 20% by 2025. The BR Report shows that, out of forty-nine (49) Member States that reported in the fourth BR, seven are on track against a milestone of a score of 9. These member states are Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya and Rwanda. This was a regression in performance from the 2021 report, where ten (10) out of twenty-three (23) Member States were on track.

5.4.5 Boosting Intra-African Trade

There has been an increase in intra-African agricultural trade throughout the CAADP period. According to Tefera et al. (2023), intra-African agricultural exports grew from an annual average of $6.4 billion in 2003–2008 to $11.6 billion in 2008–2014 and further to $14.8 billion during 2014–2023. By 2023, intra-African agricultural exports had reached $17.6 billion. The performance recorded during the Malabo period was far behind the commitment to triple intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services by 2025. Between 2014 and 2023, Africa was able to increase intra-African trade by 36.2% only, far less than the commitment made in 2014 to boost trade. The successive BRs also show that since the second BR Africa has been off track in meeting the Malabo goal of boosting intra-African trade in agricultural exports. Despite observed improvements in imports within Africa, studies show that Africa remains a net importer of agricultural goods with total imports of around $80 billion (FAO and AUC 2021). This implies that the share of intra-African imports in the total import bill is around 20%. Moreover, the growth in imports from the rest of the world is faster than the growth in intra-African imports in recent periods (Olivetti et al., 2023). Furthermore intra-African agricultural trade imports are dominated by a few countries, mainly the countries in the

Southern Africa region. Of the 10 leading countries in intra-African agricultural trade, five are from southern Africa. The leading five countries during the Malabo period were South Africa (7.1%), Egypt (5.2%), Namibia (5.2%), Botswana (4.8%), and Zimbabwe (4.7%).

5.4.6 Enhancing Resilience to Climate Variability

A total of seven (7) Member States including Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gambia, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Uganda are on-track on the indicator on the existence of government budget lines and the enabling environment to respond to spending needs on resilience-building initiatives. Only Ethiopia which was on-track during the third BR remained on-track for the fourth BR. Morocco, which was on-track in the second and third BRs, lost track for the fourth BR. Mauritius was the only member state on track in the inaugural BR report. Over half of the Member States (29) are on-track with a score of at least 9 on the indicator as a%age of farm, pastoral, and fisher households that have improved their resilience capacity to climate and other shocks (economic, social, environmental etc.).

5.4.7 Enhancing Mutual Accountability for Action and Results

According to the Biennial Review (2023). Only (13) Member States (Morocco, Benin, Egypt, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Malawi, Tunisia, Burkina, Faso and Sierra Leone,) are on-track. Compared to the previous Biennial Review where eleven (11) out of fifty-one (51) Member States were on-track, the 2023 Biennial Review results imply an increase of five percentage points in continental performance on this commitment.

5.5 Tracking the Impact of CAADP

Twenty-one years later we revisit this noble commitment to check if indeed the hypothesis informing consistently allocating 10% towards agriculture has contributed towards growth in terms of actual production and productivity. We developed an online open-access comparative tracker of 19 countries spread across East, North, West and Southern Africa (SIVIO Institute, 2025). These countries are in two categories; the 10% compliant (green) and those that are not compliant (gold). Using FAO datasets, we compared the 10% compliant countries versus those that have not been allocating 10% of their budgets to agriculture. When all countries are compared, the 10% compliant show high levels of production and productivity. Could this be the silver bullet that has been elusive all along? The 10% countries have not necessarily addressed other bottlenecks to production such as resolving sticky land tenure issues.

5.6 Progress to Date

The progress on the implementation and realisation of CAADP goals has been uneven. CAADP has contributed towards the development of improved agriculture recovery strategies given the new incentives for donor funding. Some governments were spurred into action after a quarter century of neglect. Malawi, for example, increased aggregate expenditure towards smallholder agriculture despite initial opposition from multilateral agencies such as the World Bank. There was a notable increase in the investment flows towards (i) developing technological breakthroughs such as drought tolerant maize varieties (ii) new value chain approaches that aim to improve access to markets and help farmers to raise their productivity and (iii) development of selected large tracts of land. Overall agriculture performance has been upwards for most of the countries that we have looked at and Ethiopia shown on the figure below has been the best performer from an initial production base of around 1.2 million tonnes in 2003 to 4.1 million tonnes in 2022, an increase of around 240% in ten years.

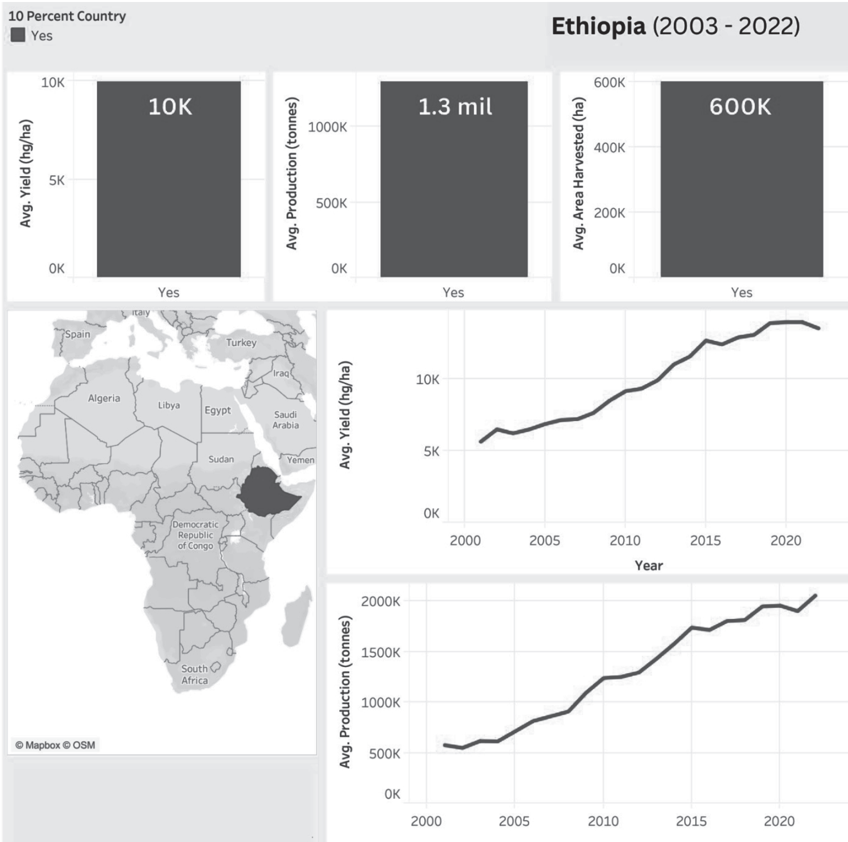


FIGURE 5-3: ETHIOPIA'S AGRICULTURAL PERFORMANCE SINCE 2003

The Inaugural Biennial Review Report of the African Union Commission on the Implementation of the Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared prosperity and Improved Livelihoods (CAADP 2) revealed that 20 countries were on track to achieve the targets that were set at Malabo.

To date a few countries shown in the figures below have been able to allocate at least 10% of their budgets towards agriculture. Countries which met the strict CAADP 10% budget allocation target were Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi and Rwanda for a period. Despite not meeting the 10% budget allocation target, Mali achieved the CAADP target of at least 6% annual growth of agriculture value-added to GDP, registering 7.6% in 2016 for this measure (Africa Agriculture Transformation Scorecard). However, there are other countries which did not necessarily allocate 10% of their budgets consistently such as Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Egypt, Mali, Mauritania and Sudan, but were characterised by levels of allocation (above 7.5%).

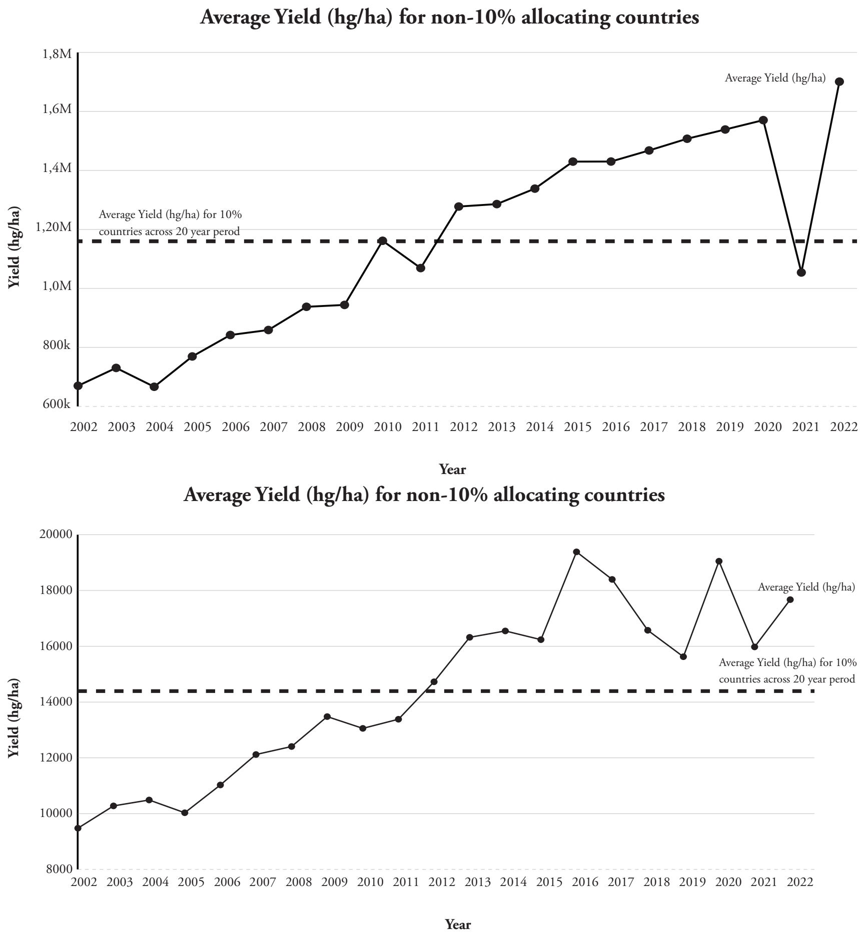
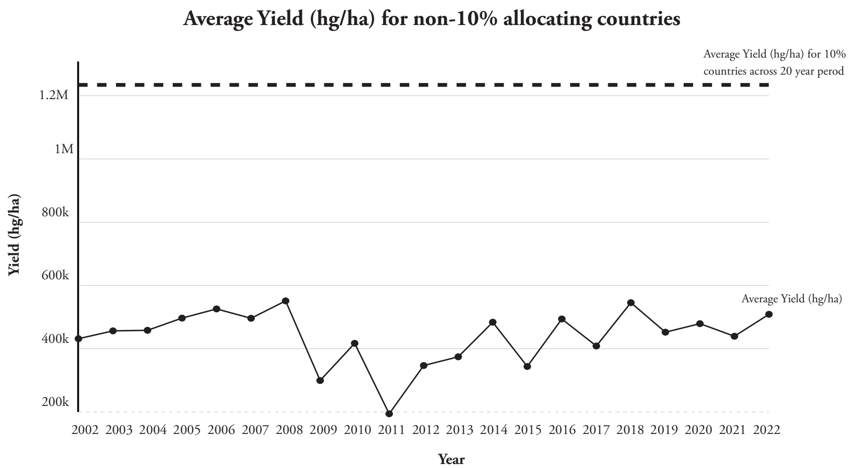


FIGURE 5-4: CAADP'S 10% ALLOCATING COUNTRIES

We considered these as part of the 10% countries in our analysis. According to our tracker countries that have allocated an average of 10% towards agriculture in the past 18 years have achieved higher levels of productivity an average of 2.3519 metric tonnes per hectare compared with 1.4131 metric tonnes per hectare for those not allocating 10%.



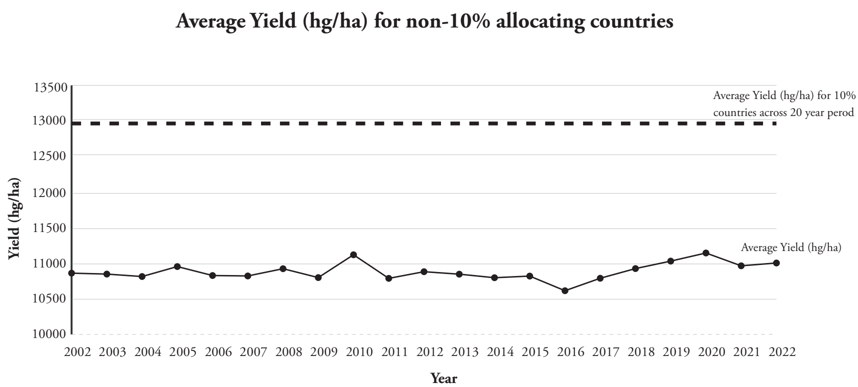


FIGURE 5-5: CAADP'S NON-10%-ALLOCATING COUNTRIES

The 10% of countries have also managed to produce more than their non-allocating counterparts. Interestingly, the non-compliant countries utilise more land than those allocating the 10% which suggests possibilities of waste and also potential for increased productivity if investments in treated seeds and fertilisers are increased to support smallholders. In comparison of two countries, for example Mali and Nigeria in the figure below, the 10% compliant country has a superior yield. In the case of Mali and Nigeria the yield (hg/ha) has been consistently growing in Mali whilst in Nigeria it is coming down.

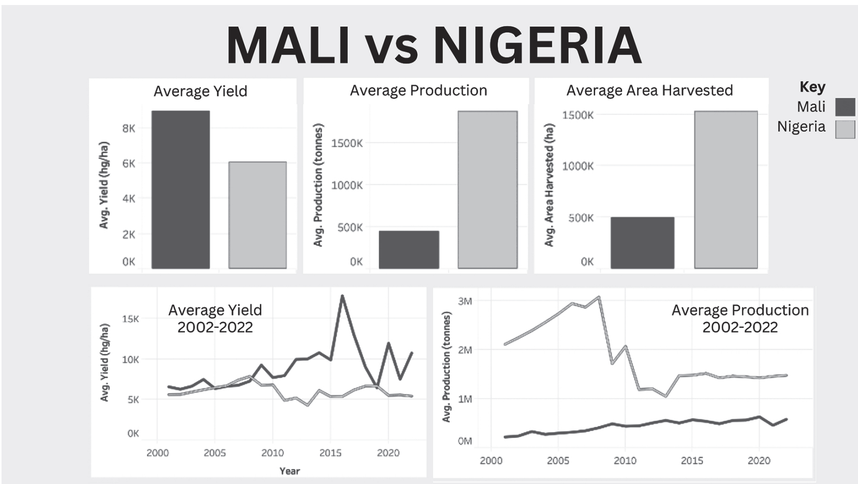


FIGURE 5-6: MALI AND NIGERIA COMPARISON

However, in some cases it looks like the growth is slowing down. Take the case of Malawi, shown in the next figure, an early reformer; in 2003 they were producing around 2 million tonnes of maize and by 2014 they had increased to 3,978,123 tonnes only to decline to 2,369,493 tonnes in 2016. This decline may have been caused by erratic rainfall patterns in some parts of the country.

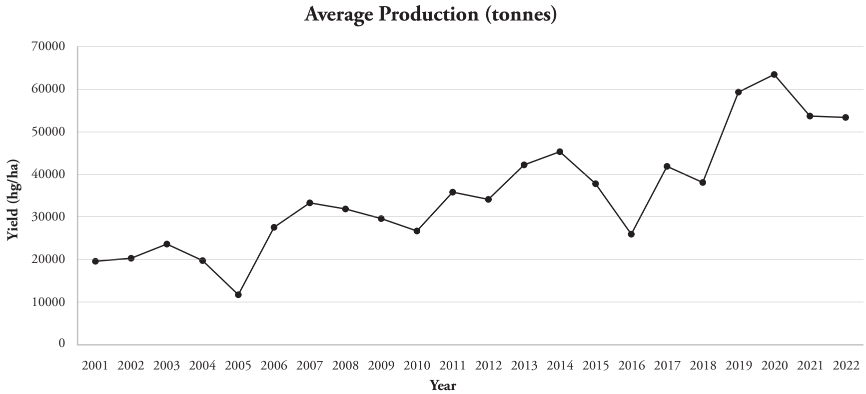


FIGURE 5-7: MALAWI PRODUCTION TRENDS (2001-2022)

5.7 Does CAADP Address the Needs of the Continent?

When evaluated on a purely technical production focus basis CAADP still has some challenges. The priority and thrust of the CAADP policies (especially Pillar 4), are all geared towards increased agricultural productivity and growth and commercialisation through improved seed varieties, fertiliser use intensification (as confirmed by the Abuja Declaration). Implicit in these efforts is the promotion of monoculture approaches with all its attendant implications pertaining to the multi-functionality of agriculture (Mushita and Thompson, 2011). Improved varieties in the form of hybrid seed and fertiliser achieve the desired short to medium term objective of attaining economic growth and food security at the expense of long-term sustenance of biodiversity and ecosystem maintenance. There are high risks for accelerated genetic erosion associated with monoculture approaches as the immediate objective will be profit maximisation. There is an increased rallying towards commercially profitable crops at the expense of food crops which at the local level promote dietary and genetic diversity. There are many lessons/takeaways to consider but we will focus on the four that we think are critical for other countries; policy consistency, strengthening the role of the state, rethinking local organisations and considering new forms of social mobilisation discussed below.

5.7.1 Need for Policy Consistency

Most of the countries that have managed to raise levels of production have not only increased budgetary allocations but have also invested significant time in carrying out policy reforms. These reforms especially in countries like Malawi served to enhance the profile of agriculture as an important sector. Many of the countries under discussion have made consistent commitments towards agriculture for over a decade. In the process they have had to deal with shocks such as climate change, global price fluctuations and competing interests for scarce fiscal resources. It is rare for many developing countries to stick to the course for at least five years without diverting into a new fad. The data that we used demonstrated commitment beyond five years. Other non-compliant countries such as Ghana were affected by changes in government. In 2009, 2010 and 2011 Ghana was allocating at least 10% of its budget to agriculture but after that it was reduced to 7% and currently is at around 8%.

5.7.2 Repositioning the State

Agricultural development remains a state function. Internal measures need to be taken by individual governments to accomplish successful agricultural transformation (especially within the smallholder sector). Political will is a prerequisite for success. However, this process should not be at the mercy of the vote-seeking political elites. It should result from grassroots platforms of citizens demanding a development agenda that imposes a local production form of food sovereignty as an integral part of a political contract. Within such a perspective, the achievements of the Malawian government must be embedded and purposefully integrated within a value-based political framework that emphasises the right of communities to produce and consume food that is culturally acceptable. Any subsequent regime voted into office will be obliged to ensure that such a right is upheld. Implicit forms of such a political contract existed in Tanzania soon after independence when it was still a one-party state. Members of parliament still had to contest for seats and had to ensure sufficient food levels in the constituencies they served. Failure to do so would have been equivalent to ceding power or position. A more explicit form of political contract on famine exists in India today and predates the colonial era.

Given the accountability structures created by democratic reforms, there is a need to increase demand on the state to reclaim its policymaking and implementation role within the agricultural sector. The current practice in which non-state actors such as NGOs have taken a central place in effecting an agricultural recovery strategy underpinned by welfarism, although necessary, needs to be complemented by a competent developmental and democratic state. A developmental state is one that has the capacity to deploy its authority credibly, legitimately, and in a binding manner to design and implement development policies and programmes for promoting transformation and growth, as well as for expanding human capabilities. The developmental state should not undermine the diverse political freedoms available in a democratic state, including regular free elections and freedom of speech. Rather, these should be seen as an integral component that allows citizens to contribute to the development project.

Democratic reforms (especially political and civil rights) alone cannot bring about food security. States need to break away from the neoliberal logic of the supremacy of the market and invest in agriculture, especially within the smallholder sector, in a more systematic manner. Priority areas include increasing allocations to a new form of extension that is embedded within communities' practices and that integrates new scientific knowledge with local practices and ways of knowing. Current efforts have not adequately interrogated the role and space of extension in agriculture and community development and pose the risk of constraining communities' own practices in favor of a defined official approach. Rather than focusing on increasing the number of extension workers, the discussion should focus on clarifying the role of that intervention and identifying ways of sustaining it, given the resource constraints apparent in many African countries.

5.7.3 Rethinking Forms of Local Organisation and Rural Production

Despite the seemingly technical nature of the problem surrounding smallholder agriculture, the organisation of production remains embedded within social networks based on autochthonous relations. Existing forms of social organisation provide the broad ecosystem for rural production and democracy. In many countries they provide a more viable and largely uncontested approach to the organisation of production and institution of social control and welfare. The forms of land ownership, access, and use—embedded within a lineage framework—allocate a hierarchy of land rights ranging from the political and territorial rights held by lineage leaders to the usufruct rights held by individual households within the lineage group. Such forms of land rights have been under attack for more than three decades. Customary-based forms of tenure, the closed approximation of common property management systems, previously under threat from the land titling movement, may have found some respite. Inherent within customary-based forms of tenure are subsystems of organising and collective decision-making about farm production, consumption, and welfare. Members belonging within the lineage group devise means of sharing the productive assets they have access to for production, and in many African countries ownership of land and other natural resources is never individual but a gift from the ancestors to the present generation, as well as a responsibility of the present to safeguard it for the next generation. Based on this thinking, a number of very complex common property management frameworks have been devised. In the process these systems provide a bedrock for thinking about community democracy and development.

In addition to customary-based forms of organisation, various social organisations such as cooperatives, farmer groups, savings associations, and unions have emerged. These do not necessarily seek to contradict common property management systems but rather are engaged in improving the capacity of land use. Some of them are embedded within the already existing structures of managing common resources. External agents such as extension and NGO workers need to thoroughly understand these complex relations and processes to avoid creating new structures that do not have community legitimacy. In fact, rather than establishing links with external agents, empirical evidence suggests that many membership-based associations are preferring to connect with national unions of farmers or social movements (discussed below).

5.8 Conclusion

Besides the agricultural reform policies initiatives currently being coordinated by AU's NEPAD, there is still a need to find mechanisms of either reforming or dismantling the international commodity chains that have served to unfairly subordinate African agriculture into global markets. Earlier movements towards industrialisation in regions such as Europe and the United States of America did not have to deal with the negative effects of globalisation-such as the free movement of goods from highly developed economies to underdeveloped regions. International commodity markets have served to undermine local production. Agricultural development and food security can only be achieved after the adoption of interrelated policies and programmes that sustainably prioritise smallholder production.

Internal measures also need to be taken by individual governments to accomplish successful agricultural transformation (especially within the smallholder sector). The existence of political will, such as currently exists in Malawi, is a prerequisite for success. However, this process should not be at the mercy of the vote-seeking political elites. It should result from grassroots-based platforms of citizens demanding a development agenda that imposes a local production form of food security as an integral part of a political contract. Within such a perspective, the achievements of the Malawian government remain threatened if they are not embedded and purposefully integrated within a value-based political framework which emphasises the right to food, so that any other regime voted into office will be obliged to ensure that such a right is upheld. Implicit forms of such a political contract existed in Tanzania soon after independence when it was still a one-party state. Members of parliament still had to contest for seats and had to ensure that there were sufficient food levels in the constituencies that they served. Failure to do that would have been equivalent to ceding power or position. A more explicit form of political contract on famine exists in India today and predates the colonial era.

Finally, it is important to note that African states regardless of their ideological orientation urgently need to embark on smallholder focused agrarian reforms. These reforms must, through a concerted national policy framework and development strategy, redirect production to the national market and create dynamic synergies with domestic wages, while broadening domestic demand for industrial goods and services. Such a strategy should lean towards small (and in other instances) middle-sized farms, realising their employment potential and through this redirect production to the home market (Moyo, 2010, p. 302). More specifically, such a development strategy has the advantage of low financial (forex) costs. It should devote more attention towards enhancing self-employed small-scale farming with local auto-consumption and demand for manufactured goods. There is also a need to ensure that the state has adequate capacity to affect the desired policies, together with the effective mobilisation of popular social forces in support of the vision of agrarian reform (Moyo and Yeros, 2007). Furthermore, we envisage a process of sustainable and fair integration into both national and international commodity markets, mediated by a more robust and equitable international framework of trade beyond the currently MNC dominated regime. The text box below captures the principles of such a policy framework.

TEXT BOX 5-2: A TEMPLATE FOR AGRICULTURAL RECOVERY

The Vision

A sustainable smallholder-led agricultural sector which integrates farmers' traditional and local experience within affordable scientific knowledge and innovation aimed at ensuring equitable access to healthy and nutritious food.

Values Driving the Vision

Inclusiveness-ensure that men and women have equal access to the means of production and also the forces of production

Fairness-remove monopolies and open the downstream and upstream value chains to more actors

Accountability- Build a new global governance system that takes into consideration the interests of peripheral states and smallholders in particular

Agency-Promote local innovations and responses to production challenges

Priority Actions

Economic Integration-Ensure that macro-economic policies/programmes prioritise agricultural development and ensure coherence with other fiscal and monetary policies (such as exchange rate regimes, tariff policies etc.)

Increased and sustained allocation of budgets towards investments in agriculture.

Develop norms for foreign investment in land (ensure that purchased land is used for enhancing local agricultural output and smallholder agriculture is not disrupted through land grabs)

Amplify the voice of the smallholders to make demands for policy change

Bilateral and multi-lateral donor partners should prioritise investment in ensuring public research, extension and credit facilities particularly for women smallholders (Action Aid, 2011)

6

Fast-Track Land Reform in Zimbabwe: A Case Study

6.1 Introduction

Fast track land reform, implemented in earnest from 2000, led to a new agrarian structure that is more representative of the demographic patterns in Zimbabwe. Prior to the fast-track land reform program, the majority of good agricultural land was owned by approximately 5,000 large-scale commercial farmers who were mostly white. Fast track radically altered the agrarian structure towards one characterised by small to medium scale farms. However, the way fast track was carried out has contributed to Zimbabwe's isolation. There were widespread complaints and concerns about how the redistribution process violated property rights. Many of the dispossessed large-scale commercial farmers successfully challenged the redistribution in many courts within and outside Zimbabwe. On most of the occasions the Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) lost the cases.

In this Chapter we examine the extent to which land reforms are contested by former owners, the international economic system. It is crucial to place the land reform in Zimbabwe within a broader global debate around reparations. The second part of the Chapter focuses on how the legal contestations contributed towards delays in finalising tenure arrangements within the fast-track areas. Finally, using the first two sections of the Chapter as a backdrop we focus on how land beneficiaries have produced. In analysing production, we remain sensitive to the fact that land reform was not just about economic outcomes. It served other purposes such as the restoring 'stolen' lands to previous owners, rebuilding a sense of identity and belonging amongst beneficiaries.

6.2 Background: The Land Question Before Fast Track

The majority (83%) of the black population was resident in communal areas prior to the Fast Track Land Reform (FTLR). According to Ruswa (2007) when Zimbabwe gained independence 45% of agricultural land was owned by large-scale commercial farmers who were mainly white and only made 1% of the total population. The land occupied by these farmers was in fertile rewarding areas while black people were congested in dry areas. Scholars such as Yeros and Moyo (2007) argue that the response of the government to such a racially biased tenure was very slow, and they attribute this to the ideological and constitutional constraints of the Lancaster House Agreement which they argue maintained a colonial land tenure structure. Black people had to contend with declining quality of land, diminishing land sizes, overpopulation and insecure usufruct to customary lands. Studies on land use have shown that over 66% of the communal areas had excess populations of more than double their assessed carrying capacity. They were usually overcrowded, and never received sufficient financial investments as compared to large-scale commercial farmers. Notably, the large-scale commercial farming model (especially in Southern Africa) did not destroy smallholder or peasant production but ensured its survival in very austere circumstances which necessitated the seeking of complementary wages elsewhere (mostly on large-scale farms and mines). These customary tenure areas served as a labour reserve but were also sites of vibrant smallholder agriculture practice, especially in areas with favorable rains such as in Makoni in Mashonaland East. At the time of independence there were 173 communal areas located within 56 Districts and these occupied 42% of Zimbabwe's land area, with over 85% of them located in Natural Region (NR) III and V (Moyana, 1984; Moyo, 1995:129). All the communal areas are administered under a mixture of customary and state-defined tenure which is not necessarily 'communal' in essence but has combined features such as communal grazing land and water sources with individual tenure on arable land (Murisa, 2009c). Families hold an average of 2 hectares of arable land, which is passed down in the family. They also own homestead sites of up to half a hectare. Available grazing, arable and homestead areas have been declining as the communal area population increases (Kinsey, 1983; Bush and Cliffe, 1984; Cusworth and Walker, 1988; Cliffe, 1988).

TABLE 6-1: LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS BEFORE FAST-TRACK LAND REFORM

Natural Region	Commercial Land	Small Scale Commercial Land	Communal Land	Parks and Wildlife	Forest Land	Total Land Area
I.	442 700	7 300	135 000	50 000	70 000	705 000
II.	4 308 000	252 000	1 270 000	25 000	2 000	5 857 000
III.	3 244 100	535 900	2 820 000	545 000	145 000	7 290 000
IV.	3 777 200	522 800	7 340 000	2 510 000	620 000	14 770 000
V.	3 652 400	97 600	4 790 000	1 840 000	70 000	10 450 000
Total	15 424 400	1 415 600	16 355 000	4 970 000	907 000	39 072 000

6.3 Enter Fast Track

The Zimbabwean government formally announced the "fast track" resettlement program in July 2000, stating that it would acquire more than 3,000 farms for redistribution. Between June 2000 and February 2001, a total of 2,706 farms, covering more than six (6) million hectares, were gazetted (listed in the official government journal) for compulsory acquisition.

Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) in Zimbabwe facilitated the transfer of land to nearly 170,000 households excluding the informal settlements that are largely excluded from the official "fast-track" programme (Moyo, 2011). six million hectares,also benefited from the FTLRP. Scoones (2014) indicate that invasions made land available to 150,000 households in smallholder farms often referred to as A1 farmers and 30,000 households in middle-scale farms often called A2 farms. By the end of 2002, FTLR had compulsorily acquired some ten (10) million hectares, or approximately 90% of white commercial farmland and redistributed most of it to 127,000 smallholder households and 8,000 middle capitalist farmers (Moyo and Yeros, 2005b, p. 188). This was a considerable increase in the number of farms acquired, especially when compared to the approximately 800 farms that had been occupied prior to the fast track between February and June 2000. By the end of 2005, the number of beneficiaries increased to 140,866 households allocated land under A1 and 14,500 households under A2 (Government of Zimbabwe, 2006, p. 2). In practice land occupiers would occupy farms that would have been listed for acquisition by the GoZ, and in other instance the occupiers' actions would compel government to list a previously unlisted farm.

6.4 Land Reform in the Era of Neoliberalism

Under neoliberalism, property rights are sacrosanct. Many measures and indexes that determine and promote external investments examine the extent to which property rights are not subject to violation by governments or communities. The FTLR was judged by many to have violated and extinguished private property rights. In 2005 Craig Richardson wrote a piece that was potentially the most damning and damaging of the land reform process. He observed that Zimbabwe's land reform had led to the loss of property rights and negatively affected agricultural production. There were many who made similar arguments, see for instance Dale Dore (2012). Others (see for instance Shay 2012)) argued that it was chaotic and a violation of international law. Shay argued that Amendments 16A and 16B of the Zimbabwean Constitution, which authorised fast-track land reform, violated minimum international standards regarding the right to property and due process. Amendment 16A requires Great Britain, instead of Zimbabwe, to pay landowners for their expropriated property. It justifies this by claiming that Great Britain has the responsibility to pay because it colonized Zimbabwe and dispossessed legitimate owners by promulgating and enforcing racist laws. The international law and treaty system is somewhat ambivalent about property rights. Zimbabwe is signatory to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) and the Banjul Charter. Article 17 of the UDHR guarantees individuals the right to own property and not to have it arbitrarily deprived. Article 14 of the Banjul Charter also guarantees the right to property, although it allows the government to take property for the public good in conformity with appropriate laws.

Several cases were brought before the courts, initially in Zimbabwe and then at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Tribunal and eventually in European courts. The Zimbabwe courts took the position that land reform is a non-justiciable political question, and that the Constitution could legally deny a right to access courts to challenge land acquisitions. The courts have been consistent in this position. In the recent Chilonga case Justice Mafusire referred to several cases which reinforced the argument that there is a long-held tradition in which land disputes are resolved politically. The judge concluded the case by recommending a commission of inquiry as the first step to finding a possible political solution.

However, the international courts, starting with the SADC Tribunal were very clear on the illegality of fast-track land reform. In 2008, 78 farmers from the Chegutu area appealed to the SADC Tribunal against their unlawful removal from their farms. The latter resulted in what is commonly referred to as the SADC Tribunal's decision on land reform in Zimbabwe. The Windhoek-based tribunal ruled in favour of the former large-scale farmers, who had petitioned the court to issue an order barring the GoZ taking over their farms without compensation. The judges held that the farmers, who are facing eviction, "can keep their farms because the land reform undermined the rule of law." The panel also ruled that "fair compensation" should be given, "on or before June 30, 2009," to farmers who had already been evicted from their farms before the judgment was handed down. The court ruled that Zimbabwe's white farmers had legal title to remain on their farms and ordered the Zimbabwe government to "take all measures to protect the possessions and ownership" of the farmers' land. Since then, the GoZ has been sued several times over the way it dispossessed former large-scale farmers of their land. The GoZ was sued by a consortium of farmers whose farms were under Bilateral Investment Protection Agreements (BIPA) and the case was lodged at The Hague.

6.5 Outstanding Challenges

The question of tenure security remains outstanding although the GoZ recently announced plans to issue private title to all the beneficiaries of fast track. Prior to the November 2024 announcement fast track seemed to have extinguished private property rights in agricultural land and broadened the effective occupation and use/ownership of the redistributed land through socially differentiated forms of land tenure. The GoZ committed to a new tenure system of permits held in perpetuity for A1 plots and 99-year leases for A2 plots. Thus, on paper the land tenure issue had been resolved: A1 beneficiaries will be issued with the permits, whilst A2 beneficiaries will be issued with leases for 99 years. However, it remained outstanding for a variety of reasons. Less than 5% of the beneficiaries were issued with signed documents. The leases and permits were never given a chance, government was slow/lethargic in rolling them out, to the extent that the majority of those on fast-track farms only have offer letters which can be withdrawn by the Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development through a letter.

In April 2021, the GoZ entered into an agreement with the white farmers in pay the US$3,5 billion for improvements on the land. The Global Compensation Agreement (GCA) was a significant milestone. Processes leading to the agreement had been characterised by major disagreements between the GoZ and the former large-scale commercial farmers, represented by the Commercial Farmer's Union (CFU) and a radical break-away group from the CFU called Justice for Agriculture (JAG). The areas of disagreement included the criteria to be used for compensation and the methodology of farm valuation. The dispute over what must be compensated for meant that even the valuation of farms remained contested and unfortunately some of the inventories on what was on the farms could have been lost. Details on the number of farmers that have received compensation remain sketchy. In earlier research we had found that of the 7,862 farms that had been acquired by September 2005, only 1,174 farms had been confirmed as legally acquired through the courts and by consent (outside courts) and 3,380 farms had been evaluated for compensation purposes. As of September 2006, approximately 206 farmers had received full compensation for improvements on their farms.

In the Global Compensation Agreement (GCA), the government committed to set aside US$3 billion to compensate all those who have lost land through fast-track land reform. There was no clarity on where the resources for compensation would come from. Initially there was an expectation that the funds for compensation would be raised largely from the international community through the Joint Resource Mobilisation Committee (JRMC) comprising of representatives of the parties to the GCA. Later the government assigned the newly established Kuvimba Mining (government owns 65% of the company's shares) to raise the resources for compensation to former large-scale farmers.

However, global compensation, lacked clarity on how the tenure question would be resolved. This area has also negatively affected prospects for the participation of financial service providers in the agricultural sector. To date many of the former large-scale commercial farmers are still to be compensated, or to agree to terms with the GoZ on how they will hand over the title. However, despite the stalling on compensation, the GoZ proceeded to announce a major change on land tenure in November 2024. According to the announcement, the government intends to issue a bankable form of title to land where the landowners can borrow against the land and sell the land or subdivide. Many potentially positive outcomes may emerge from this suggested policy change. First, it will allow landowners the options to secure financing for their agricultural activities. Second, it will potentially allow capital markets to improve their participation in agricultural value chains. Third, it will allow for official farm subdivisions to cater for family inheritance or capital raising. Fourth, it will create a new land market to cater for those who missed out on receiving land through fast track yet have an interest in farming and adequate resources. Fifth, it provides an exit strategy for others who would want to do farming for a defined period and exit when their commercial interests change. However, there are equally many potential challenges that may confront farmers and indeed government if this is passed. The 'bankable' feature of the title if not properly managed may lead to a phenomenon commonly referred to as 'land concentration' within financial institutions. The current generation of fast-track farmers was used to 'friendly financing' arrangements mostly through government.

6.6 Agricultural Production Since Fast Track

The imperative for improved production offers perhaps the most compelling argument for land reform. At inception many critics of land reform cited the decline of production as a reflection of the failure of the program. Richardson, (2005) argued

> *"Zimbabwe (thus) provides a compelling case study of the perils of ignoring the rule of law and property rights when enacting (often well-intentioned) land reforms. We have seen how Zimbabwe's markets collapsed extraordinarily quickly after 2000, with a domino-like effect. The lesson learned here is that well-protected private property rights are crucial for economic growth and serve as the market economy's linchpin. Once those rights are damaged or removed, economies may be prone to collapse with surprising and devastating speed. That is because of the subsequent loss of investor trust, the vanishing of land equity, and the disappearance of entrepreneurial knowledge and incentives - all of which are essential ingredients for economic growth".*

His argument was based on comparisons he had made between large-scale farm areas and customary (small-scale) farms. He argued that 'the fertility of the land wasn't determined just by rainfall or quality of the soil' but was due to '…the difference in property rights between the two areas'. The property rights on the commercial farms gave farmers large incentives to efficiently manage the land and allowed the banking sector to loan funds for machinery, irrigation pipes, seeds, and tools. Concerning smallholder areas, he stated;

> *"Communal lands, on the other hand, were typically plagued by tragedy-of-the-common types of problems, as the land became overused and greatly eroded over time. In addition, without property titles, there was often*

> *squabbling over land use rights between village residents and the village chief, since each village had complicated use restrictions on how the land could or could not be used.*

Craig Richardson was not alone in pursuing such a line of arguing. Many others including Zimbabwean lawyers and academics such as Llyod Mhishi and Dale Doore made similar arguments. However, it has been 19 years since Richardson led the charge against land reform and perhaps this is the best time to test if his conclusions were accurate using data on agricultural production.

It is necessary to state from the beginning the fact that Richardson's assumptions about the functions of the market in Zimbabwe's agriculture were not totally accurate. Agriculture, especially the large-scale sector, did not thrive just because they had superior property rights. The large-scale sector was privileged in Zimbabwe both during colonial and in the post-colonial period through discriminatory legislation and state-based support incentives.

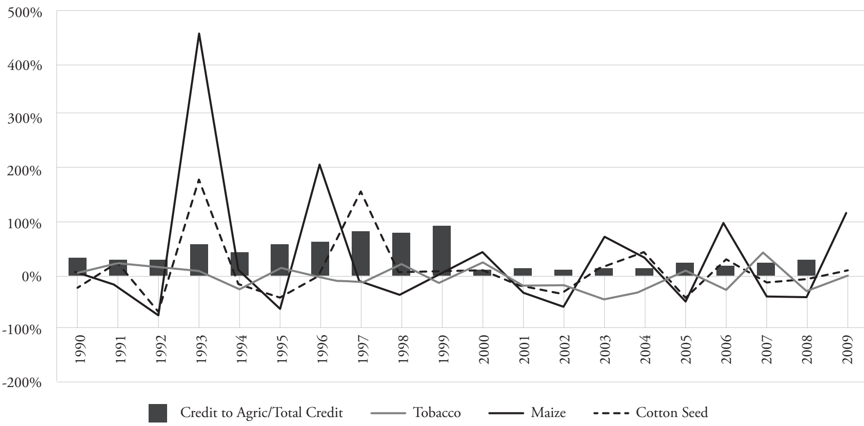
It is also a fact that there was a production slump across all crops immediately after fast-track land reform. National tobacco output plummeted from a peak of 237 million kgs in 2000-1 to a low of 48.8 million kgs in 2008. Horticultural crops such as mange-tout literally disappeared only to resurface after the dollarisation and liberalisation of 2009. Perhaps it was this decline that led others such as Richardson to argue that there was a relationship between the loss of property rights and production decline. However, by 2011 production had recovered across many crops. One of the salient features of that recovery was the significant contribution by the smallholder sector towards overall maize and tobacco production. Scoones et al. (2017) highlights that, growth of small holder tobacco since 2000 has been one of the biggest stories of Zimbabwe's land reform experience. Some scholars have referred to it as the 'tobacco boom'. The table below provides a comparison across farm sectors and their output up until 2011.

TABLE 6-2: CONTRIBUTION OF MAIZE AND TOBACCO PRODUCTION BY SECTOR

Area	Total distribution of land	Share of crop	
		Maize	Tobacco
Communal lands	56%	38.5%	13.7%
Small-scale commercial farms	3%	15.4%	46.4%
A1 farms	13%	46.2%	35.4%
Old resettlement areas	28%	0.0%	4.4%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: *ZIMSTAT (2019), 'Zimbabwe smallholder agricultural productivity survey 2017 report'*

There is limited explanation for this dramatic increase in output in maize and tobacco from the smallholder sector when we compare it with the period before fast-track land reform. Property rights, the alleged cause of agricultural production decline, are still yet to be resolved. What changed? Could it be the rise of new forms of agricultural financing in the form of contract farming models? It is important to note that prior to the dollarisation of 2009, financing towards agriculture production had all but disappeared. Figure 6.1 provides an illustration of financing trends towards agriculture from 1990 up to 2009. Furthermore, "the agricultural policy environment until 2009 was characterised by heavy-handed state intervention funded through quasi-fiscal means which distorted markets and incentives and undermined the economy" (Scoones et al., 2010). The reintroduction of price controls led to input supply shortages which forced farmers to the black market where inputs were being sold at far higher than the official gazetted prices (James, 2015, p. 91).



Source: *Masiyandima, Chigumira, and Bara, (2011)*

FIGURE 6-1: BANK CREDIT TO AGRICULTURE AND GROWTH IN MAIZE, TOBACCO AND COTTON OUTPUT

James (2015) has carried out an excellent study of contract farming models. He notes that contract faming arrangements have been on the rise following dollarisation and re-liberalisation of the markets. James (2015, p. 92) notes that whereas FTLRP disrupted agricultural production and marketing channels, which had a devastating impact on the wider economy, the establishment of a Government of National Unity (GNU) in 2008 and the dollarisation of the economy and the re-liberalisation of markets in 2009 saw a return to economic and political stability which resulted in renewed opportunities for the further expansion of contract production. It is important to note that the explanation given above for the recovery of production does not make any reference to land tenure or property rights. Moyo and Nyoni (2013, p. 236) note that private bank credit to agriculture increased to over US$300 million dollars in 2010, but over 60% of this amount went to contractors.

In the tobacco sector, the number of contractors rose from three in 2003 to 15 in 2014 (TIMB, 2014). During the 2022/2023 season the number rose to 39. There has also been a dramatic increase in tobacco output. The highest output was 252 million kgs produced in the 201/72018 season (AMA, 2018).

295 million kgsof tobacco have been recorded during the 2022/2023 marketing season surpassing the highest volume of tobacco ever produced in Zimbabwe, which was 252 million kg, recorded in 2018. Ngarava (2020) notes that, the tobacco industry benefited many peasants who were allocated small plots of land under the FTLRP. Before the FTLRP, 98% of tobacco was grown on large farms, decreasing to 21% in 2012, also resulting in medium-scale farms producing 26% and small-scale farms producing 53%. The small-scale farmers also control 50% in the production of tobacco growing areas (Sakata, 2018). Even though there was a steady increase of 67% in the number of tobacco producers just 3 years before the FTLRP, the 3 years following the programme saw the number of producers increasing by 140%. Other scholars like Sakata (2018), attest that this growth could have been a result of contract farming which increased the number, area and volume of tobacco farming in Zimbabwe. However, Scoones et al. (2017) bring to light the exploitation that contract farming has brought through farming arrangements that have reinserted them into global commodity circuits. Mkodzongi and Lawrence (2019) further argue that contract farming has also brought about new forms of land grabbing disguised as joint venture. Moyo (2013, p. 51) noted, 'some former white farmers have moved up or downstream of the farming value chain by acting as contract financiers and marketers or supervisors of farming operations of contracted new farmers".

Similarly, the number of private cotton contractors increased to 13 in 2011. James (2015), citing Irwin et al., (2012, p. 1) estimated that 50 firms contracted approximately 328,000 small farmers to produce a variety of crops on some 628,000 ha of land during the 2011/2012 season. However, despite the early recovery, the emergence of contract farming arrangements does not adequately explain the production spike, especially of maize (see the table below on production trends of the five crops under study). Could it be government-based subsidies?

TABLE 6-3: PRODUCTION VS YIELDS TRENDS ACROSS FIVE

CROPS (2000-2022)

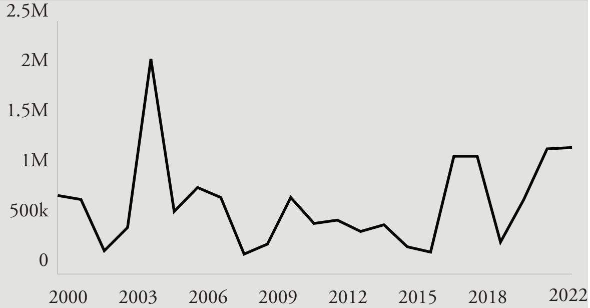
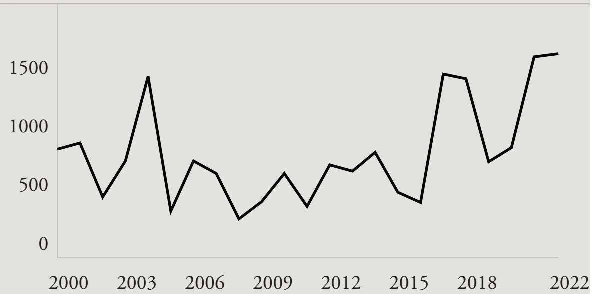
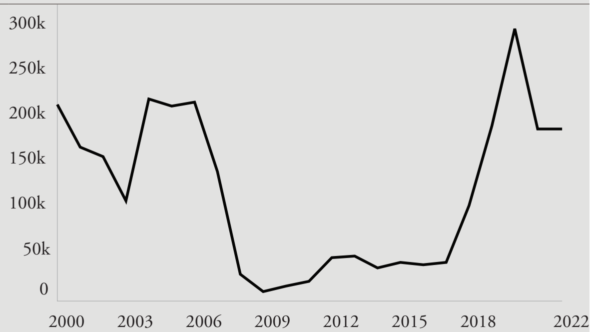
Crop		
Maize	Production (tonnes)	
	Yield (kg/ha)	
Wheat	Production (tonnes)	

TABLE 6-3: PRODUCTION VS YIELDS TRENDS ACROSS FIVE CROPS (2000-2022) [CONTINUED]

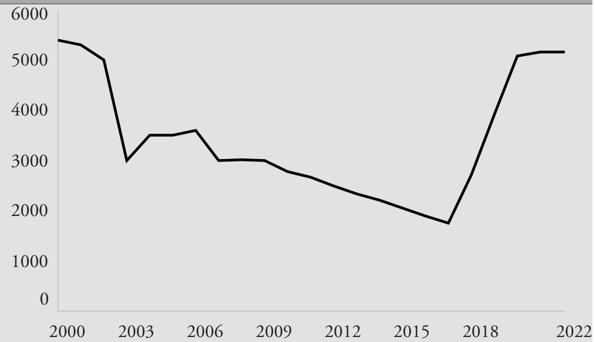
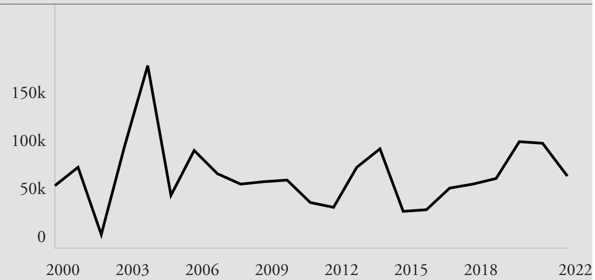
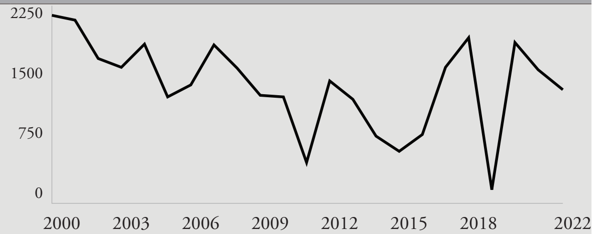
Crop		
Wheat	Yield (kg/ha)	
Sorghum	Production (tonnes)	
	Yield (kg/ha)	
Soya Beans	Production (tonnes)	

TABLE 6-3: PRODUCTION VS YIELDS TRENDS ACROSS FIVE CROPS (2000-2022) [CONTINUED]

<table>
<tr><th>Crop</th><th></th><th></th></tr>
<tr><td>Soya Beans</td><td>Yield (kg/ha)</td><td>
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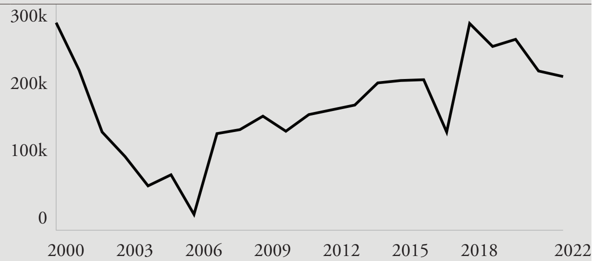
<tr><td rowspan="2">Tobacco</td><td>Production (tonnes)</td><td>
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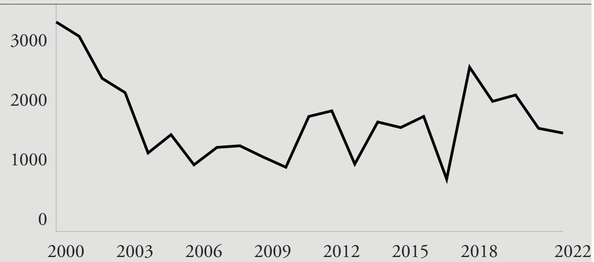
<tr><td>Yield (kg/ha)</td><td>
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</table>

Source: *FAO Data 2000-2024*

Since the inception of FTLRP the Government of Zimbabwe has come up with several subsidy schemes aimed at supporting production (see Murisa and Mujeyi, 2015 for a detailed discussion on these). The subsidies are summarised in Table 6-4 below. However, these subsidies were poorly managed in terms of targeting and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. The farm mechanisation program for instance was initially only meant for those in A2 and large-scale farms. Murisa and Mujeyi (2015) note that 'despite contributing the majority share to the country's food security and share of cropped area, smallholder farmers were sidelined during the first phase of the program only to benefit through distribution of smaller and cheaper equipment of questionable quality procured mainly from the informal sector.' Most of the subsidies that were rolled out prior to dollarisation did not significantly contribute towards agricultural production. They were mostly characterised by controversy, allegations of corruption and were not adequately structured to revamp agriculture within an environment of hyper-inflation and massive shortages of inputs.

TABLE 6-4: SUMMARY OF GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDY SCHEMES

Type of Intervention	Period	Purpose
The Agricultural Sector Productivity Enhancement Facility (ASPEF)	Prior to Dollarisation	To provide low-cost production funds to primary producers in the agricultural sector for enhancement of capacity utilisation, infrastructure development, food security and import substitution, and to generate foreign currency.
Operation Maguta	Prior to Dollarisation	To ensure that targeted acreages of grains were planted to the key food security crops through provision of tillage services and fertilisers to selected farmers.

TABLE 6-4: SUMMARY OF GOVERNMENT OF ZIMBABWE AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDY SCHEMES [CONTINUED]

Type of Intervention	Period	Purpose
Farm Mechanisation Programme	Prior to Dollarisation	To satisfy the demand for mechanised inputs and services, particularly among the newly resettled farmers who had benefited from the FTLRP.
Command Agriculture	Post-Dollarisation (2016)	To ensure food self-sufficiency by contracting selected farmers to produce a set amount of the staple maize crop, with intentions to stimulate local production of seeds, fertiliser and other inputs. If correctly implemented, it could also stimulate production of irrigation and other farm equipment in the domestic market.

Source: *Updated Murisa and Mujeyi (2015)*

However, Command Agriculture introduced in 2016 was somewhat different. It was designed in partnership with a private sector player. It was also the only program that developed enforceable contracts like the ones used by private sector based contract farming entities. It was aimed at ensuring household and national food security. The immediate outcome from the time it was launched was a dramatic increase in maize production as illustrated in Table 6-3 above.

There are many factors that explain the recovery of production in some crops. There is no silver bullet. The growth of contract farming arrangements, combined with state-based subsidies seems to have somewhat resolved the financing challenges within the sector. However, there is no guarantee of the sustainability of these interventions, especially in the context of uncertainty about currency and the speculative behaviours of contracting entities. Zimbabwe is not alone in providing a subsidy program, Malawi's maize miracle is mostly due to the subsidies that were introduced by the late Bingu waMutharika. However, there is still no consensus on the subsidy-based approach to agricultural development.

6.7 The Democratising Potential of Land Tenure Reforms

6.7.1 Land Tenure Reforms and Their Influence on Social Organisation

Migration into newly resettled areas and tenurial changes has deep significance for re-imagining rural social organisation. An individual living on their lineage land amongst their kinsfolk obviously fulfilled certain obligations towards their lineage group, not necessarily out of a spirit of voluntarism but as part of expected duties codified within the customs. Resettlement and tenurial changes on the other hand suggest freedom from the tyranny of the mechanisms of cooperation embedded in the lineage and the possibility of the individual focusing or maximising output on their own landholding. The tenure measures introduced at the beginning of fast track; A1 permit and A2 lease did not make any reference to traditional authority. They state that any disagreements between the permit/lease holder and the lessor will be mediated by the courts of law. The introduction of the A1 permit and A2 lease seemed to be contributing towards nurturing a more direct relationship between the land beneficiary and the state. This was in direct contrast to trends within the customary areas where the chiefs' historical claim to certain land allocation and adjudication powers holds sway, especially after the promulgation of the Traditional Leaders Act (1999) which restored their land allocation powers. The new measures entailing private tenure build upon the shift towards the creation of new forms of relations between landowners and the state.

Land tenure cannot, however, be analysed in isolation from the local government system that is responsible for the newly resettled areas. The official position on local government states that the newly resettled areas will eventually become part of existing chieftaincies and wards of Rural District Councils (RDCs). Although this looks neat on paper, in practice it is a messy arrangement characterised by competition for turf between the RDCs and chiefs, especially over land. Previous research (Anderson, 1996; Alexander, 2003) has shown how, prior to the 1999 changes, the chiefs disregarded the official local government regulations on land and continued to intervene in land conflicts. The research by Anderson (1999) demonstrated the fact that people preferred the intervention of the chief to that of the RDC officials. The case studies presented in Murisa (2009c) have shown how within a space of less than five years village heads had already begun to violate the land laws. Field research carried out in Goromonzi and Zvimba district found instances where village heads had allocated land to members previously left out of the official allocation in different ways. Although the tenure system (permits and leases) does not officially recognise the role of traditional authority, their power lies within the local government system and their presence at a very local level where the RDCs are markedly absent.

Traditional authority is being introduced in the newly resettled areas in the absence of lineage and kinship ties except in rare cases (see Murisa 2009 for an exhaustive discussion of the process). The village councils that have emerged are made up of a fusion of traditional and elected officials. Whilst the village head is mostly appointed by the chief, the members of the subordinate Village Development Committee (VIDCO) are elected by members of the village.

In customary tenure areas village heads are usually lineage elders responsible for single or related lineage groups and in such a context they command authority and power not only on the basis of delegated responsibility from the chief but also on the basis of seniority within the lineage group. However, the A1 fast track villages are mostly not organised according to lineage ties and the authority of the village head is only based on delegated authority from the chief without the attendant seniority within a certain grouping of inclusion. The village authorities under the leadership of the village head are not socially rooted among the communities and lack the authority of organising communities for production and consumption that their counterparts within customary tenure areas possess.

In such a context there are limited possibilities for mobilising around the other obligations that normally arise out of such networks, such as participation in ritual events and mutual assistance in case of need. A critical question that arises is whether the introduction of traditional authority is synonymous with the re-introduction of the lineage-based form of organisation. The evidence so far indicates that these village authorities are struggling to establish themselves and have limited mobilisation capacity to intervene in the socioeconomic production challenges faced by the land beneficiaries. State functionaries such as the Chief Lands Officer explain the establishment of the village head in the newly resettled areas simplistically as part of an effort to replicate customary area organisation since the purpose of the A1 is itself to expand customary areas. The Chief Lands Officer is quoted saying;

> *"If you look at what we call A1 farms, that is almost like the communal areas, (sic) it includes villages which have communal grazing areas or small plots…The aim is to bring people from communal areas where they live under the chiefs and to preserve their value system" (quoted in Fontein, 2009, p. 3).*

These opinions suggest a lack of understanding of the web of social relations that undergird the system of customary tenure in communal lands. Although the lineage framework has been on the wane in terms of nurturing social relations of production it remained intact and relevant when decisions of land allocation had to be made, and the exclusionary nature of the identities that emerge within this form of social organisation have been crucial in preserving the customary areas even in the face of an increase in demand for land in the 1990s. It is difficult to understand how state planners can assume that this model could easily be replicated over a short space of time in areas where autochthonous relations do not exist and where the form of land tenure marginalises the role of chiefs. According to the Traditional Leaders Act (1999) the chief is responsible for the allocation of land and prevention of illegal settlement in customary areas. In the newly resettled areas, the chief does not have such powers. The permit that confers usufruct rights on the land beneficiary in perpetuity makes it clear that the agreement is between the GoZ represented by the Ministry of Lands and the lessee.

There are visible attempts at not only introducing traditional authority but importing culture from customary areas into the newly resettled areas even though the land beneficiaries come from different areas with unique cultural practices. The village heads are responsible for ensuring that the land is given rest on the day of chisi and in Goromonzi and Zvimba they have chosen to observe this ritual on a Thursday. However, the decision to have chisi on Thursday was arbitrarily made without consulting the rest of the villagers. During focus group discussions in both districts several people queried why chisi should be on a Thursday instead of a Wednesday. Although chisi is part of the common traditions of rural Zimbabwe it has been converted into a Christian ritual and those who worship on Sunday prefer to have Chisi on a Thursday while those who worship on Saturdays prefer to have it on a Wednesday. Those who observe Sunday as a day of worship also use Thursday as day for activities such as women's meetings and those who observe Saturday prefer to hold these meetings on Wednesday.

6.7.2 Prospects for Rural Democratisation

Besides the physical restructuring of the agrarian landscape from large farms into smaller farms, land tenure reforms that accompanied 'fast track' land reform contributed towards some of the initial steps in the creation of what Mamdanini (1996) calls 'citizens' although the expansion of traditional authority functionaries requires a more cautious examination of the significance of these reforms. Currently 'fast track' associated reforms have not necessarily led to a comprehensive democratisation process which is vital to the reorganisation of the local state. Traditional authority, deriving its legitimacy from the state, has been weakly inserted into areas where there is no countervailing force on the ground to oppose such state-led efforts. However, the agenda of the state seems to have radically shifted. The new measures seem to suggest a turn towards a market-based logic, where land is treated as a commodity. These reforms may entail a restructuring of local government.

6.7.3 Land Tenure Reforms and the Emergence of a Rural-based Civil Society

The contradictory changes relating to landholding practice, the emergence of local associational forms and introduction of Village Councils made up of traditional authority and elected officials form part of an important stretch in Zimbabwe's tortuous path towards development and democratisation. The land redistribution tenure changes imply two fundamental variations: firstly, equality before the law, and secondly freedom from the tyranny of traditional authority which still dominates customary areas. These lie at the heart of modern democracy. Within this line of thinking the civil and political rights of the land beneficiaries have been asserted and they have become members of civil society with a clearly defined set of human rights.

Concepts of civil society have a rich history, but it is only in the past thirty years that they have moved to the center of the international stage. 'Civil society' is a very difficult and fluid concept which in Alan Fowler's 1996 words is like "trying to pin a multi-coloured jelly to a wall". Gramsci's conceptualisation provides a more illuminating clarification of the concept, especially in reference to the subject of rural associational forms. Gramsci was preoccupied with exploring the relations and boundaries between civil society and the political economy, especially the state (Mckeon et al., 2004, p. 4). According to Gramsci, the extent to which the state or civil society invaded the other was key in establishing how hegemony was created. That is how rulers maintained their powers over the subordinate class and attempted to manufacture a sort of political consent. The voluntary associations, in essence the hallmark of civil society, are autonomous but not necessarily independent of the state, for the latter is the guarantor of that autonomy. Within this context civil society is not necessarily a sphere to facilitate development, rather it is an arena in which the character of rule is determined and fought over (Mckeon et al., 2004, p. 5). In this regard it is the nature of the relationship between the state and associational forms that is critical for development.

Another related conceptual analysis of civil society was done by Mamdani (1996). He argues that in Africa the history of civil society is laced with racism as it was primarily a creation of the colonial state (Mamdani, 1996, p. 19). According to Mamdani (1996, p. 19) the colonial state was bifurcated between the civil and the customary. The rights of free association and eventually of political representation were the rights of citizens and not of subjects indirectly ruled by the customarily organised tribal authority. The intervention of independence in most of the African states only led to the deracialisation of the state and expanded civil rights to urban-based natives who were mainly middle- and working-class persons (Mamdani, 1996, p. 20). The anti-colonial struggle was at the same time a struggle of an embryonic middle class and working classes for entry into civil society while the native strata (within the customary areas) remained in limbo. Consequently, to paraphrase Mamdani (1996), the historically accumulated privilege which was usually racial was embedded and defended in civil society. Furthermore, historical privilege was not only defended within civil society, but it was moralised in the language of civil rights, individual rights and institutional autonomy.

However, the discourse of civil rights within the post-colonial state remains locked up with the constraints view of human rights. In this line of thinking, rights are intrinsic and any violation of a right is wrong per se even if such violation would result in the best consequences or an improved state of affairs. The approach is focused on negative freedoms, that is, ensuring the absence of interference or constraints from others. Karl Marx dismissed this approach to human rights as "the 'rights of egotistic man', promoting the separation of 'man from man' and 'recognition of slavery'" (Lefort, 1988, pp. 21, 44). Within such a framework freedom and equality before the law on their own can be oppressive and oriented towards the status quo in areas where ownership of property (such as land) is skewed in favour of a defined social group and the law is formulated by the same group.

Using the same schema of reasoning as Mamdani (1996) and Gramsci's notion of civil society, the discussion below summarises the significance of the fast-track reforms, associationalism in local farmer groups and village authority. As already mentioned, the fast-track program not only redistributed land but significantly altered relations of property ownership; initially the state became the landlord and then eventually making a turn around to embrace private tenure.

The introduction of private tenure (through title deeds) gives the immediate impression of the expansion of citizenship to the countryside. Besides the introduction of civil laws in property relations the program is linked with associational activity outside the parameters of kinship (except in a few instances). These developments suggest that the hallmarks of civil society have been attained. However, the movement towards this civil society remains constrained by several factors. Firstly, it lacks organic leadership (what Gramsci calls 'the intellectual') to challenge for autonomy against the state. The leadership previously provided by war veterans during the period of occupations has dissipated. There are remnants of war veteran leadership within some of the local farmer groups, but it is too fragmented and isolated to have a significant impact on broader mobilisation. Secondly fast-track resettlement areas remain not only isolated from the national smallholders' union but also from global and national civil society comprising a complex web of networks involving local and international actors such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), unions and donors. The local farmer groups that have emerged operate outside the parameters of this civil society. They sit uneasily in both civil society and as subordinate agents of the state as they help their members to undertake productive and economic activities, a role associated with the state. They remain shunned and isolated by other civil society-based networks despite the state's attempts to civilise the fast-track resettlement areas by ensuring that the land beneficiaries are legitimate property holders through the 17th Amendment to the Constitution which nationalised all agricultural land.

The continued exclusion of fast-track resettlement areas from the networks characterising civil society is not surprising. Civil society discourse in Zimbabwe and globally is united around the need to protect human rights and it is the interpretation of the right of the individual that is problematic. As discussed above, the constraint view as an approach to human rights tends to be ahistorical and status quo oriented. The CFU managed to operate within this sphere of rights and to defend the rights of its members to due process in land redistribution, while disregarding the historical theft of land, labour and livestock. Other civil society networks including the Zimbabwe Farmers Union (ZFU) were also mobilised to defend the racially defined privilege on the basis of due process and the 'rule of law'. The CFU in the process emphasised (to the point of exaggeration) its importance to the economy and the urban civil society-based networks joined in the process of ridiculing 'fast track' as "chaotic and likely to lead to a decline in agricultural production" (Zimbabwe Crisis Coalition and National Constitutional Assembly Joint Press Statement, August 2001). While the fears of production decline are genuine, the statements from urban-based civil society were not accompanied by viable alternatives to the 'fast track' approach.

The fact that fast track resettlement areas are isolated from receiving support from development and relief NGOs is convenient for both civil society and the state. It simplifies a very complex problem where civil society, by choosing not to engage with the land beneficiaries, can continue to dismiss the land reform process as largely benefiting politically connected elites. In the meantime, the ZANU (PF) dominated state remains the only active external agent in providing support. In the absence of partnerships with civil society the local farmer groups in newly resettled areas have entered into relationships of survival with the state. This is convenient for the ZANU (PF) dominated government for two reasons. Firstly, the state and the party remain the only players active in responding to the challenges these communities face, and this dependence entrenches clientelist relations. Secondly, the GoZ uses the isolation of the newly resettled areas from any outside help to strengthen their case of sanctions. The rules of engagement with the state have been mostly welfare and production oriented to an extent that the politics of local farmer groups remain very underdeveloped.

However, although these formations look like the groups existing in customary areas they need not to be treated as similar. In customary areas they are a product of a society with established structures of authority, while in the newly resettled areas they are emerging within a space where there is no defined framework of cooperation, and the legitimacy of local authority is in a state of flux and contestation. In certain instances, such as in Goromonzi, the local farmer groups have become a more dominant structure of inclusion and allocation of resources, especially in the absence of the lineage form of organisation, while in rare cases such as at Dalkeith, where beneficiary selection was on the basis of belonging within a certain lineage group, traditional authority functionaries have taken the lead in establishing village structures that include the farmer group. There is a need to qualify the foregoing by briefly discussing the significance of the emergence of traditional authority in these areas.

6.8 Conclusion

Zimbabwe's fast track was and remains controversial especially in the way it dispossessed probably one of the most organised sets of large-scale commercial farmers across Africa. The large-scale commercial farmers were behind the modernisation of agriculture and were the third largest source of employment. They were second to mining in terms of generating foreign currency. However, they were a minority white group and had not managed to include the blacks. Fast track redistribution was by essence a racial conflict. Fast track suggests a radical shift in government thinking from the willing seller and willing buyer framework which dominated thinking in the 1980s and 1990s. There are a number of factors that led to the radical shift, (i) the refusal of the British government to release more funding for land reform despite the success of the earlier phases, (ii) the changing political environment characterised by the emergence of a strong opposition party backed by the trade union movement, (iii) the growing frustration within the rank file of the war veterans exacerbated by the worsening economic conditions and (iv) a growing localised land occupation movement which had gone various phases of intensity since independence.

The new agrarian structure comprising of small, medium and large-scale agriculture created new opportunities for a large number to participate in agriculture. As stated, fast track dispossessed approximately 6,000 large-scale farmers and created close to 160,000 farms of varying sizes. The immediate effect of the fast track to some was about the collapse of property rights and to others it was about gaining access to land as a form of livelihood. It is usually difficult to find a common position on the significance of land reform. To many, land reform signified the end of 'modernity', the collapse of property rights and agriculture. It was argued that the current law for land reform is arbitrary, racially discriminatory, disregards due process, and denies compensation for property (Shay, 2012).

Yet to others, usually the majority within the country, land reform was a means to new opportunities of participating in agriculture and restoration of dignity and identity. For some, land reform was part of restorative justice. There were others with more nuanced positions, who were opposed to the brazen politicisation of the land question and corruption around allocations. They argued that land reform is by itself a necessary condition in the resolution of colonially based injustices and skewed wealth accumulation, but fast track does not guarantee an inclusive framework, rather it is about benefiting a few connected elites. They correctly raised problems of multiple farm ownership and at times the unnecessary vandalisation of property.

These contrasting perspectives define fast land reform. The judgements passed by various courts within the region and in Europe suggested a static and probably ahistorical approach to understanding the evolution of property rights. The central issue under contest was 'who owns the land'- could it be individuals or a collective represented by the state. In some ways the debate could be structured around an understanding of the evolution of private property. Prior to colonisation there was no individual ownership of land nor a market where land was traded. Many anthropologists agree that the local language groups did not treat land as a commodity. It was part and parcel of their identity. Land could not be traded. The GoZ's approach, especially when one considers Amendment No.16A to the constitution, requires Great Britain, instead of Zimbabwe, to pay landowners for their expropriated property. The GoZ's argument was that it was the colonial government's policy of bringing in would be farmers from Britain and resettle on land that they had acquired by expropriation. Fast track was viewed or at least promoted as a strategy of undoing expropriation that had taken place during colonial times. Can legitimate property rights emerge from expropriation? A number of commercial farmers argued that they had purchased their farms in the period after independence following due process. In many instances due process means approaching the government to confirm whether they have an interest in the land that is on the market. The government would issue certificates of no present interest on farms that they had no intention of resettling people, allowing for commercial transactions to take place. Could it be that the government, through the issuance of certificates of no present interest was confirming the existence of private property? Perhaps.

The new consensus is around compensation for improvements on the farms. Despite having signed the GCA, there has been limited traction regarding the actual disbursements. On the other hand, there are suggestions of shifting back to freehold tenure although the government is yet to clarify how farmers will acquire private title.

7

Conclusion - What Must be Done

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have detailed the extent of contemporary land and agrarian questions in Africa. In this concluding chapter we acknowledge the research done on the subject before and focus on ideas that may have not been adequately considered. The premise being Africa already lags other regions in terms of resolving its land and agrarian question. Many have recommended a 'catch-up' approach where the continent only needs to copy and paste what others have done. We suggest an alternative framework. What if, rather than pursuing a catch-up approach, Africa instead embarks on an alternative path driven by existing strengths and opportunities. It has been argued that the privatisation of land could be an antidote to ongoing land alienation. Yet the evidence from elsewhere also suggests increased concentration of land within a few institutions and individuals in areas where freehold tenure exists. Besides, full private property rights which allow for outright sales are rare. Land has always been associated as belonging to a clan inherited from the previous generation, held by the present generation in trust for the next generation. Land was never a traceable commodity and could not be owned by a single individual. The dominant tenures usually provide usufruct rights. What if the re-imagination of tenure builds upon rather contradict this historical consensus? Furthermore, much has already been written about the potential negative effects of increased usage of synthetic fertiliser and treated seeds. In fact, as already discussed in detail in Chapter 4, global agriculture value chains are dominated by very few actors who control the technology and distribution networks that span the entire globe. Discussions on the efficacy of an alternative model or approach to agriculture are on the rise. There is an urgent need to reconsider the hegemonic large-scale agribusiness model especially considering growing concerns about global warming. At the center of rethinking a new model are questions such as; (i) what kind of rights do people have over land, (ii) what forms of access to other natural resources such as water exist and also (iii) the extent to which relations with market based players can be restructured, for instance in the area of agricultural inputs to enable the producers to develop their own supplier chains of seed through community owned seed-banks.

There are several outstanding reforms to address issues of access and improved utilisation of land. The majority of those in the rural areas eke out their livelihoods based on customary tenure. The plots they use are continuously shrinking mostly due to the pressure to accommodate members of the family. Furthermore, agricultural productivity across Africa is the lowest compared to other regions. Africa lags behind most regions in terms of adoption and utilisation of modern technologies. For instance, Africa's fertiliser usage rate is lower than other regions. The same applies to the adoption and use of treated seeds. Put in other words Africa is perhaps the only region still practicing some form of sustainable agriculture using organic fertilisers and indigenous seeds. It is yet to adopt the industrial model for agriculture.

Some governments (Ghana, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia) have come up with several reforms to enhance the security of customary tenure lands. These reforms entail the introduction of promissory tenure and land titling. In Tanzania the Land Act and Village Act of 1999 provides a framework for the decentralisation of decision making around land and encourages land registration and titling. Former settler colonies have grappled with undoing freehold tenure, given the claims around its superiority over other tenure regimes. However, the phenomenon of freehold tenure is not as widespread on the continent. In many former non-settler colonies, there was never outright ownership of land. In many countries land is vested in the president as a trustee. In other territories traditional authority structures have similar powers of holding land in trust with delegated powers to allocate and preside over conflicts related to boundaries and right to use. The dominant tenure framework has been usufruct based on granting the right to use but never outright ownership. In contexts where rural land markets exist, they are largely informal and only offering the right to use. However, the vesting of land in the president of a country or any other institution has of late created problems of security for those eking out an existence on those farms. Governments have taken advantage of the fact that communities are not outright owners of the land to negotiate and make transactions over the same lands without adequate consultation with the affected users of the land. Chapter 3 has provided a detailed description of the ongoing land grabs in the name of carbon sinks. The negotiations for land/forests to remain underutilised have mostly been between governments and would be investors. It is the contention of this book that if land was held privately by individuals or by recognised clan domains the quality of the discussions and outcomes would have been different. Furthermore, the discussions on large-scale land investments mimic pre-colonial era negotiations over land. The subsections below provide elements of a new agrarian reform manifesto based on values of inclusion, harmony with nature, dignity of the producers and healthier lifestyles.

7.2 Equitable Distribution and Inclusive Land Tenure Reforms

African countries face different elements of the land question as described in Chapter 2 including lack of access, shrinking farm sizes due to ongoing partitioning to accommodate other members of the family, conflicts over boundaries, ongoing alienations to make way for big investments and unclear frameworks for inheritance. The solutions to date include land titling, limited redistribution and changes in land laws. The table below provides basic guidelines on inclusive land tenure systems.

TABLE 7-1: QUALITIES OF INCLUSIVE TENURE

Qualities of inclusive tenure	Description
Optimal farm sizes guidelines	Governments should develop guidelines for optimal farm sizes by agro-ecological zones, ensuring smaller farm sizes in areas with good rainfall and quality soil, and larger sizes in regions with limited resources.
Large farm sizes for commercial production	Governments should allocate large farm sizes for commercial production, ensuring the commercial sector cooperates with, and does not encroach upon, the smallholder sector through grower schemes and aggregation.
Effective decentralisation strategy	Implement a decentralisation strategy, to enable local participation in decision-making.
Digital mapping and identification of agricultural land	Digital mapping of all agricultural land, proper pegging of existing farm boundaries, and identification of each plot by owners. Each piece of land should be identified by the families utilising it.
Right to cede and subdivide at district level	The right to cede and subdivide should be handled at the district level. Land conflict adjudication should also be conducted at this level by competent officers.
Certificates of ownership	Issue certificates of occupancy/ownership to present landowners. Clearly define the rights to use, invest in, and benefit from the land within a land act. Land use rights should ideally be held in perpetuity. Allow for land sales of underutilised plots or when no family member is available to utilise the land. The land law should permit voluntary surrender of title with adequate compensation for farm improvements.

There is a need for bolder reforms. First, governments must consider developing guidelines for optimal farm sizes by agro-ecological zones. Best practice usually ensures that farm sizes in areas with good rainfall and quality soil are smaller than those in regions which have limited rainfall and soil quality. Optional farm sizes allow for comprehensive use of land, especially in the context of limited agricultural financing. Second, where there is room, governments should set aside reasonably large farm sizes for commercial production. There is a need to ensure that the commercial sector does not encroach into the smallholder sector but instead to create a relationship of cooperation throughout grower schemes and aggregation.

Third, there is need for an effective decentralisation strategy like the one carried out in Tanzania to allow for local participation decision making. Fourth, there is an urgent need for digital mapping of all agricultural land and identification of each plot by owners. Existing farm boundaries must be pegged properly, and plots of land adequately numbered within a new national land map. Each piece of land should be identified by families utilising it. Fifth, the right to cede and subdivide should be done at District level. Adjudication on land conflicts should also be at District level with competent adjudication officers. Sixth, present owners should be issued with certificates of occupancy/ownership. The right to use, invest on the land and appropriate benefits should be specified within a clearly defined land act with specific clauses of processes that may lead to alienation of land. The right of use should ideally be held in perpetuity. Land sales should be for plots deemed to be underutilised or there is no remaining family member available to utilise the land. Finally, the land law should allow for entry and exit by allowing for voluntary surrender of title and adequate compensation for farm improvements.

7.3 A Holistic Framework to Revamp Agriculture

The task at hand is to strengthen smallholder-led agriculture. As already stated, the majority of Africa remains rural, suggesting the dominance of smallholder agriculture as the main economic activity. Yet it brings in so little, and many have remained in poverty. Pathways out of poverty have rarely been through smallholder agriculture. The sector is in many ways not seen as an economic sub-sector but rather as a site for organising welfare. Yet there is evidence to suggest that when adequately supported by appropriate policies and related market incentives smallholders have the capacity to produce, increase their yields and be profitable. In many instances policy making tends to be in silos. There is a need for a broader approach which takes into consideration forces that affect production (land, water and temperatures), factors of production (equipment and labour) and inputs for production (seeds, fertiliser and pesticides). The same framework should be influenced by considerations of the wellbeing of producers (nutrition and health), quality of commodities produced and the way producers are inserted in both the inputs and agriculture commodity markets. The tension in policy making has always been about reducing production costs to satisfy local and export markets. In the process producers have been given a raw deal for the goods they produce. Furthermore, market related pressures have contributed towards adopting yield maximising farming methods which do not necessarily support the long-term sustainability of the soils or produce healthy foods. Some of the fertiliser and pesticides (such as glysophate known as round up) have carcinogens which have been found to cause cancer (Cressey, 2015).

7.4 Beyond Food Security

Agricultural value chains have been thoroughly inserted into global value chains and Africa remains a junior partner. Traditionally food security has not focused on the local production imperative but rather puts emphasis on comparative advantage of different countries and the mediating role of markets. The concept of food security was originally viewed as 'avoiding transitory shortfalls in the aggregate supply of food' (Staatz et al., 1990), which led the World Food Program to define food security from a supply perspective as 'an assurance of supplies and a balanced supply-demand situation of staple foods in the international markets' (WFP, 1979, p. 3). However, despite the notable increase in global aggregate supply of food commodities hunger has persisted leading to murmurings about the insufficiency of the supply and trade-based approach to food security without addressing demand capabilities. In his seminal work Amartya Sen observed that it was not lack of food that caused food insecurity but rather the collapse of entitlements, these are, a set of alternative bundles of commodities over which a person can establish command over food given the prevailing legal, political and economic arrangements' (Dreze and Sen, 1989, p. 9). As if the murmurings of Sen, de Waal and others were not enough the global food crisis of 2007/8 happened. Essentially the food crisis was characterised by an artificial shortage of cereals (corn and rice), based on the speculative nature of the futures market where cereals are increasingly being sold and it led to a significant and unsustainable price spike and in the process threatening starvation amongst millions of poor people who could not afford the new prices.

The food crisis has exposed the weaknesses of the global food production system, especially the capacity of the global commodity markets to efficiently distribute affordable food. Besides the food production dimension there is need to discuss power relations and democracy within rural communities. The increasingly global nature of agricultural production systems and policy architecture have gone a long way in disempowering communities through the insertion of these communities' way of lives into externally controlled chains that distribute necessary agricultural inputs combined with 'expert' knowledge regarding the use of privatised technology in production. These systems have prioritised protection of individual intellectual property rights and simultaneously ensured that local systems of production are positioned as inferior to new developments.

7.5 Towards Food Sovereignty

Within agriculture the food sovereignty vision captures the goal of glocalisation. Glocalisation can be described as thinking globally but acting locally. In essence this vision challenges the dominant model of food security. The Global Union of Peasants, La Via Campesina, came up with the food sovereignty framework (2003). On the other end of the food spectrum is the 'food security model' and it is preoccupied with questions of access to food through ensuring that systems of distribution and pricing of agricultural commodities do not lead to shortages. The alternative food sovereignty model places an emphasis on how food is produced- away from the large-scale commercial/industrial to local smallholder production that aligns with environmental/soil management best practices, promotion and defense of local diets and ways of living. The food sovereignty vision has emerged (or re-emerged) as a potential counter process and narrative on re-imagining local food production and delinking. Indeed, there are many other concepts and ideas such as community food systems and local food systems animating the search for a more sustainable alternative to the multinational global agriculture regime seeking to restructure it in a way that works for local communities. Four intervention strategies are common within this space, and they are (i) promotion of local production of food through food fairs and increasing instances of food markets, (ii) creation of worker owned businesses, that while still market centric, challenge typical capitalist relations of production, (iii) invigoration of urban organic agriculture and (iv) campaigns for eating well in public schools. It is worth noting that although different in origin these new ways are an attempt at correcting an anomaly within the current agriculture regimes.

At the centre of the search for alternatives is the concern with local production of local staples, establishment of linkages with local markets and preserving the environment using organic inputs and encouraging local ownership of necessary inputs such as seeds rather than depending on the ones produced and distributed by multinationals. These approaches are also accompanied by concerns for invigorating the local as a space of production not only for agricultural commodities but also for knowledge, preserving culture and other norms of coexistence. However, the technological advances around communication, trade in commodities and other innovations suggest that a pristine form of isolated and autonomous existence can no longer be the case. Rather viable food systems must take into consideration the interconnected nature and interdependence amongst global communities but in it emphasise the importance of the local. Closely aligned to the food sovereignty approach is the agro-ecology movement (see below).

TEXT BOX 7-1: PRINCIPLES OF FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

A focus on food for people: the right to sufficient healthy and culturally appropriate food for all individuals and rejects the proposition that food is just another commodity.

The valuing of food providers: it values and supports contributions, and respects the rights, of women and men who grow, harvest and process food. It rejects policies and systems that undervalue them and threaten their livelihood.

Localises food systems: it puts food providers and food consumers at the centre of decision-making on food issues.

Ensures Local Control: food sovereignty places control over territory, land, grazing, water, seeds, and livestock and fish populations on local food providers and respect their rights to use and share them in socially and environmentally sustainable ways. It rejects the privatisation of natural resources through laws, commercial contracts and intellectual property right regimes.

Knowledge and Skills: it builds on the skills and local knowledge of food providers and their local organisations that conserve, develop and manage localised food production and harvesting systems.

Works with nature: it uses the contribution of nature in diverse, low external input agro-ecological production and harvesting methods that maximise the contribution of eco-systems and improve resilience. It rejects methods that harm ecosystem functions, which depend on energy intensive monoculture and livestock factories and other industrialised production methods.

7.6 A New Democracy/Participation Utopia

The deepening poverty in the countryside, especially in smallholder areas, leads to a new form of politics of domination by political elites. The countryside is usually controlled by traditional authority structures and ruling parties through, usually ineffective subsidy regimes and various charitable interventions. Oftentimes regimes in the developing regions have held onto power based on their monopoly over an opaque form of welfare support which in many instances promotes what others have called patron clientelist relations and keeps most of the citizens highly dependent upon these forms of unstable support and in a passive state. Political elites on the other hand have benefitted immensely from such a situation and may not be ready to let go of the skewed relationship between them and rural communities. Outside of the state, service delivery focused Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) hold sway in the countryside. They have an influence on those who receive project support and the form of development that takes place within communities. Usually, the interventions are project based with minimal design input from local communities. A more democratic ideal is required. Authority structures, especially the hereditary forms of power, common across Africa and their hold on land will have to be revisited and reformed to allow for self-determination-oriented decision making. NGOs will have to re-embed their approaches within communities' own practices. They must allow for genuine participation instead of the tokenism common within many development practices.

7.7 Research to Enhance the Efficacy of Smallholder Agriculture

The idea of shifting away from the dominant model of agriculture characterised by increased use of a certain paradigm of science which promotes use of synthetic fertilisers, treated seeds and pesticides support by remote sensing technologies and at times precision agriculture is perhaps an attempt of rowing against the tide. Many countries have organised their agriculture sector to align with the global model. Attempts at delinking may seem futile. However, there is a growing awareness and criticism of the agricultural industrial model emanating even from within the regions that have made huge strides of modernisation. It is also perhaps that there is no development model/theory that predicted a smallholder led growth patterns except, maybe for Alexander Chayanov, a Russian Development Economist who belonged to the neo populist school of thought. The neo populist tradition emphasised the viability of peasant (smallholder) agriculture and its ability to survive and prosper under any circumstances (Harrison, 1975). They argued that the peasantry had no necessary tendency to develop the increasing economic inequalities and class antagonisms of bourgeois industrial society; there was no tendency to create increasing groups of rich and poor or landless peasants with a more and more unstable group of middle peasants in between. The village was an overwhelmingly homogeneous community, constantly reproducing itself both economically and socially. Consequently, Chayanov saw the modernization of traditional small farming as lying along neither a capitalist nor a socialist road, but as a peasant path of raising the technical level of agricultural production through agricultural extension work and cooperative organisation, at the same time conserving the peasant institutional framework of the family small holding.

However, many schools of agriculture tend to devote significant scholarly research into large-scale agriculture. Research on issues such as the efficacy of organic fertiliser, use of commonly occurring open pollinated varieties of seed and use of organic pesticides remains underfunded and invisible. Yet there is a growing demand for 'certified' organic products. It is perhaps this increasing shift from mass produced foods towards organic varieties that can help save African smallholder agriculture. There is an urgent need to increase funding for research into sustainable organic farming. Preliminary pilots carried out by NGOs such as Foundations for Farming have indicated potential of increased yields by using zero tillage, composts as manure and mulching (to mitigate against water shortage). In contexts of climate change, where rainfall seasons are getting shorter farmers practicing this form of conservation farming have managed to secure better yields compared to their counterparts. However, there is need for more research on organic fertilisers that can produce similar results as the synthetic types, and (ii) technological innovations that allow for scaling. Furthermore, research has demonstrated the importance of precision agriculture, entailing feeding plants with appropriate and adequate water and nutrients. Research must extend into identifying innovations that can ensure these approaches are easily scalable and affordable.

8

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