

The state of agricultural productivity and food security in Zimbabwe's Post 2000 Land Reform Programme in Umguza district.

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Abstract :*The paper explores the outcomes of the post 2000 land reform programme implemented in the communal area of Umguza district. This involved the triangulation of qualitative data collection methods to gather data from the respondents. A total of 45 famers were sampled for unstructured interviews and focus group discussions. The findings of the study revealed that there are numerous factors that contributed to the decline in agricultural production that included limited skills from the farmers, lack of investment on land because of tenure insecurities, sabotage from former white commercial famers and the rise of climate change. Among the recommendations made was thatthe state should consider training new farmers upon allocating land to them as this will ensure that farmers know what to do once they are in the farms.*

Key words:*Food security, land reform agricultural production*

I. EXTENDED

In the year 2000 Zimbabwe embarked on a state led accelerated land reform programme. Development practitioners have had mixed feelings as to whether the land reform precipitated food insecurity both at household and at national level and affected agricultural production or whether it strengthened food security and increased agricultural production. It is in this background that the paper sought to assess whether Zimbabwe's post 2000 land reform programme resulted in agricultural collapse, precipitated widespread and recurrent food insecurity. The study sought to assess the areas in which the post 2000 land reform experienced agricultural decline resulting in food insecurities.

The WFS (1996) conceptualized food security as existent when people at all levels can have access to sufficient food. WTO (1996) further adds that food security is built on two pillars which mainly comprise firstly of food access which denotes having sufficient resources to obtain appropriate food for a nutritious diet at a household level, secondly food availability which implies that sufficient quantities of food are available on a consistent basis at a national level. Food insecurity is thus viewed as individual's failure to access food at household level and the limited availability of food at the national level. However it is interesting to note that Logan (2006) states that NGO's broadened the definition of food insecurity in Zimbabwe to include politically defined groups such as rural MDC supporters and workers displaced from white owned commercials farms by the war veterans. Thus being an MDC member would make you food insecure. According to Wolford (2005) land reform is conceptualized as the redistribution or transfer of property ownership regimes of land from the landed class to the landless poor. The paper also sought to establish whether the transfer of land ownership rights from white commercial farmers to the black farmers affected the national availability of food as well as the individual access to food and the overall agricultural production.

Background of Zimbabwe's post 2000 Fast Track Land Reform Programme

According to Zikhali (2008) the main objectives of the fast track land reform programme included speeding up the identification of not less than five million hectares of land for compulsory acquisition for resettlement. Moyo (2006) cited in Zikhali (2008) states that the other objective of the land reform programme was to accelerate the planning and demarcation of acquired land and settler replacement on this land, and to provide limited basic infrastructure and farmer support services. The land reform programme entailed compulsory acquisition of land largely from white commercial farmers and private companies. The program was comprised of two models which include the model A1 which was intended to decongest communal areas and targeted at land constrained farmers in communal areas. Zikhali (2008:4) states that "the A1 model was based on existing communal area organization, whereby peasants produce mainly for subsistence". The majority of the beneficiaries in the fast track were in the A1 model. The A2 model was based on a commercial settlement scheme comprising small, medium and large scale commercial settlements which were intended to create a group of black commercial

farmers. The A2 model, in principle was targeted at any Zimbabwean citizen who could prove farming experience or resource availability and was based on the concept of full cost recovery from the beneficiary (Zimbabwe 2000 cited in Zikhali 2008).

II. Methodology

The study focused on the adoption of qualitative methodology. The study was done in Umguza district of Matabeleland North Province. The district was chosen because of the large number of farmers that were allocated land in the area. The study period of this research extended from March 2015 to November 2015. In gathering data the study adopted the methodological triangulation approach which included the use of unstructured interviews with farmers, key informant interviews with officers from the agricultural extension department, five focus group discussions with farmers as well as the use of secondary sources of data. A total of 45 farmers were purposively sampled for interviews whilst 5 officers from the agricultural extension department were selected as key informants. In order to enhance validity and reliability of findings the interview questions for the farmers were reviewed farming experts from the department of Agriculture.

III. Results and discussion

Lack of investment on land because of tenure insecurity. The post 2000 land reform programme resulted in agricultural decline perpetuating food insecurity as it affected the availability of food in the country as this was as a result of lack of investment on land because of tenure insecurity. Human Rights Watch (2002) argues that the fast track land reform programme was carried out in a rapid manner short circuiting legal procedures. As such those who were resettled in the new farms were worried about the lack of certainty that their title will be secure. The fast track land reform thus caused tenure insecurity which resulted in low land investment since the 99 year leases and offer letters could not be used as collateral to obtain loans. Marongwe (2008) observed that A2 farmers at Mkwasine estate were not receiving financial assistance from the banks since the 99 year leases and the offer letter were not recognized as collateral. 75% of the respondents from the study noted that they experienced challenges in acquiring funding from local banks hence making it difficult to establish a capital base that they would use as their starting point for venturing into agriculture. As such their farming operations remained constrained resulting in low agricultural yields. This in turn resulted in widespread food shortages hence stirring food insecurity because of the limited availability of food in the country. It should however be noted that despite the failure by farmers to access loans 10% of the respondents noted that as farmers they made significant improvements in clearing the land, buying cattle and farming equipment. As such the tenure insecurity associated with the post 2000 land reform cannot be blamed for the failure of investment by farmers in ensuring an increase in agricultural production.

Sabotage from white commercial farmers. At the time when farm invasions were being done agricultural production came to a standstill affecting production since the white farmers in some cases destroyed the farming infrastructure when they left their farms. Respondents in the focus group discussions noted that Marongwe (2008) points out that at Hippo Valley holding farm 25 when the former farm owner left the farm he removed the water pumps resulting in the drying up of sugar cane. This contributed to the reason why there was no availability of sugar in the country. It is in this regard that farm invasions disrupted farming activities as many resettled farmers needed time to settle down and acquire infrastructure hence contributing to severe underutilization of land resource and low production. This resulted in a collapse in the output of agricultural production ultimately leading to severe food shortages hence implying a decline in the availability of food in the nation ultimately implying food insecurities.

Limited skills and resources. Results from key informants revealed that the land reform programme resulted in the collapse of agricultural production in the process perpetuating food insecurity because the newly resettled farmers had limited capability in managing the farms in terms of skill and resources. Michael Roth (2006) cited in Maguwu (2007) adds that the modal group of the beneficiaries under the fast track land reform programme were poor and lacked the farm management skills since all they could do was venture into subsistence agriculture which could only strengthen household food security but negatively affect food availability at national level. Maguwu (2007) posits that most of the new farmers were just happy to own a new farm but they did not know what to do next nor did they have the farming equipment and skills to produce on a large scale. Kanyenze et al (2011:99) notes that "in the 1980's input packs had been directed to communal and old resettlement areas but under the fast track land reform programme they were directed towards the new farmers in the resettled areas who ironically lacked commercial farming skills". As such during the fast track land reform programme communal and old resettlement farmers faced famine not only in terms of rainfall but also in terms of inputs which adversely affected their productivity.

Unavailability of farming resources. 52% of the respondents noted that the shortage of farming inputs has played a critical role in affecting agricultural production. Respondents have attributed the shortages in farming inputs to lack of capital. The unavailability of farming resources has thus resulted in the decline in agricultural production and in turn has perpetuated recurrent food insecurities that are being experienced in the district. Moyo (2007) states that as a result of the limitations of farming inputs, yields of soya beans have been at a decline. Sunflower production at large scale commercial farming recorded severe decrease of 87% in the planted area between 2002 and 2003 and the 90s average, leading to an equal drop in its volume of output during the Fast track land reform programme (Moyo 2007). As a result there was a shortage of cooking oil and related products on the market and broader based food insecurity. Maguwu (2007) points out that due to the incapacitation of commercial agriculture as a result of the land reform the country experienced a shortage of maize meal. Even those that had money starved as maize was not found in shops. Hence affecting the accessibility of food especially for the poor since the demand for the food was great and the supply was low there was an increase in the prices of mealie meal which was beyond the reach of the poor. It is in this vein that Sachikonye (2003:13) cited in Maguwu (2007) states that “although Zimbabwe’s land reform from 2000 to 2002 was partly premised on poverty reduction, one of its principal outcomes so far appears to be poverty exacerbation”. Gono (2007) pointed out in the farm mechanization programme that there are farmers who had problems with farm inputs during the post 2000 land reform hence resulting in the destruction of wheat and maize hence resulting in food insecurities. This implies that under the fast track land reform programme the poor could not access food of which failure to access food was an indicator of food insecurity.

Marongwe (2008) is of the view that the dominate role of the state in managing and controlling small holder irrigation at some farmers undermined the performance of the scheme. Thus the state caused discontent among farmers forcing them to behave in certain ways that undermined production in the process affecting the availability of food at a large scale hence the agricultural collapse and recurrent food insecurity as a result of the post 2000 land reform programme.

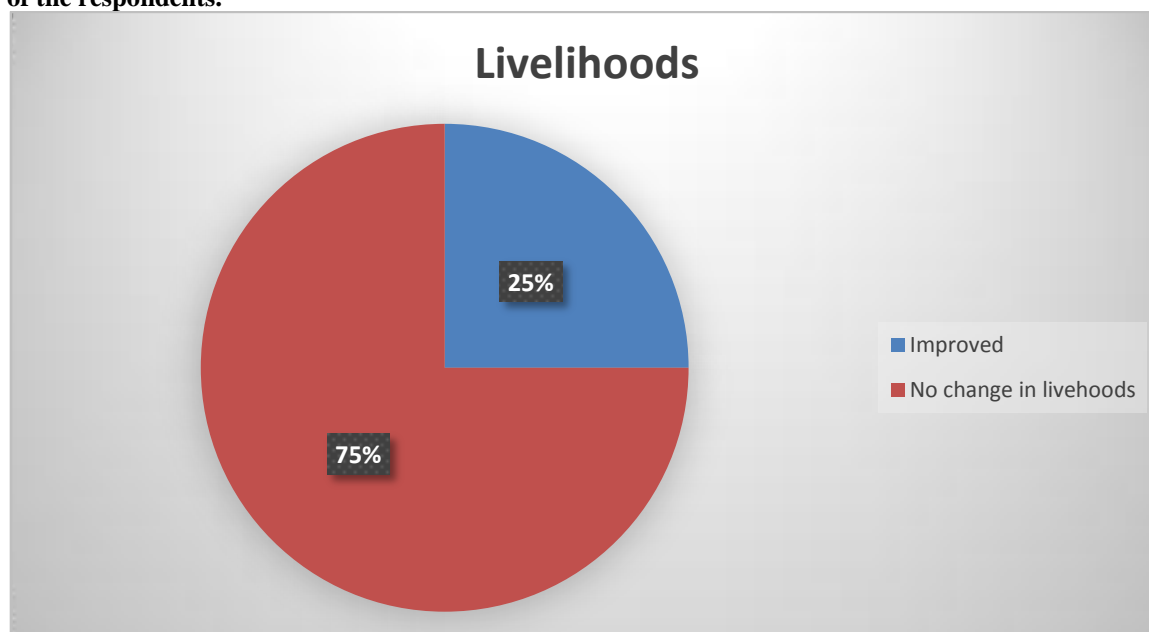
The vagaries of climate change. The weather in Zimbabwe has played a crucial role in perpetuating agricultural decline and in turn food insecurity. Respondents noted that Umguza district is experiencing uneven rainfall patterns and recurrent heat waves which has immensely constrained the growth of their crops. The results indicate that the agricultural decline in Zimbabwe cannot be entirely attributed to the events of the post 2000 land reform programme. Dube (2011) points out that there was a strong correlation between the food crisis experienced in the country and the decrease in rainfall from the post 2000 period. Dube (2011:32) states that “there is convincing evidence that the onset of unfavorable rain seasons in Zimbabwe led to a decline in food production leading to the food crisis”. This is said to be so as the cropping seasons in post 2000 period were classified either by low or delayed rainfalls and in some instances by floods emanating from cyclones that hit the country in the process destroying crops and hence resulting in a decline in agricultural production

Development of the home care economy. 32% of the respondents noted that the rise of the home care economy as a result of HIV and AIDs has played an immense role in affecting agricultural production where instead of going to the fields respondents have to take care of their sick loved ones. Dube (2011:94) adds that “Food access was affected because in some instances, it was the breadwinner who died leaving the dependents with no source of income to purchase food”. Thus the impact of HIV and AIDS has played a major role in laying fertile ground for the collapse of agricultural production and food insecurities in the post 2000 land reform programme.

Positive outcomes of the land reform in enhancing agricultural productivity and food security

The post 2000 land reform programme had significant success in some areas resulting in food security and in the process spurring an increase in agricultural production as noted by the reports of the transformation of livelihoods of some beneficiaries of the land reform programme. 43% of the respondents noted that through the land reform programme they have been accorded land that has enabled them to grow crops that include maize, sorghum, millet and rappoko which have been instrumental in strengthening household food security. Moyo (2010) asserts that the access to land by some beneficiaries actually improved their livelihoods as they would produce their staple food for subsistence purposes only which they could also transfer for their urban families to consume. It is in this case that the beneficiaries of the land reform managed to have access to food as a result of the land reform together with their families living in the urban areas hence strengthening food security thus invalidating the assertion that the post 2000 land reform resulted in widespread recurrent food insecurities.

Fig 1 below presents results on whether the post 2000 land reform programme improved the livelihoods of the respondents.



The A1 model which was used to resettle the majority of the landless people played a critical role in ensuring household food security as it enabled farmers to access food for household consumption. 25% of the respondents noted that despite the challenges that they face as farmers they have access to food for consumption. This is in line with the findings by Moyo (2010) who points out that the important aspect of the A1 farm production is that it contributed to food security and healthy nutrition for the resettled farmers. Moyo (2010) states that in an interview with Lovemore Ncube of Makokoba who was resettled in Nyamandlovu Umguza district, Ncube revealed that the farm has helped him a lot as he managed to harvest four bags of maize and one bucket of groundnuts which he has managed to use in his urban home. Thus it can be noted that the Post 2000 land reform programme also made significant strides in enhancing access to food at household level. Scoones et al (2011) are of the view that the production of sorghum and millet increased by 193% in comparison to the 1990's on average while the production of cotton also increased. Thus there have been problems in the agricultural production but the sector has not entirely collapsed (Scoones et al 2011). Thus the increase in the production meant that people have access to food an indicator of accessibility and availability of food both at household and national level.

Recommendations

- There is need for the government to give real land rights that are clear which can be used as collateral.
- The state should consider training new farmers upon allocating land to them as this will ensure that farmers know what to do once there are in the farms. Kanyenze et al (2011:116) state that "the bottom line is that the ultimate success of agriculture hinges crucially on the ability of the government to launch a fast track small holder improvement programme that can turn the formerly landless people into farmers who produce an economic surplus for the market". All this is aimed at ensuring a land reform programme that increases agricultural production strengthening food security.
- There is need for proper planning before conducting land reforms avoiding taking land without compensating farmers
- Need for the government to come up with ways to mitigate droughts in this background of climate change.

Conclusion

The above mentioned paper has highlighted that Zimbabwe's post 2000 land reform negatively affected agricultural production in the process increasing food insecurity as the resettled farmers lacked farming skills, had no farming inputs and failed to invest in the land given because of tenure insecurity. The paper has also shown that some of the factors that affected productivity were beyond the control of the farmers. These are factors that have to do with climate change and HIV and AIDs. The study however revealed that there are subsistence farmers that benefitted from the land reform programme and became food secure.

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