

7 | *Dispossession: Reforming Land in South Africa*

Introduction

After more than twenty-five years since its transition to democracy, South Africa still grapples with a highly unequal distribution of land and uneven development. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the collapse of apartheid witnessed the majority of black Africans dependent on the (urban) industrial economy and still zoned into locations with high levels of poverty and deprivation. The black population's access to land was strictly constrained to infertile agricultural homelands, mainly rural in character and underdeveloped and deprived of basic services and proper infrastructure. Thus, in light of the historic policies which dispossessed rural populations of their land and forced them into migrant labour, subsistence farming makes very limited contributions in the area of employment or in serving as a safety net against poverty in the black community.

By October 2019, complex systems of labour migration to, from and within rural areas coexist with high structural unemployment (Graham *et al.*, 2019). Food insecurity and poverty are widespread as fertile agricultural lands are still heavily concentrated in the hands of white farmers and corporate entity owned by whites. With minimal access to land, black communities often can undertake only subsistence farming activities which make minimal contributions to household survival. To this end, the poor and food insecure in (peri) urban and rural areas perceive the issue of land transfer as inextricably linked to the kind of small- or large-scale food production they yearn to pursue (Rankoana, 2019). Yet, the belligerent post-1994 economic environment – punctuated by the termination of state subsidies for the agricultural sector and deregulation of commodity markets – has played a minimal role in encouraging new entrants and supporting the gains of smallholders seeking to expand their production. Downstream and upstream markets mainly serve the interest of commercial and industrial farmers as they have monopolised the

local and export market with little competition from their small-holder counterparts. To this end, the next aspect of the chapter takes a look at some of the measures which have been adopted by the state to purchase land for purposes of redistribution – assistance it has extended to smallholders and previously disadvantaged groups – and the response of the public to the government's effort in this regard.

A Backward Glance: Apartheid, Land and Legal Safeguards

In contemporary South Africa, widespread inequalities in ownership to and access to land continue to hinder millions from attaining adequate access to food and basic livelihoods. From a rural development and social justice perspective, the current debate about land reform is key in mapping out strategies towards reversing this inequality (Kepe and Hall, 2018). The question of land reform is seen by many as an avenue for redistribution of capital assets through agrarian transformation (Aliber and Mdoda, 2015; Arko-Achemfuor, 2016). Besides the prevalent land agitation, the landless and rural poor have pressed for better standards of living, particularly access to employment in light of the high retrenchment in the agrarian, banking and mining sectors. For this reason, the broader debate for land might be influenced by the prospects of the rural poor to have a stake in the urban industrial economy given the mass rural–urban migration.

It is important to indicate at this point that one of the vital victories chalked up by the unconquered white industrialists and farmers during the country's negotiated democratic transition was the successful insertion of a property clause in the 1996 Constitution. In effect, by averring that '[n]o one may be deprived of property', section 25(1) of the Constitution placed a legal stamp on, and legitimised, colonial land grabs. Agricultural land on the market needs to be transacted or bought from a willing (white) seller before it could be redistributed by the state. Despite this provision, section 25(8) sets out that the state may take legislative measures to implement land reform as a means of overcoming past racial injustice. Accordingly, the state adopted the White Paper on Land Policy (DLA, 1997), which sets out three key elements addressing the land question. First, guaranteeing access to land in the former homelands through *land tenure*. Second, providing compensation or *restitution* to those whose lands were taken on account of apartheid machinations. Finally transferring white-owned (large-scale) agricultural holdings to

black farmers through *redistribution*. Here follows a brief look at each of these interventions.

Land tenure: Land rights is an important concept for ensuring sustainable livelihoods for rural communities, the poor and the vulnerable, and their access to land for food production and other economic activities should not be ignored. At the moment, there are four groups of people whose access to land is under constant threat. First, owners of land in the former homelands stand to lose their pockets of land through customary tenure systems. Second, occupiers of informal settlements are victims of insecure tenure in urban areas. Third, occupiers of coloured rural areas face evictions from former mission stations. Finally, agricultural labourers and their families reside on privately owned agricultural lands. While customary or communal tenure does provide a sense of protection in land access, the rights of landlords may be compromised in cases where intermediaries such as local chiefs give away land for monetary gains without the consent of the rightful owners of the land. Despite a plethora of legislation adopted to forestall this practice, the status of community members as land-rights holders is not secure as they are uncertain that their rights to land will be recognised or upheld as legitimate by the state or relevant stakeholders. Even though section 25(6) of the Constitution provides for the facilitation of long-term security of land tenure for these groups, this has not been effectively implemented. Moreover, legislations setting out tenure and labour rights of farmworkers have been notoriously challenging to operationalise leading to the constant struggle of commercial farmworkers living on private lands (Mbembe, 2008). Without access to their own lands, farmworkers are not motivated to cultivate their own food as they may have to share the insufficient yield with their landlords (Kepe and Tessaro, 2014). In light of the hostile conduct of commercial farmers, evictions of farm dwellers, casualisation and retrenchment of farmworkers, it is imperative that the state finds a lasting policy and institutional solution to land administration and land rights.

Land restoration: The main reason for the continuous outcry for repossession of land could be traced back to the 1913 Natives Land Act 27 (NLA), 1950 Group Areas Act and other apartheid segregated laws which forcibly pushed blacks from fertile agricultural lands into congested native reserves or homelands (Mbembe, 2008). The NLA was rolled out on 19 June 1913 and limited land ownership by black people

to 7 per cent; with the population explosion among the black community, the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act increased this share to 13 per cent (RSA, 2019). These instruments basically proscribed black occupation or purchase of land in suburbs or fertile areas. This development ultimately triggered discontent and struggle over limited resources in former homelands or *ikasi* (Pienaar and von Fintel, 2014). In seeking to nullify these retrogressive instruments, the Restitution of Land Rights Act 22 (RLRA) was adopted by the first democratically elected national Assembly in 1994. The crux of the instrument is that communities or persons whose land was wrongfully dispossessed through the NLA have an option of requesting for its return or an equivalent cash settlement (Kepe and Tessaro, 2014). Two bodies established to administer the Act were the Land Claims Court (LCC) and the Commission on Restitution of Land Rights (CRLR). The task of the latter is to assist people to prepare their claims, assess claims and submit land claims to the LCC for adjudication. Based on the ruling of the court, the state can then purchase or expropriate the land for the claimant. By July 2019, some 80,664 of such claims have been settled, with 3.5 million hectares of land purchased and restored to individuals and communities previously dispossessed (RSA, 2019).¹ In this context, the state's quest for transferring land from whites to blacks is seen within the lens of righting historical wrongs, as land justice is essential for overcoming the triple challenges of inequality, poverty and hunger. Nonetheless, in view of the complex nature of the property clause in the Constitution, it is evident that transferring large parcels of land would remain cumbersome if not impossible. Three main challenges underscoring this observation are the limited financial capacity of the poor in terms of gathering evidence in support of their historical claims, delays in finalising their claims and the reluctance of white owners to trade off their lands. The process of excavating evidence for claims has proven time-consuming and taxing for many who wish to return to their historical lands for farming purposes (Zenker, 2015). Additionally, the state's pursuit of reversing the prevailing dualist agricultural structure through the creation of a new class of black commercial farmers

¹ According to the state, approximately 2.1 million recipients have benefitted from the land redistribution programme. From the 80,664 land claims settled, the state's land reform project has shifted from its initial agenda of transferring land to the rural poor to creating and building the capacity of a new class of African large-scale farmers on sizeable holdings. See (RSA, 2019).

may be burdensome as a result of inflated land prices (Arko-Achemfuor, 2016). Even more disturbingly, there is no uniform land price, as prices greatly fluctuate from one province or municipality to another. Thus, if the state seeks to pursue its agenda of land reform through the market, then it needs to increase its budget in order to meet the needs of the landless wishing to cultivate their own food as a means of survival.

Redistribution: As part of its rural restructuring programme, the state launched its Settlement/Land Acquisition Grants (SLAG) instrument to provide financial assistance to those hungry for land for subsistence activities (DRD, 2019). Yet, this initiative failed to provide sufficient fiscal resources to enable households purchase the required parcels of land for farming. At the risk of stating the obvious, the ZAR 16,000 (US\$ 1,100) per household grant was woefully inadequate to acquire a fertile plot of land for adequate food production (DRD, 2019: 1). In light of this backlash, the state took a policy shift in 2000 with the adoption of the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD), with the objective of creating a class of black large-scale food producers (DALA, 2000). Specifically designed for the wealthy or aspirant black commercial farmers, applicants are eligible for a grant between ZAR 100,000 (US\$ 6,647) and ZAR 20,000 (US\$ 1,329), but were obliged to make a corresponding contribution covering part of the land cost between ZAR 400,000 (US\$ 26,587) and ZAR 5,000 (US\$ 332) in a slanting pattern (DALA, 2000). From a pro-poor perspective, this initiative disempowers the food insecure and perpetuates inequality as it pegs the marginalised and unemployed against the very-well-off to compete for the same limited resources. The LRAD has, since its inception in August 2001, become the major government land reform programme as it has dwarfed others, thereby cutting off the poor from land transfers (Hendriks and Olivier, 2015) In effect, the lowest number of households engaged in agriculture in 2016 was located in the less economically vibrant provinces such as Northern Cape and Free State which recorded 2.1 per cent and 6.8 per cent of the national agricultural households (RSA, 2019). Besides this setback, other constraints confronting the applicants are poor post-transfer support such as inadequate access to markets to sell produce, lack of access to credits for irrigation pumps, lack of processing equipment and storage, poor roads for transportation of goods, and insufficient training and extension services. Consequently, the practical and financial

barriers limiting people's access to these high-priced lands have reawakened or refuelled calls for expropriation of land without compensation.

The Fate of Smallholders in Contemporary South Africa

Since colonialism and the subsequent apartheid regime, being white was the major threshold for accessing agrarian capital. With efforts towards deradicalisation in the commercial sector, post-apartheid regimes decided to undertake steps to reorganise and deregulate the agricultural sector. To make inroads into rural poverty and enable black farmers have access to land and considerable capital, the government in 2009 adopted the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP). To Kepe and Hall (2016), these instruments were key weapons to combat overcrowding and inadequate access to arable land in the homelands. The core objectives of both interventions were to minimise the hostile climate which militates against subsistence farmers in their effort to effectively compete on (inter) national commodity markets. To this end, the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD previously Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF)) specifically sets out strict thresholds on who qualifies to access the state's land redistribution programme. The primary benchmark is that the applicant must be black African and (i) an affluent or aspiring business person with financial means and willing to venture into large-scale farming; (ii) commercial farmers who are well-established, yet are disadvantaged by conditions such as infertile land; (iii) farmers who are engaged in small-scale farming but want to expand production; (iv) individuals who need land and support to embark on commercial farms; and (v) households who need land to start small-scale farming (GSA, 2019). The golden thread which runs through these benchmarks is an attempt to deracialise the country's commercial farming sector and/or to upskill black farmers to transform their small-scale farms into large-scale production sectors. These initiatives have ultimately led to the emergence of diverse and 'large-scale commercial black farmers', often with access to small pockets of land (Aliber and Mdoda, 2015: 19).

Yet, the lack of post-transfer support or insufficient capital has presented recipients with limited options. Beneficiaries are, therefore,

forced into (i) forging joint ventures with commercial farmers and, in most cases, former white owners, for purposes of securing farm labour and shareholdings; (ii) leasing out land to former owners and splitting the rental income among a large household, mostly yielding an inadequate portion for each person; (iii) combining resources to farm together as a group; or (iv) engaging in small-scale farming. This development has ultimately pushed some of the new black farmers out of the agrarian sector as they are faced with infrastructural constraint including insufficient funds for seeds, pesticides and farming equipment. Existing smallholders have further been discouraged by agricultural budget cuts which somewhat contributed to the collapse of most government extension services in the rural areas (Raidimi and Kabiti, 2017).

Meanwhile, effective land transfer is a complex process and, thus, not speedily operationalised, coupled with slow job creation and ongoing mass retrenchment. The state's market-led 'willing buyer, willing seller' land redistribution programme has been rolled out at the expense of poor smallholders as they lack the means to purchase land.² This somewhat provides a background to the intensification of land struggles and tensions from key political parties during the 2019 elections calling for land expropriation without compensation (Runciman and Paret, 2019). This call implies that the government policy of purchasing land at highly inflated prices for redistribution will be replaced by the practice of eminent domain or the power of the state to convert private property into public use. This agenda is fuelled by *ikasi* and urban residents agitating for increased access to land, which has intensified grassroots mobilisation and occupation of white farmlands (Shoba, 2019). With increasing unrest and threats against white farmers, private security guards are visible in most white-owned commercial farms. Aside from these tensions, land transfer – when operationalised with the objective of cutting down on food insecurity – could transform the agricultural sector by revitalising systems of smallholder production.

Despite these challenges, the state's effort in the operationalisation of the SLAG and CRDP may arguably be seen as depicting a relative success in improving the living conditions of beneficiaries. To be

² The programme has, however, benefited new black entrants to the large-scale agricultural sector.

specific, these programmes have led to the emergence of two categories of smallholders. Firstly, the number of emerging farmers who sell their produce and aspire to expand into the commercial market has increased to approximately 200,000 (Pienaar and Traub, 2015: 6). The second category is made up of several small-scale farmers who produce for household consumption. In theory, these two classes of farmers are perceived as symbolising the gradual transformation of poor rural small-scale farmers into industrial commercial farmers through the emerging farming sector. Even though it is estimated that approximately 2.1 million black subsistence farmers have emerged since the collapse of apartheid, this cannot be verified as the figure alternates daily or the data in the literature is perhaps only a fraction of the real number (Pienaar and Traub, 2015: 6).

Primarily consisting of the production of staple foods for local markets and household consumption, smallholders and small family farms can now be seen in different settings, such as cities, townships and deep rural areas of the former homelands. One aspect of small-scale farming worth citing is domesticated animals, namely poultry and livestock farming or (e.g. pigs, goats, sheep and cattle). While its significance is often ignored or underestimated by traditional economics, domesticated animals make a meaningful contribution to the economy and household needs by serving as surplus income and payment of *lobola* (bride price), and providing ploughing helps and a source of nutrients (Thomas *et al.*, 2007; Scholtz *et al.*, 2013). With high level of variations between provinces and households, rearing of livestock remains prevalent. Consequently, while many households engaged in 'animal combination', 77.6% in Eastern Cape and 72.4% in KwaZulu Natal kept one to ten cattle; KwaZulu Natal (68%) and Limpopo (66.8%) recorded the largest percentage of households that kept one to ten sheep; 78.2% in Limpopo and 75% in Mpumalanga farmed one to ten goats; with 31% in Eastern Cape and 24.6% in KwaZulu Natal farming one to ten poultry (StatsSA, 2016: 7–11).

Apart from open rangelands, farming activities often occur on demarcated fields, small plots and gardens with little of the produce finding its way into (inter)national (commodity) markets. Yet, many smallholders still carry out their operations on soils with poor agricultural prospects as they are predominantly confined to the former homelands where most of the soil nutrient reserves have been depleted. Worsened by overcrowding, poor rainfall and continued nutrient

mining without sufficient replenishment, most of these areas do not yield sufficient output. The resultant downward spiral of soil fertility has triggered corresponding environmental degradation and decline in crop yields. Subsistence farmers are ultimately consigned to minimal productivity, operating in a paucity of physical and material resources in light of the intrinsic inadequate resource base, poor educational background and insufficient access to water sources for irrigation. Thus, in light of apartheid architecture or construction, most subsistence farmers have been pushed to the fringes or areas with lesser crop yield based on insufficient or unreliable rainfall. Insufficient access to water is worsened by farmers' unskilled attempts at water harvesting to manage evaporation, deep drainage or surface runoff. With their primary dependence on rain-fed agriculture, most of the lands only generate minimal yields which are often directed at household consumption or trading off surpluses for extra income. Inevitably, with the increasing land constraints faced by smallholder farmers, the primary issue for enhancing production is transferring some of the arable lands to black farming communities. Suffice to add that agrarian and land reform will not only overcome essential components of structural inequality, but may play a key role in creating employment and scaling up food production for poor households.

In contrast to their commercial counterparts, a disproportionate percentage of smallholders are unable or unwilling to invest their limited resources towards their occupation mainly on account of frequent poor yields or customers' preference for processed foods. According to Pienaar and Traub (2015: 6), many are only willing to invest as little as ZAR 36 (US\$ 2.5) a month, which ultimately provides an indication of the resultant return. In light of this, smallholders pursue different survival strategies including social grants, wage employment, remittances or work as farmworkers. While monthly family remittance amounts to approximately ZAR 123 (\$8), the mean monthly salary income is estimated at ZAR 939 (US\$ 62), even though most households are not linked to the (in)formal labour market (Pienaar and Traub, 2015: 5). Of these different sources of livelihood, the majority of people rely on cash transfers from the state which provide a structural basis for broad-based pro-poor development. As discussed in the previous chapter, with monthly incomes of ZAR 425 (\$30.1) for children, ZAR 1,780 (\$126.0) for the aged, and special free quotas of water and electricity for the vulnerable, these targeted

programmes exclude the unemployed and food insecure young people. The exclusion of the youths, especially young women, poses a threat to their livelihood and health as it compels them to undertake different activities potentially increasing their vulnerability to sextortion, rape, multiple partners and teenage pregnancy. With such exclusion, poverty and degree of hunger is more likely to increase once a teenager exits the programme at eighteen years of age since the child's means of accessing food or other basic needs for survival will be truncated (Nkrumah, 2018).

To this end, vibrant and well-resourced subsistence farming stands to supplement the insufficient grant uptake, while the unemployed could depend on it for consumption and income. Nonetheless, while 15.6 per cent of households were involved in some form of food production in 2017, this figure dropped to 14.8 per cent in 2018 (StatsSA, 2018: 6; StatsSA, 2019: 68). This development represents a decrease of 0.8 within the period, which may arguably be tied to the poor policy and institutional environment. For those little or no access to key safety net or wage income in times of crisis, farming provides about 10–25 per cent of average household income (Lahiff and Cousins, 2005: 128). Accordingly, a large proportion of households in the rural areas still engage in some form of agriculture as it forms an important livelihood strategy or response to crisis, or for quality standard of living.

Despite the prospect of this sector in curbing poverty and household vulnerability, government's support has been limited. For instance, StatsSA (2018: 6) reported that only 7.0 per cent of farmers received dipping or livestock vaccination services, slightly more than 2.2 per cent received training, and just 11.1 per cent received farming-related support. This lack of government support seems to cut across municipalities in spite of the massive fiscal budget directed at this sector. Illustratively, despite allocation of ZAR 471 million to the Ilima/Letsema programme in 2015, the programme shows little evidence of assisting vulnerable black farming communities attain an increase in production (Hancock, 2015).

In a narrow sense of the term, subsistence farming implies ability to produce food to meet the dietary needs of farmers and their families. Yet, one may broadly construe this form of farming as production of food for survival and meeting local requirements. While the size and type of crops cultivated may be informed by family needs, contemporary subsistence

agriculturalists have evolved to actively participate in the local markets, usually selling their surplus for other essentials, including meat, spices, used clothes and medications. With this broad conceptualisation of subsistence agriculture, several black smallholders may perceive themselves as falling outside this bracket. This is because poor soil quality and low yields does not allow these farmers to afford basic utilities such as electricity and water for irrigation, as well as access to pesticides and fertilisers to boost their production (Rogan 2018). On the basis of the vital importance of women as the custodians of knowledge on food crops and small livestock, it is worth considering the challenges faced by this group in farming.

The Plight of Women Smallholders

Even though the percentage of women in food production and post-harvest activities in many municipalities is increasing, most of their agricultural projects are carried out on communal lands governed by local chiefs, of whom most are men. Owing to their cultural and traditional roles, women play a key role in the production value chain, from ploughing to harvesting, and yet remain marginalised in major decision-making and resource allocation (Beall, 2005). Particularly in the rural areas, the conventional housekeeping role often assumed by women may be tied to the gradual feminisation of subsistence and smallholder agriculture. With the country's dualistic agricultural sector, subsistence farming which is tied to femaleness has been pushed to the fringes and therefore makes it difficult for subsistence farmers, especially women, to access the necessary resources including land and support services for increased production. In instances where there is abject deprivation and food insecurity in the house, women often bear the brunt of their husband's (emotional and physical) abuse as they are perceived as being the causes of the hardships the household is experiencing.

Rural women continue to experience different levels of cultural vulnerabilities which adversely impact on their access to opportunities and land, even though the country's 1996 Constitution has set out extensive provisions guaranteeing their rights. In particular, notwithstanding sections 9 and 19 calling for equality and the right of women to stand for public office respectively, there has been slow progress in the transformation of cultural roles of women in the community. More

than two decades since the enactment of the Constitution, women are still perceived as subservient to their husbands or unsuitable to assume major leadership roles at the traditional level (Ainslie and Kepe, 2016). In most local communities, a women's claim to land can only be guaranteed through men, either through familial relations or matrimony. As a consequence, while government policies seek to promote sustainable rural livelihoods for poor women, this vulnerable group find it challenging to access land, particularly as their right to this resource is not secured. Women are naturally assuming the role of primary provider for their families but these unequal power relations greatly deprive them of the prospect of earning a living for their households, especially in a patriarchal rural setting.

Related to the plight of women is the evolution of the branding of South Africa as a 'fatherless nation' (Bertelsmann, 2019), tied perhaps to its widespread occurrence of female-headed households (FHHs) or the high rates of absent fathers. By the end of 2018, about 37.9 per cent or 6.1 million households were headed by women (StatsSA, 2019). In stark contrast to urbanised provinces such as Western Cape and Gauteng where only 32.5 and 29.8 % of households are FHHs, respectively, this practice is dominant in provinces with large rural areas such as KwaZulu-Natal (45.0%), Limpopo (45.8%), Eastern Cape (46.9%), Free State (39.4%), Northern Cape (41.0%), North West (36.4%) and Mpumalanga (36.9%) (StatsSA, 2019). This data triggers an urgent call for policy makers to take a second look at the distribution of land and agricultural assistance to women as they and their children form the majority of vulnerable groups in poor rural communities.

The prospect of women to successfully engage in and scale up their smallholding is further constrained by three related factors. The first is fear of mobility. The produce of smallholder women is often home-bound because of fear of urban insecurity such as possible robbery or rape and subsequent HIV/AIDS infection. Recent hikes in the figure of rape victims, including older women, has exacerbated the fears of women smallholders to use public transport as a means of transport and marketing their commodities in urban centres (Pijoo, 2019). This development calls for support services for local food providers in the form of providing processing facilities including abattoirs, mills and storage, construction of market places and development of effective transportation systems (such as bridges and upgrading of roads) to

enhance easy access to and from urban markets. Second, in an effort to advance their economic activities and attain food security, women smallholders are compelled to strike a balance between food production and their (re)productive roles in families, especially in light of their entrenched sociocultural roles bearing and bringing up children. Finally, the poor social and familial support in local communities means women often have to temporarily leave their families in order to commute and sell their produce in cities. This practice hinders their successful participation in the food market as being temporarily absent from their families or spending the night elsewhere is considered culturally unacceptable in traditional African societies. On that account, sociocultural barriers and competition from major commercial farmers impede women from transforming small-scale farms into commercial ones. The constraints pose a serious threat to their entrepreneurial ability and any prospects of boosting their activities to overcome their poverty and food insecurity situation.

In an attempt to reverse this trend, the government adopted the 2004 Agricultural Black Economic Empowerment (AgriBEE, 2005) aimed at redistributing control of the economy to previously disadvantaged groups, by giving procurement preference to black smallholders (Kupka, 2005). As a result, it sets out a scorecard obliging government departments and parastatals to give preferences to black food producers or companies with majority black shareholders (Tapela, 2008). This calls for partnership between subsistence farmers and their commercial compatriots. Regrettably, this form of partnership may unfairly expose or place the inadequately resourced and usually unskilled smallholder and the industrialised and/or sophisticated commercial white farmer in the same ring to bid for the same tender. To enable smallholders to participate meaningfully in the economic transformation, government must seek to award such tenders to multiple smallholders or boost their capacity to adequately access established formal markets in view of present challenges.

The CASP equally seeks to enhance the capability of smallholders in order to expand their production. Yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, saddled by poor coordination in its operationalisation with insufficient skills among staff, poor planning, challenges in technical staff retention and delays in the procurement and supply of farm materials, the policy has not been able to live up to its promise of uplifting smallholders. The incoherent operationalisation of the

programme plays out at the provincial level where two different departments responsible for the supervision and disbursement of funds meant for land purchase and farm inputs adopt different criteria for accessing beneficiaries and the window period for disbursement of funds.³ Accordingly, with the disbursement of an insufficient amount from one department, recipients are tempted to use up the first payment for household needs while waiting for the subsequent one.

In a nutshell, the challenges which militate against the aspiration of smallholders towards achieving sustainable livelihood include insufficient access to the markets, poor infrastructure, sociocultural dynamics, communal way of life within the rural areas, and insufficient institutional and technical support. Eventually, although these programmes could play a key role in alleviating poverty, their ineffective operations defeat their noble intent. After taking a closer look at the numerous challenges confronting smallholders and their ability to improve the food security, the next section turns its attention to assess some of the possible remedies which could be mobilised to circumvent these barriers.

Overcoming Challenges

It is important to underscore at the onset that the aforementioned are not irredeemable problems, but overcoming them requires concerted efforts from the state, the private sector and the smallholders working in tandem to distribute adequate land, technical assistance and marketing skills to the poor and food insecure. Five steps are necessary in this regard. First, the key remedy for enhancing the productivity and market access of smallholders is by their forming cooperatives and unions. However, business partnerships formed by smallholders often collapse if the group's aim of maximising profit conflicts with the sociocultural dynamics of the rural area. Besides the lack of skills, poor management of business organisations and the prevalence of the 'free-rider' ideology have been key impediments to smallholder groups in accessing (inter) national markets.⁴ To be exact, access to market for groups is negatively impacted by the conflict between the profit-seeking notion of

³ These two institutions are the Department of Local Government and Housing, and DALRRD.

⁴ The use of 'free rider' here denotes the challenge of some smallholders contributing less than their fair share of their responsibility or cost.

business and the sense of communal ownership of cooperatives. This challenge could be averted through skills training and/or business orientation to trigger dynamic and well-informed unions. Presently, one such union worth citing is the National African Farmers' Union (NAFU), which was forged in 1991 and continues to serve as a platform for black farmers against the existing white-dominant union, Agri South Africa (Matlala, 2014). Despite the fact that NAFU engages in lobbying (non)state agencies to support its members with access to technology, research, capital, markets and land, its main clientele is emerging black capitalists, or investors in agriculture or black commercial farmers. In this vein, there is the need for subsistence farmers to have a unified voice through similar cooperatives in order to mount pressure on the government and lobby donors for financial and technical support. Through effective capacity building, the communal spirit of ownership could be tapped and transformed into effective cooperation among members and their accessibility to markets.

Secondly, the state must refrain from copy-and-paste models of providing interventions for smallholders. It must seek to adopt interventions which are cognisant of the unique circumstance or sociocultural condition of the locality as a specific farming model in one urban or regional environment may not be suitable in another, given that each may have its unique soil (in)fertility, level of productivity and rain patterns which may deserve a specific kind of extension service.

Thirdly, there must be effective participation of smallholders in the drafting and operationalisation of land reform and agricultural policies. The involvement of this vulnerable group is key, as any development programme which is not grounded on the active input of the prospective beneficiaries' runs the risk of being unsustainable, particularly as there is no sense of ownership at the local level. An understanding of the culture and way of doing things within the local community is vital in the construction and operationalisation of any policy or intervention for local smallholder farmers. This may somewhat explain why millions of Rands have been injected into programmes such as CASP, Ilima/Letsema and AGRI-BEE, but all have failed to make the necessary inroads at the local level.

Fourthly, the Department of Local Government and Housing should partner with the DALRRD to survey how traditional patriarchal societies could be transformed to develop the capability of women as active players in a capitalist environment. This call is urgent in light of the

harsh socioeconomic conditions which compel some women to become breadwinners of their families. Emphasis should be placed on land transfer to women to make inroads into household food insecurity. Primarily, women smallholders need post-settlement or post-transfer intervention in the form of access to market, credit, equipment, extension services, tractors, fertilisers and pesticides to sustain their farming activity.

Finally, investment in human capital. Farmers could enhance their access to markets and/or overcome their current state of food insecurity through access to adequate information. Adequate and reliable information will assist farmers to observe quality standards and make informed choices about which crops to cultivate, how to price their products and where to sell them. Also, access to relevant departments capable of providing essential information regarding particular markets, how to assess these markets and how commodities are traded is key. In this context, the rural spirit of commonality and platforms such as town halls, mosques, churches, schools and clinics could be used to assist in information dissemination and capacity building. Consequently, the Department of Trade and Industry must strengthen its partnership with the DALRRD to provide training and logistical support to subsistence farmers on how to package their products, penetrate existing markets and access credit facilities for expanding their operations. The provision of training and skills to the poor, especially smallholders, not only boosts their confidence, but enables them to transfer the acquired knowledge to improve the quality of their farm activities and sharpen their marketing strategies. This intervention also has the added advantage of promoting other qualities such as resilience and effectiveness and imbues the prospects of buy-in of interventions tailored to improve coping strategies. In essence, investments and initiatives for subsistence farmers should focus on improving the sociocultural and human assets.

In summary, for land reform to make a significant contribution to food security, there is an urgent need for the LRAD to overcome the market-based system of acquisition and ensure a systematic approach of transferring between 40 and 60 per cent of the total agricultural holdings to different categories of marginalised groups. Beside subsistence farmers in the former homelands, preferential treatment should be given to FHHs, the disabled and youths to enable them undertake different agricultural activities including urban backyard gardens,

rural subsistence and commercial food production. The land (re)allocation should be backed by post-transfer institutional support such as market information, training, infrastructure development, pest control, irrigation sprinklers, transport services, credit facilities, research, veterinary services and agricultural extension to boost production and enhance the effective participation of smallholders in the agro-industry. The failure of the state to blend land transfer with an overarching rural development intervention, coupled with insufficient post-transfer support programmes has militated against the rejuvenation of the rural economy or improvement of the food security of poor farmers. In the contexts of revitalisation of the rural economy and neoliberal hegemony, there must be sufficient consultation between government officials, consultants and prospective land beneficiaries in terms of land use or tenure, the types of crops or animals to be raised (whether poultry, dairy, cereal, vegetable or subtropical fruit production), the scale of (small/large) production and marketing of produce.

Conclusion

Subsistence farming serves as one of the main sources of entitlement or food security among rural and urban populations in contemporary South Africa. This avenue is important especially as the moneys received from social protection, remittances and wages are woefully inadequate to meet the food needs of many households. Yet, the number of people involved in this sector has dropped in recent times by reason of insufficient technical support, mainly in the area of lack of access to land, training and capital for farm equipment, and the exclusion of many youths from government agricultural interventions. Moreover, protectionist policies in advanced industrial countries have hindered agricultural opportunities and trade liberalisation has equally displaced small-scale producers. Rural women engaged in subsistence farming also face the additional challenge of entrenched societal practices and insufficient state protection which limits their access to markets. Most of these women are limited from trading off their produce in urban centres for fear of violence or exposure to high risk situations or vulnerability to sexual assault.

In order to reverse this trend, the chapter observes that it is essential for (wo)men to be equally represented in the framing and operationalisation of development programmes aimed at building the capacity of

subsistence farmers. Their participation in decision-making will help shape policies which will safeguard their right to land and access to commodity markets. The needs of women should be further prioritised in the allocation of productive assets, irrigation and pest control. This recommendation is made in light of the dual role of women as primary food producers and breadwinners in a widely fatherless society. Additionally, adequate allocation of resources – including provision of training and sharpening of skills of women – will be vital in sustaining the livelihood of many households since most children are dependent on their mothers. Suffice to say that the food security, economic growth, sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation cannot be achieved by solely ensuring adequate access to land through land reform. The remedy lies in the transformation of the smallholder agricultural sector, with women, youths and the disabled having sufficient state support in the form of access to productive assets, including land, water, seeds, machinery for cultivation and access to the markets.

In sum, overcoming food insecurity through land reform would require six different, but intersecting strategies: (i) provision of farming education to smallholders; (ii) suitable technology to replenish soil fertility; (iii) transformation of the agricultural markets; (iv) improved government extension services to new entrants and existing black smallholders; (v) broad-based land transfer; and (vi) increased access to water for irrigation.