

**An Analysis of South Africa's Food Security Policy Frameworks from a  
Food Sovereignty Perspective: Challenges and Implications for Genuine  
Long-Term Food Security**

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## **Abstract**

Food price volatility, ecological shocks and unprecedented levels of hunger and obesity are increasing concerns within food security governance, as is the emergence of food sovereignty in broadening critical discussions around food, water, energy and environmental crises. This thesis analyses this changing terrain in the context of South African policy. It analyses shifts in policymaking and the capability of South Africa's food security policy frameworks to include food sovereignty principles and in so doing support genuine long-term food security. A shift in policy priorities from household production, trade and income opportunities towards social safety nets and nutritional interventions is identified. This focus is constrained by an inability to affect structural changes within a deeply inequitable food landscape. An emphasis on commercial farming and unwillingness to challenge large agribusiness, value chains and corporate retail has enabled social differentiation in access to food and the country's colonial land dispensation to continue. Consequently, markets have continued to be antipathetic to the needs of poor producers and consumers in South Africa. To overcome these structural constraints, food security policy needs to be framed within a more radical normative agenda. This is important for challenging inequitable power relations and asserting the social and ecological imperatives of healthy food systems. Food sovereignty has significant potential to support a normative agenda by supporting the multiple farming practices, enterprises and livelihood strategies pursued by poor farmers, the unemployed and working poor whilst preserving sensitive environments for future generations. Determining the future of food security is not the privilege of the few with economic clout or power to govern but the right of all. The incorporation of food sovereignty principles in policymaking is therefore paramount for achieving genuine long-term food security.

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### **List of Acronyms**

Agri-BEE	Black Economic Empowerment for the Agricultural Sector
AoA	Agreement on Agriculture
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CASP	Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CFTC	Commodity Futures Trading Commission
COPAC	Cooperative and Policy Alternative Centre
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
DoH	Department of Health
DSD	Department of Social Development
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EPWP	Extended Public Works Programme
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FSM	Food Sovereignty Movement
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
GM	Genetically Modified
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFSS	Integrated Food Security Strategy

IMF	International Monetary Fund
INP	Integrated Nutrition Programme
LARP	Land and Agrarian Reform Programme
LRAD	Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development
LVC	La Via Campesina
Mafisa	Micro agricultural financial institutions of South Africa
NDA	National Department of Agriculture
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSNP	National School Nutrition Programme
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPEC	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
OTC	Over-the-Counter
PLAAS	Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies
PSNP	Primary School Nutrition Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SANHANES	South African National Health and Nutrition Examination
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
TAM	Transnational Agrarian Movement
TNC	Transnational Corporation
TRIPS	Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property



UN	United Nations
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VAD	Vitamin A Deficiency
WB	World Bank
WFFS	World Forum on Food Sovereignty
WFP	World Food Programme
WFS	World Food Summit
WTO	World Trade Organisation

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1 Scarcity, Surplus and Crisis in Food Systems

By the year 2011, over one billion people across the world were living in conditions of hunger and malnourishment at the same time that they were outnumbered by the 1,5 billion people who were overweight or obese (Patel, 2012:1). These phenomena did not occur in isolation but were and continue to be consequences of the same inequitable global food regime. Defined by Friedmann (1993:30) as “the rule-governed structure of production and consumption of food on a global scale”, the global food regime is a product of the changing interests and power relations within the political economy of food. These interests compete at times and converge at others but most importantly they delineate who has access to what kinds of food and under what conditions. The balance of these interests and power relations has come to determine the structure of global food systems and the distribution of and access to food both *between* and *within* countries. Some of these interests include those of nation-states, farming and consumer lobbies, as well as different classes of labour, farmers, consumers and capital (Friedmann, 1993:31). Part of this contentious food regime has been the increasingly influential social movements intent on reclaiming power and autonomy within food systems to support food regimes better disposed to respect the rights of people, the environment and to withstand ecological and economic shocks. This is most evident in the counter-narratives posited by the food sovereignty movement which through grassroots activism and construction of its own discourse has continuously struggled for a future for agriculture which is more socially just and ecologically sustainable.

The inequities in the global food regime are also evident within the South African food landscape. While the country is food secure at a national level, over half the population is considered either to be food insecure or at risk of hunger (Shisana et al., 2014:2-3; Drimie and McLachlan, 2013:220). The increasing numbers of overweight and obese South Africans, even living within the same households as the malnourished, is indicative of the complexity of food insecurity in the country (Chandrasekhar ad Gosh, 2012:49). Both of these trends have been situated within a changing food landscape in which limited access to adequate food for some people has occurred alongside a nutrition transition for others. Diets along this nutrition transition are now higher in processed foods with high sugar, salt and fat content and lower levels of micronutrients (Pereira, 2014:14; Lawrence, 2004:196). The food

landscape in South Africa discussed in this thesis is one largely constructed and contested along the fault-lines of class, race and gender. These social dynamics have played central roles in the structural causes of hunger, poverty and inequality within the country. These dynamics are, however, also evident in the everyday lives and interactions of people living in South Africa. They determine the spaces where people grow food, where they live, work and where they buy food. A defining feature of the South African food landscape has been its colonial and apartheid legacies which taken together created socially differentiated spaces in which people were able to grow, work for and access the food needed for themselves and their dependents. Twenty two years after South Africa entered a new democratic dispensation this food landscape is much the same. The endemic problems of hunger, poverty and inequality have thus been focal points of social policy since 1994. Social policies in democratic South Africa are important as they have been the primary mechanisms through which the country has attempted to address past inequities and to create a new citizenship based on principles of equity, greater opportunities for previously disadvantaged populations and to deracialise social rights of citizenship. Considering the vicarious food security status of South African households, the country's attempts to improve access to food through social policy has undoubtedly been important although fraught with difficulty.

## **1.2 Research Goals**

The primary goal of this thesis is to examine South Africa's food security policy frameworks from a food sovereignty perspective and their ability to achieve and sustain genuine long-term food security. A second goal of this thesis is to assess the implications of South Africa's food security policy frameworks for broader issues of transformation and agrarian reform in the country<sup>1</sup>.

In pursuing these goals, the analysis of the policies is based on contemporary discourse surrounding the concepts of food security and food sovereignty. Food security as a discourse is relevant because of its implications for how theories of hunger, poverty and food (in)security have shaped the conceptualisation of these problems in South African policymaking and their attendant policy prescriptions and interventions. Food sovereignty discourse finds its relevance in the South African context due to its resonance with many

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<sup>1</sup>The understanding of transformation within an agrarian context as it is used in this thesis is taken from the definition given by Greenberg (2015:958) as a process which includes "widening the base of democratic control over economic assets, collective decision-making, shared technologies, social justice and ecological sustainability".

contentious socio-economic and political issues in the country today – including but not limited to malnourishment and obesity, chronic unemployment and poverty, inequality, stagnating wages, landlessness as well as the political and economic alienation of South Africa’s poor. As such, a food sovereignty perspective is favoured in analysing South African food security policy and to achieve the primary and secondary goals of the research. This is because the discourse of food sovereignty presents itself as a fundamentally more radical way to engage with and address the issue of food insecurity which is, at its most fundamental level, a deeply political issue.

### **1.3 Research Methods**

In order to comprehensively assess the food security situation in South Africa and the policy developments that have attempted to bolster food security, the research methods included the use of secondary data as well as primary and secondary texts. Secondary data was used to investigate the status of food (in)security and related anthropometric indices to illustrate the prominence of hunger, vulnerability and non-communicable diseases such as stunting, wasting and other diet-related illnesses prevalent in the country. The use of primary and secondary texts were used in the form of government publications relevant for food security policy as well as relevant publications and literature discussing food security and food sovereignty discourses.

### **1.4 Overview of Chapters:**

In chapter two, a description of food security as it is defined and discussed in food security discourse is presented before a more detailed exposition of its core characteristics. The discussion then moves on to relevant literature concerning the ideological and theoretical understandings of hunger in the contemporary era before food security emerged as its own discourse, followed by a discussion of its paradigmatic evolution as a discourse from the 1970s onwards. The chapter then discusses the increasing importance of food security as a global governance issue and the expanding involvement of influential international institutions, the liberalisation of agricultural trade and the emergence of food as a human right. Reflecting some of the more recent developments surrounding the 2007-8 and ongoing global food crisis, the chapter then extrapolates some of the new phenomena and global issues reflected in the discourse and popular discussions around food security. These include the impacts on food security of financial deregulation and commodity speculation, the

agrofuels industry as well as the biophysical and climate change challenges facing agriculture.<sup>2</sup>

In chapter three, a brief history of food sovereignty as a discourse and international movement is discussed. An analysis of the processes of economic and cultural globalisation is then presented, with stout opposition to these phenomena forming the core of food sovereignty activism. The chapter then proceeds with an exploration of the ways in which food sovereignty has come to be seen by its proponents as an alternative praxis in facing many of agriculture's modern challenges. In doing so, the chapter focuses on three of food sovereignty's central themes – those being its advocacy for agroecological production, the rights of peoples to access productive resources as well as food sovereignty's support for localised trade regimes. Lastly, the chapter considers the relevance of these central themes for the livelihood strategies of smallholder producers and the rural poor. An analysis of this kind looks at the diverse livelihood strategies pursued by smallholders and the rural poor as well as their situation within the trajectory of modern capitalism and the challenges this may pose for food sovereignty.

Chapter four provides a broad overview of the food security policy frameworks in South Africa. It begins by outlining the status of food (in)security in the country and its distribution according to factors such as geography, race, gender and age. The chapter then goes on to posit these circumstances within a broader historical context within the legacies of the colonial and apartheid eras. The constitutional right to food in South Africa is then detailed in order to introduce food security policy and its constitutional imperatives within the democratic era. Following this, the chapter goes on to describe the main food security policy frameworks developed since 1994 and how they have attempted to coordinate policies relevant for food security and create entitlements for the food insecure and vulnerable populations.

Chapter five provides a synthesis of many of the themes and policies discussed throughout the thesis with the aim of incorporating them within a critical discussion of South Africa's food security policy frameworks. Within this discussion, an analysis of the policy

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<sup>2</sup> The use of the term "agrofuels" rather than the more commonly used "biofuels" is explained by Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2009:180), with the former denoting the conversion of crops to liquid fuel on an industrial scale and the latter a process of converting crops to liquid fuel by small-scale, owner-operated facilities mostly for local use. The term agrofuels is preferred within this thesis when referring to the predominant model of agrofuels production under large-scale industrial farms and directed by national energy objectives.

frameworks is presented from a food sovereignty perspective. This analysis is applied using the three core tenets of food sovereignty as discussed in chapter three – those being agroecological production, the right to access productive resources and localised trade regimes. Following this, the chapter then considers the implications of the food security policy proposals that do not fit neatly within the aforementioned tenets of food sovereignty. These include policy proposals related to nutrition interventions and social safety nets. Chapter six concludes by making some final remarks before explicating some of the constraints faced by the research and prospects for future research related to food security policy and food sovereignty in South Africa.

## **Chapter 2: The Politicisation of Hunger and the Evolution of Food Security**

### **Discourse**

Food security as a concept has had numerous meanings to interested organisations and people over a number of decades. The concept itself entails an endeavour in food policy and trade systems to ensure that people are able to acquire and consume enough food for a healthy, active life and that they can live without uncertainty as to where future food will come from. The concept has evolved over the past number of decades in order to reflect shifting discourse and paradigms explaining the nature of hunger and appropriate responses to eliminate it. The working definition of food security as it is used in this thesis is taken from the United Nations' (UN) Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) document *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2001*. As stated by the organisation, "food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food which meets their dietary requirements for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 2001). As Otero, Pechlaner and Gürcan (2013:267) explain, such a state has four major requirements – adequate supply of food, access to food (physical, economic and social access), the adequate utilisation of food by individuals and lastly the stability of all these factors over time. A failure of any of these factors leads to circumstances of food insecurity – understood as a temporary or long-term failure of people to procure adequate food for themselves and their dependants (Staatz, Boughton and Donovan, 2009:159-160). Encompassing a matrix of different components, the prerequisites for food security can be better explained by focussing on each facet in turn.

### **2.1 Complexity Beyond Agricultural Markets**

In the first instance, it seems intuitive that agriculture and markets form the basis of food security. The physical supply of food and its distribution to markets is vital in enabling people to physically procure enough food for themselves and their families when it is needed. The proficiency with which food can be produced and distributed to markets or grown through home production is what is understood as physical access in food security discourse. Additionally, economic access refers to the ability of people to actually purchase food from markets which is typically determined by the status of people's incomes, the purchasing power of that income and by the prices of food and other non-food expenditure (Staatz,

Boughton and Donovan, 2009:158). Social access is a factor easily misunderstood in food security discourse but essentially means that people must be able to access enough food in ways that are both culturally acceptable and meet their food preferences. This is not to say that people should be able to choose whatever food they wish on an arbitrary basis but rather that they should be able to choose food that is consistent with cultural norms and values in ways consistent with human dignity and respectability (Maxwell, 2001:21). Utilisation is a concept concerned with how our bodies use the food that we eat. It depends on the good health of people, adequate sanitation, hygiene and the nutritional quality of food (Maxwell, 2001:237-40; Otero, Pechlaner and Gúcan, 2013:267; Young, 2012:36). These factors enable people's bodies to physiologically absorb and utilise enough nutrients and minerals for all their physical and cognitive needs. A person suffering from chronic diarrhoea, for example, will be unable to optimally absorb nutrients from the food that they consume. Proper utilisation requires the sufficient absorption of macronutrients (carbohydrates, fats and proteins) as well as micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) which is affected most significantly by a person's health and the diversity and quality of their diets (Drimie and Rusenaar, 2010:319; Davis et al., 2014:189).

All these requirements make food security a rather complex issue. Its status is dependent not only on how much food is grown for home consumption or for markets but on how much food is imported; what kinds of food are grown or imported; the nutritional quality of food; how it is stored, processed, distributed, sold, acquired, prepared and eaten; education about food and nutrition; adequate health and sanitation; as well as supportive policies to underpin all of these inextricably intertwined factors. In all, food security is a product of what happens in the entire food system from the seed to the dinner table, without isolating any food, health, development or economic issues (Drimie and Ruysenaar, 2010:319; du Toit and Neves, 2014:845). Very importantly, stability of all these factors over time is vital. A person cannot be considered food secure if they have access to sufficient food for most of the year but face hunger during intermittent periods. A failure in the stability of these factors occurs in two ways, in the short-term (transitory food insecurity) or in the long-term (chronic food insecurity). The former is characteristic of temporary shocks in food security or disruptions in food access and is most commonly associated with market volatility, natural disasters or internecine violence (Barrett, 2013:7; Staatz, Boughton and Donovan, 2009:159). The latter is structural in nature, resulting in a long-term lack of access and is a consequence of the



inability of states and markets to distribute food to vulnerable groups or because of chronic poor health in individuals (Staatz, Boughton and Donovan, 2009:160).

The complex nature of food security as a discourse is a consequence of numerous theories and policy prescriptions which have not stayed static over time but have been adapted, revised or even discarded as the discourse has evolved. The concept is also typically analysed at different levels from global, regional, national, household and individual levels, all of which have a bearing on how the concept is understood and analysed. The evolving discourse around food security has gone to show that a number of factors are all necessary in mutually dependent ways for individuals to be food secure. Drimie and Ruysenaar (2010:319) put this quite succinctly when explaining that “food availability is necessary, but not sufficient for access, and access is necessary but not sufficient for utilisation” – not forgetting that all these factors require temporal stability too. Food security has been both a policy-driven discourse as well as theoretical one, also with different indicators used to measure it at global, regional, national, household and individual levels. As such, the concept of food security and policies supporting it have, over time, focussed on a plethora of interconnected and mutually reinforcing aspects such as agricultural production and growth, distributive mechanisms in the market, income and job security, healthcare and sanitation as well as social security nets. In this sense, the concept of food security as it is understood today is as much a scientific endeavour as it is an economic, social and political one.

Although the issue of malnutrition and hunger seems to be one endemic to society the world over and throughout history, the ascendance of the concept of food security and its position in developmental and global governance parlance has a fairly recent history. Noting the long historical embeddedness of hunger in society and its political importance even in ancient historical records, Maxwell (2001:13) points out that relevant literature follows quite an extensive epistemological tradition. That being said, the history of hunger and malnutrition is far too complex and lengthy to analyse in its entirety in this thesis. As such, the focus of this chapter is firstly, to provide a description of the concept of food security as it began to gain momentum in global governance institutions and national policies and secondly, to provide an analysis of its evolution, showing how various theories about development, poverty and the conceptualisation of food security itself have come to effect the status of hunger and malnutrition today and responses to it. Although it should be noted that the issue of hunger is one endemic to human history, this exposition will focus on hunger and malnutrition in the

contemporary era because of the way in which it has become politicised. As Sen (in Uvin, 1994:81) explains most eloquently:

Hunger in the modern world is more intolerable than past hunger not because it is typically more intense, but because it is now so unnecessary. The enormous expansion of productive power that has taken place over the past few centuries has made it possible, for the first time in history, to guarantee food for all. It is in this context that the persistence of chronic hunger and the recurrence of violent famines must be seen as morally outrageous and politically unacceptable. If politics is the “art of the possible” then conquering world hunger has become a political issue in a way that it could not have in the past.



As the political importance of food security has gained credence over the past number of decades, there has also been more contestation and debate around the theoretical and ideological underpinnings that have framed food security discourse. Exploring these contestations is vital. As Young (2012:70) points out, theories of food security are of importance as “theories suggest policies and very diverse political and/or economic interventions”. Changes in the manner that hunger and malnutrition have been conceptualised in the past are therefore very important to understand changing trends in food security itself and its corresponding policy responses at the current conjuncture.

On this point, Maxwell (2001:15-16) illustrates how between 1975 and 1991 alone, about thirty two different working definitions of food security and food insecurity were developed and adjusted by authors and organisations working within the discourse and in policymaking. The considerable differences within some of the definitions of food security bear thinking about as they show how different theories of hunger and food security have framed the ways in which the problem has been approached. The definition adopted by the UN in 1975 following the 1974 World Food Conference, for example, regarded food security as a situation that existed when there was the “Availability at all times of adequate world supplies of basic food-stuffs” and explained further that to achieve such a scenario, states and other organisations would need “to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption... and to offset fluctuations in production and prices” (UN in McKeon, 2015:74). The preoccupation in approaching food security at this time quite clearly concerned the primacy of physical supply in global markets and that it kept pace with effective demand at stable prices. This definition is starkly different to the FAO’s 2001 definition mentioned earlier with its emphasis not only on food supply but on economic and social access, health and utilisation. These changes are direct consequences of shifting paradigms and growing activism around food security.

## 2.2 Early Thinking about Hunger and Food Security

Even before the concept of food security officially gained creditability as a discourse in its own right from about the early 1970s, there existed a plethora of debate, theory and philosophy regarding issues of hunger more specifically but also concerning ecology, agriculture, development and sustainability (Margulis, 2013:56). One of the most prolific thinkers regarding some of these issues in the contemporary era include Thomas Malthus with the publication of his work *An Essay on the Principle of Population* in 1798. The argument postulated by Malthus at the time was based on what he perceived as two fundamental laws of nature, the first of which was that “food is necessary to the existence of man” and the second that “the passion between the sexes is necessary” (Malthus, 1798:4). In essence, Malthus believed that two certainties in human life were that there would be a tendency for populations to grow and that this would heighten demand on the productive capacity of the soil and the food that could be produced thereon.

The overarching argument that was presented in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* was that in a natural state of affairs, the natural environment would always place a “check” on populations so that they did not egregiously exceed the carrying capacity of the environment and did not decimate their sources of sustenance (Malthus, 1798:60,106). However, due to the advancement of human societies and their mastery over the environment, Malthus felt that these checks had been removed and he acknowledged lower mortality rates, higher birth rates and medical breakthroughs improving human health as evidence of this. Additionally, Malthus believed that population growth would far exceed growth in agricultural capacity which would create future stress and scarcity of food, to the extent that there would emerge increased checks to limit population growth closer within the carrying capacity of the earth. He stated that “Necessity, that imperious all pervading law of nature, restrains them [populations] within the prescribed bounds [of nature]” (Malthus, 1798:5). These laws of “necessity” or checks came in both natural and anthropogenic forms (mostly in the form of misery and vice), meaning that excessive population growth could be kept in check by factors such as low fertility rates, high mortality rates, future hunger and famine, pestilence, violence and war (Malthus, 1798:60,106). Alternatively, population overreach could be avoided by what Malthus regarded as “moral restraint” which would occur in the forms of family planning and changes in sexual behaviour (King, 1969:28). The fundamental cause of this population problem, he argued, was the rift between population growth rates (decoupled from checks and without “moral restraint”) and growth in agricultural production. He argued that

populations would tend to grow geometrically whilst agricultural output could at best only grow arithmetically (Malthus, 1798:6). This unfolding scenario, which would only worsen the longer populations grew so rapidly, would increase the incidence of “necessity” in the form of misery and vice. This led Malthus to postulate the idea that in a world of increasing ecological overreach, not even an egalitarian society would be able to solve what he considered the population problem. This viewpoint led him to surmise that

it appears... to be decisive against the possible existence of a society, all the members of which, should live in ease, happiness, and comparative leisure; and feel no anxiety about providing the means of subsistence for themselves and their families (Malthus, 1798:5).

In the event, Malthus’ gloomy predictions about demographic crisis never materialised mostly due to two major unfolding global events. First was the discovery of new geographical (usually colonial) frontiers outside Europe, particularly in North America, Argentina, New Zealand and Australia. This allowed for the export of Europe’s surplus population to settlements and new colonies abroad. Almost simultaneously, breakthroughs in technology and agricultural practices enabled rapid increases in agricultural productivity to meet growing demand – this was also spurred on by the introduction of fossil fuels as a new source of energy in food production and industrial development (Warnock, 1987:35; Thoday, 1969:5; King, 1969:30). Nevertheless, the thinking surrounding Malthusian crisis prevailed, especially during times of heightened food crises and increasingly so with the growing credence of environmental problems and constraints from about the 1960s onwards (Warnock, 1987:29). The argument presented by Malthus is indeed important within food security discourse today as theory and research based on Malthusian thinking is often used as a scientific justification of what has come to be dubbed the productionist paradigm. This paradigm is identified by a hegemonic belief in the absolute necessity of large-scale industrial farming techniques including modernised biotechnology, chemical, transportation, storage and processing techniques to adequately feed the world’s growing population with little regard for the adverse effects of such techniques (Lang and Heasman, 2004:20). As Lang and Heasman (2004:19) explain, the overarching concern of the productionist paradigm is “to increase the quantity of food over other priorities”.

In a nutshell, this guiding logic sees the solution to growing populations to simply ramp up food production in the most rapid and efficient way possible, with other social and ecological concerns left by the wayside. Patel (2012:101) also points to a concurrent trend within Malthusian thinking that has stigmatised the poor and hungry themselves, proposing

measures to control their numbers and lifestyles as a problem population rather than finding ways to feed them. In this regard he cites the period of forced sterilisation in India in the 1970s, effectively “addressing the problem of a hungry population not by feeding the people, but by reducing their number” (Patel, 2012:101). The productionist paradigm itself can also invoke Malthusian language and assumptions. The narrative adopted can be seen in topics as broad as demographics, dietary transitions, economic growth, biotechnology and environmental degradation. Malthusian logic as it is often used today broadly sees food security as essentially an endeavour focussed on increasing agricultural production and economic efficiency to satisfy an increasing population with the limited and finite resources available at any given time.

Many academics, policymakers, scientists, politicians and activists alike have continued to see the issue of food security within the scope of Malthusian logic. Thoday (1969:2), for example, urged that the rapidly growing global population that reached 3,2 billion by 1964 was a serious challenge and stated at the time that it “is all too clear that it cannot go on forever”. Doubting the ability of global food systems to cope, he argued that what was needed was “every effort... to meet the inevitable increase with increases in production, especially of agricultural production” (Thoday, 1969:2). What is telling of Thoday’s ideological assumptions concerning hunger is that he viewed population growth as its most fundamental cause and therefore believed in the primacy of agricultural productivity and increasing aggregate supply as its most logical solutions (Thoday, 1969: 2,5). A common thread in the kind of arguments presented above is that when dealing with global hunger and appropriate policies, agricultural and demographic concerns should take precedence. Such Malthusian sentiment underpins numerous influential writings in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, including Ehrlich’s *The Population Bomb* (1968), Hardin’s *The Tragedy of the Commons* (1968) as well as his *Living on a Lifeboat* (1974) and Kaplan’s *The Coming Anarchy* (1994) for example.

Following the traditions of Malthus, neo-Malthusians have consistently nurtured the fear of demographic crisis, insisting that not only is high population growth a harbinger of future disaster but that now we also have to contend with growing wealth (particularly in emerging economies) and environmental degradation which taken together pose serious challenges for the world food system (Patel, 2012:3-4). As Warnock (1987:29) explains, in recent decades

old Malthusian questions were raised. Can the world continue to support a steady increase in population? Are there enough natural resources available to eliminate

poverty and extend the “age of mass high consumption” to all areas of the world? Are there enough foodlands and other resources to feed the world on a western diet? Are there enough energy resources available?... wouldn't their full utilization place an unbearable burden of pollution on the world's ecosystem?

In a rather interesting discussion of Neo-Malthusian arguments, Uvin (1994:75) implies that the pervasiveness of these worldviews is a consequence of intellectual inertia that uses poor causal correlations between populations, poverty, environmental degradation and food crises. Young (2012:75) argues that in this way Malthusian thinking can, for example, infer “that it is ‘natural’ that as population expands poverty increases, when in fact there is no such rule at all”. Such explanations are usually sufficiently vague and appealing enough to obscure the ways demographic pressure is attributable to other social, economic and political problems including inequality, social conflict, political upheaval, environmental degradation, poverty and underdevelopment.

The neo-Malthusian implication is, in a nutshell, that population growth can explain part (if not all) of the problems mentioned above – a distinctive ahistorical case of blaming the poor and marginalised for their own circumstances. Within more recent decades, the blame for increasing stresses on food security resulting from growing populations, growing economies and rising incomes has been placed squarely at rapidly developing countries (particularly India and China). The fundamental worry is that too many mouths in developing countries will spell disaster for global food systems. In contrast, population growth in the Global North has been steadily declining, which King (1969:29) interestingly points out dispelled long held beliefs that increasing prosperity and economic growth would only accelerate population growth even further. A possibility here is that perhaps the fears over India and China are premature, and that they too might follow a population growth plateau similar to countries in the Global North. The causes and implications of high population growth are too intricate to examine here but a number of authors such as Lappé, Collins and Rosset (1998:29-30), Klugman (1991:75-77) and Parks (1969:13-14) illustrate some of the contention around issues such the transition from agrarian to industrial and service based economies, the roles of household agricultural labour, modern agriculture, medicine and infant mortality rates for example.

Regardless of the nuances which can explain or complicate the global trends in population growth rates and socio-economic transitions, it is still common for food security challenges to be framed as facing its most pressing challenges or even threats from developing and emerging countries in particular. Framed in this way, it would seem that emerging

economies, with the largest population growth rates and rising incomes, are largely responsible for Malthusian crisis which if it failed to materialise during Malthus' time is likely to come to fruition in the near future. Such alarmist predictions are commonplace in contemporary readings of food security, viewing emerging economies such as China and India posing a colossal threat to global food security, what with their surging populations, changing diets and rising incomes to match a seemingly insatiable demand. Such neo-Malthusian perspectives though are not without their contestation. It is widely recognised that even with declining population growth *vis-à-vis* the developing world, rich industrialised countries continue to consume the lion's share of the world's resources, from energy and natural resources to global food supplies (Warnock, 1987:35). Chandrasekhar and Gosh (2012:46) argue quite fervently that positing India and China as the chief culprits accelerating the global demand for food is grossly incorrect. They point out both aggregate and per capita consumption in these two countries have actually fallen and grain demanded for direct and indirect use did not increase between 2000 and 2007 (Chandrasekhar and Gosh, 2012:46). Warnock (1987:35) explained the paranoia over India and China as far back as the late 1980s thus:

while the political establishment in the industrialized countries anguishes about excessive population growth in China and India, each American uses 60 times as much of the world's resources as do the Chinese or Indians... It is because of this that most of the underdeveloped countries are "destined never to be developed".

This last remark is particularly salient when considering sentiment about the population problem. Much of the lamentation over population growth and world food supplies is not so much that there is not enough to feed the world's population an adequate diet, but that it cannot be achieved by standards approximate to a "western" diet. This sentiment is expressed quite unambiguously by Warnock (1987:31) when explaining popular attitudes that "The world environment could simply not survive the elevation of the underdeveloped countries to the American standard of living". Headey and Fan (2010:14) state that the popularity of this China/India explanation is most probably due to its intuitive appeal, with both countries having a combined population of over two billion, high rates of economic growth and being integrated into the global market. The above analysis suggests that food demand pressures have more to do with consumption habits and global inequities than with population growth *per se*. Having said this, one should not be necessarily dismissive of population growth as an important food security determinant. As McMahon (2013:51) points out, there an additional 219 000 people to feed globally every day, which means that even if there is enough food to

feed them the challenge of creating distributive mechanisms and entitlements is still a monumental if achievable task.

Considering these arguments and the long-held consensus that the world does produce enough food in aggregate terms, it would seem that these problems speak more to the distributional character of food systems than to production and population constraints (Wittman, 2010:93; Lappé, Collins and Rosset, 1998:8). Important questions to then ask are where does all this food come from? What is it used for? Who is able to access it and with what means? The glaring reality is that hunger is largely a product of gross inequity and inefficiencies in global food systems; these tend to lend the issue of food security more of a normative or moral dilemma than purely a technical or economic one. With this realisation, the ground-breaking ideas of Sen (1981) have probably had one of the biggest impacts on food security discourse.

### **2.3 Paradigm Shifts and Legal Entitlements**

In 1981, Sen published his hugely influential work *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*. Writing about the causes of hunger and famine, this seminal work was to have a monumental impact on how food security was to be conceptualised thereafter. Most significant in this regard was his theory of entitlement in explaining the prevalence of hunger and food insecurity. At the time, his theory of entitlement differed in the way that it discussed new causes of hunger and famine over and above the old paradigm focussing chiefly on concerns of population growth and food supply. This is not to say that his thinking saw issues of population and food supply as unimportant components of food security but rather that food production per capita was a very poor indicator for assessing the status of hunger and food insecurity (Sen, 1982:450).

Sen's (1981:45) overarching hypothesis is that the prevalence of hunger can be better explained by the lack of legal entitlements people have to food rather than because there are simply too many mouths to feed with too little food. These observations were made clear to him by the existence of famines in circumstances with little change in food supply or even without much change in prices – most infamously obvious to him through the famines in Bengal in 1943 and Ethiopia from 1972-1974 (Sen, 1981:52,86; Sen, 1982:450). The entitlement approach maintains that hunger can better be explained as a consequence of poverty. Because of the poverty people find themselves in, they cannot afford to grow or buy



the food they need. Additionally, their health is often woefully inadequate to properly utilise the food that they do have access to. Sen (1981:45) explained this approach as follows:

The entitlement approach to starvation and famines concentrates on the ability of people to command food through the legal means available in the society, including the use of production possibilities, trade opportunities, entitlements *vis-à-vis* the state, and other methods of acquiring food. A person starves *either* because he does not have the ability to command enough food *or* because he does not use this ability to avoid starvation (emphasis in original).

The concept of entitlement concerns the legal means through which people can procure an adequate diet in any given society. With regards to the above statement, Sen (1981:45) does acknowledge that a person's malnourishment can result from not using "[their] ability to avoid starvation" (implying personal failings) but maintains that of greater import are the structural causes related to market society which the hungry themselves have little control over. He explains this when emphasising the observation that "In every society that exists, the amount of food that a person or a family can command is governed by one set of rules or another, combined with the contingent circumstances in which that person or that family happens to be placed *vis-à-vis* those rules". Within a market driven economy, Sen (1982:451) argued that there are three typical ways in which a person or family can gain an entitlement and hence a right to food.

In the first instance there might be a production-based entitlement to food. Through this manner, people can gain an entitlement to food through their own production, either by owning or having access to land, skills, labour power and other inputs necessary to produce the food they or their families need (Sen, 1982:451; Uvin, 1994:85). In the second instance, an entitlement to food can be an exchange-based one which results from the ability of people to trade assets, sell labour or generate income to procure adequate and sufficient food from the market using various forms of remuneration or currency (Sen, 1982:451). This can be secured most typically through waged labour, selling produce or through other economic and business activities. Alternatively, an entitlement to food can be a "transfer entitlement" in which food is gained either by being a member of a household for which an entitlement to food already exists (implying that usually a person will gain a share of that entitlement) or by qualifying for other means of assistance such as food aid, social security or various forms of charity (Sen, 1982:451; Uvin, 1994:58; Staatz, Boughton and Donovan, 2009:158).

Using his observations from 20<sup>th</sup> century famines, Sen (1982:451) argued that the principal cause of hunger was essentially a failure of these forms of entitlement. For instance, in

circumstances where people do not have or lose ownership of farming resources such as land, inputs or natural resources (including water supply, favourable climate or fertile soil), or if they can no longer provide or hire the labour power and skills they need to farm, these circumstances will result in a loss of their production-based entitlement. Alternatively, people can lose their exchange-based entitlement in instances where they become unemployed, do not have enough assets to exchange for food or if they are unable to work any longer. Exchange-based entitlements are also contingent on markets; an entitlement can be weakened if the purchasing power of wages and other assets decrease, if food prices increase relative to income or if the prices of non-food expenses such as education, rent, utilities and energy costs increase relative to income. Lastly, people can lose a transfer entitlement to food by losing access to social safety nets and other support including income grants, supportive family, community networks, feeding schemes, food aid or charity.

The biggest impact that Sen's work has had on the discourse of food security itself has been the way it has broadened the view of food security beyond the limited conceptions of agricultural growth and efficient markets. Issues of poverty, unemployment and livelihoods are now a crucial part of food security as poor access to productive resources, lack of employment and inadequate purchasing power is what bars a significant proportion of the world population from procuring an adequate diet. However, Uvin (1994:85) does astutely point out that such an approach does not belittle the importance of food supply. He states that "This is not to say that increases in food production are a bad thing – on the contrary – but only that they do not necessarily eradicate hunger. They can do so if at the same time they create entitlements to the hungry".

In sum, if old Malthusian concerns can be viewed with a preoccupation of food availability and demand, Sen's theory of entitlement can be seen as part of a paradigmatic shift in the way scholars, policymakers and activists began to think more seriously about issues of distribution and access as equally important components of food security. Maxwell (2001:17) points out that as a result, it has become increasingly difficult to talk about food security without at least acknowledging the importance of food access. He states that "In practice, it has been more usual to define food security as being first and foremost a problem of access to food, with food production at best a route to entitlement, either directly for food producers or indirectly by driving market prices down for consumers" (Maxwell, 2001:17). The aforementioned developments in food security discourse brought a new intellectual and policy-making fervour to eradicate hunger – this was particularly evident in the increasing

involvement of international organisations in formulating debate and directing policy. Their involvement has been significant because, as will be shown, they have had a vast impact on framing the international policy context in which states have typically pursued food security objectives and interventions. An analysis of these organisations and their involvement in food security therefore needs attention if we are to create a more nuanced understanding of how the concept of food security has evolved.

## **2.4 Food Security in Global Governance**

As was mentioned previously, food security began to gain credence as a policy issue in its own right from about the 1970s. World events since then are very telling in how they illustrate the evolution of food security concerns and discourse, as was just illustrated by the work of Sen (1981). Margulis (2013:56) notes that food security concerns gained increasing attention after the 1972-1974 food crisis. During this time it became patently obvious to observers that new or underestimated factors were responsible for food insecurity and hunger, such as price volatility and unstable supply in international markets. During the 1972-1974 crisis, price volatility and supply shortages were attributed mostly to a massive grain deal between the then USSR and USA which withdrew vast quantities of grain from international markets and caused prices to soar (Schanbacher, 2010:21). Added to this, the 1973 oil embargo by the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) countries caused considerable volatility in energy markets which since the 20<sup>th</sup> century have been tied to food prices due to fossil-fuel dependent production methods (Jarosz, 2014:171). Taken together, these developments then caused a rise in the import bills of many net-importers of food and particularly for many African countries dependent on both food and oil imports, leading to declining terms of trade and contributing to the debt crisis of the 1980s (Greene and Khan, 1990:10). International events such as these began to show how the status of food (in)security was not quite as simple as creating sufficient global supplies and efficient markets to distribute food but that political decisions and power relations within the political economy of food had significant impacts on food access for people across the world.

The effects of market volatility and vicarious supply in international markets have been the foci of food security and food crises since and are now examined in conjunction with new causal factors such as the impacts of the agrofuels industry, changing climates and weather patterns, changing diets in emerging economies, poor policy responses to shocks, speculative trading in commodity futures markets and hoarding behaviour of major exporters and grain

traders (Pinstrup-Anderson and Herforth, 2008:51). What is interesting in the events since the 1970s is the way in which food security has become an important global governance issue, being mandated and discussed within UN agencies and bodies such as the FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Other international organisations outside of the UN with significant influence in food security issues include the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and more indirectly the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Margulis, 2013:57-59; Schanbacher, 2010:1-2).

These developments gave rise to the concept of an international food security regime, with a plethora of state and non-state actors involved, including not only international organisations but also private agribusiness, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Community-based organisations (CBOs), transnational agrarian movements (TAMs), research institutes and academia. The concept of an international food security regime emerged since the 1970s and was borne out of the realisation that greater international cooperation was needed in eliminating hunger. The creation of the FAO, IFAD and the WFP were endeavours toward this end (Margulis, 2013:55). Premised on the idea that hunger (and by extension food security) is an issue with global ramifications that cannot be addressed by any singular state or entity, involvement by global governance organisations was based on the realisation that there was a broader need for international consensus and frameworks through which both national governments and international organisations could tackle food insecurity (Margulis, 2013:58).

Margulis (2013:57-59) points out that as the concept of food security and the plethora of organisations involved expanded over time, there emerged diverging norms and standards between organisations. This led to the emergence of what he refers to as a “regime complex for food security” (Margulis, 2013:57). This regime complex is characterised by the confluence of organisations that became involved in food security since the 1970s. In addition to the FAO, IFAD and WFP – which were primarily concerned with food and agriculture – the global trade regime (under the auspices of the WTO, World Bank and IMF) and the global human rights regime (CESCR, OHCHR, and UNCHR) began to play a role in tackling global food insecurity and by setting normative standards for pursuing food security. This regime complex is essentially the product of two significant historical events, namely

the integration of food and agriculture within the auspices of the WTO and the affirmation of food as a human right.

#### **2.4.1 Trade Liberalisation in Food and Agriculture**

The WTO's involvement in and global control over food and agriculture began in earnest during the 1986-1994 Uruguay round of the then General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT, now the WTO) (Schanbacher, 2010:10). This round of trade talks had the specific aim of reaching consensus by members on trade rules relating to agricultural trade and food safety standards, which led to the creation of the formal Agreement on Agriculture (AoA) and Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) in 1995 (Schanbacher, 2010:11; Margulis, 2013:57). It was through these two agreements, argues Schambacher (2010:10), that the WTO "reaffirmed its position as the ultimate authority in global trade negotiations and policy implementation" which thereafter applied explicitly to food and agriculture, previously a policy area agreed to be unique and subject to national control.

The WTO's authority in food and agriculture is extremely consequential, as its visions of the global economy and appropriate trade policies delineate the policy terrain through which member states are able to achieve food security objectives and structure related policies. In this regard, ideological presuppositions and policy prescriptions advocated by the WTO affect global food security in the manner in which they "potentially impact [the] global production and distribution of food" (Schanbacher, 2010:10). The trade and policy rules advocated by the WTO are premised on orthodox neoliberal economic theory – a firm belief that trade liberalisation and global integration are the key elements to creating efficient markets and producing greater economic growth and prosperity for all. With regards to agriculture, the WTO affirms the neoliberal and productionist position that the most efficient way to feed the world and to generate income and job opportunities for the rural poor is to integrate rural economies into the global market. A cornerstone of WTO regulation in the AoA has been its insistence on reducing protectionist policies and barriers to trade in agricultural markets. The use of domestic supports and protectionist policies in agriculture has been opposed particularly vehemently by the WTO. Rosset (2006a:16-17) explains the position of the organisation quite succinctly when stating that its overall ambition is to

Liberate trade and thus market forces from the taxes and regulations that hinder them – and government subsidies that distort them – creating incentives for businesses everywhere to produce more to take advantage of more easily

accessible foreign markets. This is expected to generate more economic activity, jobs, and growth.

Following this theoretical grounding, WTO regulations and policy recommendations advocate for freer trade in food and agriculture with minimal state protection and assistance, with policies geared not only toward trade liberalisation but also privatisation and market deregulation in order to ensure the “unfettered flow of agricultural goods” in the most efficient and cheap way possible (Schanbacher, 2010:35). The position of the WTO is that once trade-distorting tariffs and subsidies have been removed, the best way to organise agriculture and distribute food is for larger producing countries to export food surpluses as cheaply as possible, and for developing countries to produce high value crops for which there is significant demand in international markets, thus creating jobs and increasing foreign earnings for food and other imports. Such logic is premised on economist David Ricardo’s theory of comparative advantage. The theory of comparative advantage suggests that countries should structure their economies to prioritise production in the goods that they can produce most efficiently and rely on global markets to source goods that other countries are able to produce most efficiently – in this way every country is supposedly able to benefit from freer trade (Rosset, 2006a:17; Parkin, Powell and Matthews, 2005:40). As signatories of the WTO are bound to its policy consensus, these policies have proliferated into macroeconomic policies at a domestic level, with member states structuring not only their international trade relations but their own domestic economies according to WTO prescriptions. This has had a direct impact on how WTO members have approached domestic food security policies. The norms and values entrenched within the WTO however have not been unchallenged, as normative differences between WTO members themselves, UN organisations, human rights organisations and social movements have showed.

At the level of global governance, this normative chasm has been most notable in the differences on certain issues between UN bodies and the WTO. UN bodies such as the FAO and IFAD have cautioned that the WTO’s insistence over trade liberalisation may in fact adversely affect food security in certain circumstances (Schabacher, 2010:3). Margulis (2013:61) argues that the UN’s reservations about the primacy of trade liberalisation (and hence the trade regime) stem from the recognition of “asymmetrical power relations where powerful food-exporting countries and transnational agrifood companies disproportionately shape market outcomes”. These issues are most important for weaker states within the WTO who are at the disadvantageous end of asymmetrical trade relations. Consternation over

asymmetric power relations became manifest in an acrimonious stalemate during the latest Doha round of WTO negotiations over agreements on agricultural issues and tariff reductions.

Schanbacher (2010:11) notes that a central feature of these consternations has been the ways in which “many industrialized nations have been able to circumvent WTO regulations by manipulating the language that describes different types of support or subsidies” in ways that they appear to have no price-distorting qualities at all. This was facilitated most extensively through the “Blair House” agreement between the US and EU in 1992 (Patel, 2012:105). This enabled dominant countries to continuously support their farmers regardless of WTO agreements, with farmer support reaching an average of 29% of gross farm receipts in Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries by 2003 (Jha, 2013a:218). Acknowledging the ways in which power relations can in fact distort market outcomes, both the FAO and IFAD see economic globalisation and trade liberalisation as a potential “double-edged sword” which on the one hand has the potential to benefit rural economies if they are able to successfully integrate into global economic relations in a fair and equitable manner but on the other hand can open up rural economies and weaker countries to exploitation and uneven trade relations (Schanbacher, 2010:3). What is important to realise in this regard, however, is that despite these reservations, the FAO and IFAD are nonetheless still committed to an orthodox understanding of the free market and development. Their fundamental approach to ensure global food security is through the successful harnessing of economic globalisation in ways that benefit the poor – long understood as “pro-poor” growth (Schanbacher, 2010:26). Schanbacher (2010:9) summarizes that for the FAO and IFAD,

Current trends in economic globalization are thus viewed as opportunities for achieving food security. There are still risks involved with transitioning from traditional models of rural farming and food production, but with the help of social safety nets and aid from developed countries, these transition costs can be minimized.

For Schanbacher (2010:9), the objections of the FAO and IFAD to trade principles of liberalisation and global integration only serve as a moot point, as both organisations focus “less on how neoliberal and developmental economic theory/policy has contributed to hunger and poverty than on how globalization can benefit the poor through the implementation of new policies”. Contentions in the norms governing global food security have also come from the human rights regime, in which the ideals underpinning human rights and obligations on

states and the international community have caused tensions with normative principles of free trade and liberalism.

#### **2.4.2 Food as a Human Right**

Food as a human right was first brought into the public domain when it was articulated in the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and was later given legal substance in the 1966 CESCR (Margulis, 2013:58; Fairbairn, 2010:19). The idea of the human right to food is by extension a universal one, with obligations on states for its protection and by implication is a right that supersedes trade considerations. Its founding premise is that food and agriculture cannot be understood as purely economic phenomena best organised through the principles of the free market but that they are in fact the *sine qua non* of life and economies themselves. This understanding of food, although still largely unbinding on states, has led to the emergence of new norms within the regime complex for food security, to the extent that there is growing consensus that the protection of food as a right is of great import in food security discourse because it clearly “defines the obligations of states to ensure that access to food is not diminished by other policies, particularly for the most vulnerable groups in society” (Margulis, 2013:59). Within the global regime complex for food security, these normative values have been most astutely propagated by the UNHRC, the OHCHR and the CESCR. This development has also resulted in the ratification of the right to food in the constitutions of numerous countries, including South Africa (Beauregard, 2009:4; Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996).

The impact of these emerging norms, however, should not be overstated. It does not necessarily follow that a formal right, even when given legal precedence, will be converted into an effective right for the food insecure (Chatterjee, 2004:38). Patel (2009a:668) elucidates this point by saying “rights cannot be summoned out of thin air. For rights to mean anything at all, they need a guarantor, responsible for implementing a concomitant system of duties and obligations”. This development though is still noteworthy insofar that it has created new institutional norms, most apparent in the 1996 World Food Summit. Consequently, says Margulis (2013:58), “The obligation of states to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food is now an accepted international norm”. He further explains that while agreements on the right to food are nonbinding on states, they do have the advantage of providing a framework through which states can structure national legislation and policy, as well as promoting international cooperation on food security, agriculture, development and



trade (Margulis, 2013:58-9). At the very least, the role of the human rights regime in food security has the potential to guide popular movements and the struggle of the poor and marginalised to gain access to food. In this regard, Margulis (2013:59) points out that “The linkage between food security and the right to food creates new expectations among citizens and other actors for state action to promote food security”.

## **2.5 The “New Fundamentals”**

In more recent years, authors writing about food security have continued in the same spirit inspired by Sen’s (1981) theory of entitlement, focussing on the prevalence of distributional and access constraints that prohibit many states and the international community to make proper headway in eliminating hunger. Clapp (2014a:2) argues rather astutely that economic globalisation has only complicated these obstacles rather than being a panacea for development – supposedly meant to create food cheaply, efficiently and distribute it across the world to the hungry faster than could be achieved previously. She argues this in a context whereby economic globalisation has in all too many cases enabled the rapid consolidation of global market chains by a small number of companies and the entrenchment of a global food regime that continues to favour Eurocentric industrial agriculture at the expense of traditional and time-honoured agricultural practices – a trend that indeed has had dire social and environmental consequences in previously agrarian societies (Bello and Baviera, 2010:69; Patel, 2012:21).

Jha (2013b:3-5) in this case illustrates the global extent of market concentration in both upstream and downstream agricultural markets as a consequence of economic globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation.<sup>3</sup> Patel (2012:21) likens these market relations to an hourglass, whereby a small number of dominant states, agribusinesses and large retailers have placed themselves between farmers and consumers and are now able to extract unprecedented value from these groups. This market dominance has at the same time enabled these economic actors to become extremely influential in determining the terms and conditions of food access for the world’s population.

A challenge in analysing the effects of economic globalisation on agriculture, however, is witnessed by the way in which processes of globalisation have occurred in complex and

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<sup>3</sup> Upstream markets refer to economic activities involved in creating and supplying agricultural inputs, from seeds to fertilisers, pesticides, animal feed, tools and machinery. Downstream markets refer to activities after food has been grown and harvested, from storing and processing agricultural products through to retail.

uneven ways, especially with the confluent interests of national governments, international organisations, large corporations and international finance. This complex array of influential actors and interests has shown that food security at all levels is now becoming increasingly subject to a closely interconnected web of actors, donors and interests. Clapp (2014a:2) argues that because of this, “Global economic relationships, such as trade, finance, and investment, as well as the rules that govern those relationships, set the international policy context and affect food security in complex and significant ways”. The (mal)functioning of these relationships has typically lead to an uneven global system of agricultural production and trade which explains a large part of the discrepancies in access to food both *between* and *within* countries (Clapp, 2014a:3). Indeed, this lop-sided global system of agricultural production and trade, coupled with seemingly endemic poverty, makes it increasingly difficult for individuals to gain access to food for themselves and their families. This leads Clapp (2014a:3) to the conclusion that today, “A person’s income, position in society, and the productive resources and other assets available for production and trade are now widely seen to be other important determinants of food security”.

Clapp’s (2014a) analysis of food insecurity is a rather interesting one as it poses an examination of Sen’s entitlement theory explicitly in a context of globalisation and the important effects of this phenomenon on access to food. Her analysis points to the increasing impacts that activities in areas such as the financial sector, commodity speculation, the agrofuels industry, fossil fuel driven industries, agricultural investments, bilateral and multilateral trade and food aid all have on the status of food security across the world (Clapp, 2014a:4-10). Chandrasekhar and Gosh (2012:47) support such an understanding when arguing that especially in the most recent food crisis of 2007-8, popular explanations highlighting demand and supply determinants did not suffice in explaining increasing price volatility in global food prices and unprecedented food insecurity. They substantiate this position with FAO data showing that “there was scarcely any change in global supply and utilisation over 2007-10, and that, if anything, output changes were more than sufficient to meet changes in utilisation in the period of rising prices, while supply did not greatly outstrip demand in the period of falling prices” (Chdrasekhar and Gosh, 2012:47). These observations indicate that in a modern context there are many underexplored factors influencing the global food system. These observations led to analyses of what can be considered “new fundamentals” in food security which have been discussed at various lengths by authors such as Clapp (2014a), McMahon (2013), Chandrasekhar and Gosh (2012); Pinstруп-Anderson

and Herforth (2008) Lang (2010) and Powledge (2010) to name a few. These issues have been mentioned earlier and include financial deregulation and commodity speculation, agrofuels policies, environmental degradation and climate change.

### **2.5.1 Financial Deregulation and Commodity Speculation**

Clapp (2014a:4) notes that during the time around the 2007-8 food and financial crises, speculative investments in agricultural commodities increased globally from US\$65 billion in 2006 to US\$ 126 billion in 2011. This trend finds its provenance in the rapid deregulation of futures markets in the US and EU since 2000 (Clapp, 2014a:4; Chandrasekhar and Gosh, 2012:51-3). In the US (with the biggest commodities futures market globally), this shift was facilitated by the Commodity Futures Modernization Act of 2000 which mandated the removal of regulatory controls by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC). This facilitated a large influx of financial capital and traders who used agricultural commodity futures as a hedge against inflation (McMahon, 2013:144). These policy shifts also eliminated regulation that required traders to disclose their holdings of contracts and their positions within the futures markets (Clapp, 2014a:4; McMahon, 2013:144). This behaviour was most prevalent in over-the-counter (OTC) transactions which are essentially futures contracts made privately by two parties in which the prices and terms are negotiated independently of spot or exchange markets (McMahon, 2013:141).

The lax regulatory environment during this period enabled a flurry of capital towards commodity futures contracts, enabled higher levels of nondisclosure in OTC transactions and enabled speculators to control huge numbers of contracts (Chandrasekhar and Gosh, 2012:52). These developments have been blamed for significant divergence between spot and futures prices as traders are able to inject or withdraw huge amounts of capital into futures markets without much oversight, resulting in higher price volatility and making the hedging of risk for farmers and physical traders (or “*bona fide* hedgers”) more risky (McMahon, 2013:153; Kaufman, 2012:106). Sceptics of this critique have argued that the increase in financial speculators is a mere correlation and not necessarily a cause of price volatility. They argue that at the very least, financial speculators have been able to supply agricultural markets with liquidity which can have the effect of smoothing markets (Clapp, 2014a:5). In any case, authors such as Chandrasekhar and Gosh (2012:52-3) have argued that if not the major cause of price volatility, financial speculation has exacerbated high prices by manipulating markets to profit from short-term price fluctuations.

### **2.5.2 Agrofuels Policies**

Growth in the use of agrofuels and especially its use in US and EU energy policy has had a slightly more obvious and less disputed effect on food prices in the ongoing food crisis than financial speculation. Agrofuels were initially touted as a clean and renewable energy source – renewable in the sense that coming from plants it is renewable in a manner that fossil fuels can never be – whilst producing less carbon dioxide when burned (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2010:77). Environmentalists have been steadfast in challenging these assertions, pointing out that agrofuel production has had a negative impact on the environment through processes of deforestation and arguing that they negatively affect food security either by competing directly for food or by requiring the utilisation of land for energy crops which alternatively could be used to produce food crops for people (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2010:77-8). The rather harrowing implication that such a trade-off seems to suggest is that when it is most lucrative, agriculture can better serve as a means to feed cars than people. Headey and Fan (2010:28) suggest that in a period characterised by high yet volatile oil prices, an oil price exceeding US\$ 60 a barrel makes agrofuels competitive alongside conventional oil, meaning that periods of high oil prices are likely to create higher competition over agricultural land between food or fuel production. As a result, and despite heavy criticism, agrofuels are now promoted more as an energy policy measure rather than for environmental reasons, being important for states preoccupied with energy independence and reducing oil import dependency.

EU policy relevant for agrofuels has a history as far back as 1992 with the Mac-Sharry Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reforms in order to deal with grain surpluses (Sorda, Banse and Kemfert, 2010:6983). Within the US, a heavily criticised policy development was the passing by the US Congress of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 which “mandated the use of 164 billion litres of renewable fuel by 2020, with up to 68 billion litres to come from maize” (McMahon, 2013:57). With oil prices at unprecedented highs during this time and in the years that followed, this legislation was not slow in the uptake and in 2008 a quarter of US corn production was already being used for agrofuel production (McMahon, 2013:56). The international significance of this should not be underestimated – the US is the world’s largest producer of corn and supplies a third of all internationally traded grains and as such has the biggest singular influence on global market prices (McMahon, 2013:57). Following the explosive growth in the US agrofuels industry, the price of corn on international markets exploded in a similar fashion. From 2002-2006 the average price paid

for a ton of maize in the US was US\$ 107, reaching US\$ 208 by June 2008 and a high of US\$ 332 in 2010 (McMahon, 2013:57). The reach of the agrofuels industry does not stop with grains such as corn, but has also expanded into other crops with the industry's use of palm oil, soybean, olive oil, sunflower seed, coconut, cottonseed, peanuts, grapeseed, canola, rapeseed, rice, jatropha, wheat, sugarcane, sugar beet and cassava (Kaufman, 2012:94-5; Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2009:180). On a global scale, Kaufman (2012:94) points out that in 2010, 6% of all the corn, oats, millet, milled rice, wheat, rye and sorghum grown ended up being used to power vehicles and industry rather than living beings, human or otherwise.

Although corn has been one of the more dominant crops used in agrofuels production, its use in agrofuels also has a knock-on effect for the prices of other grains. Headey and Fan (2010:28-29) as well as McMahon (2013:57) explain that in the event of rapidly increasing corn prices, the prices of other major grains will also rise as competition for acreage and substitution in feedstock increase. In the first instance, as corn becomes more lucrative, farmers tend to allocate more suitable land to growing corn in order to capture the benefits of higher prices. Consequently, farmers will reduce their acreage of other grains such as wheat, oats or soybeans for example, effectively squeezing supply of those grains. In the second instance, livestock farmers are able to use variable grains in the feedstock given to animals, so that in times of high corn prices they can opt for cheaper grains. This move induces demand-pull inflation, as this substitution leads to greater demand for alternative grains. When coupled with reduced acreage in these alternative grains the trend is exacerbated, with other grains experiencing similar market volatility in the recent food crisis. Between 2007 and 2008, for example, wheat prices increased by 137%, soy by 87% and rice by 74% (Holt-Giménez and Shattuck, 2009:184).

Consensus on the extent to which the agrofuels industry on its own has contributed to high food prices and food insecurity has been difficult to reach, with some estimates indicating agrofuels are responsible for as much as 70% of food price increases and other arguments that the effect has been negligible (Clapp, 2014a:5). To create a more nuanced understanding of such estimates, Clapp (2014a:5) cites a cross-study published by the National Academy of Sciences in the US which found the medium estimates to range between 20% and 40%, implying that although the recent food crisis may have a multiplicity of causes, the impact of the agrofuels industry on price volatility and food insecurity is indeed significant. Much of the above debate has also skirted around significant ecological and moral issues, concerned with how to manage limited resources such as land and for what purposes. Another food

security issue that has gained credence in this regard is the ecological limitations of current food systems.

### **2.5.3 Biophysical Limitations and Climate Change**

The biophysical conditions bestowed upon countries and the now widely acknowledged implications of climate change for agriculture has had very real implications for the global food system, affecting what crops can be grown in certain biomes, the attainable yields of those crops and the likelihood of shocks (such as erratic weather, disease or pests) that can threaten production. Indeed, some countries and regions have fared better than others in the lottery of nature, being blessed with large amounts of fertile land and climates accommodating of long growing seasons and higher yields (Landes, 1998:14,19; McMahon, 2013:80). Where other countries have faced greater biophysical constraints to production, technological innovations have enabled them to join the food system as major producers through the successes of the “green revolution” beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, and later with the introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and other high-yielding hybrid crop varieties (McMahon, 2013:31,63; Powledge, 2010:260).

The effect of these developments enabled a massive global expansion of agricultural productivity despite natural constraints, but as McMahon (2013:63) points out, productivity levels began to taper off from the 1990s and this was exacerbated by declining levels of agricultural investment and research. He states that consequently, “The modern agricultural revolution was slowing in some parts of the world and going into reverse in others. It is not altogether surprising that crop yields in the most advanced systems started to plateau” (McMahon, 2013:63). Viewed in a different light, neo-Malthusians may use such observations as evidence of ecological overreach amidst increasing global demand. On a related note, Powledge (2010:260) is quick to note that even Norman E. Borlaug (who pioneered the green revolution) was not naive enough to suggest the green revolution was a panacea for food security and indefinite agricultural growth. Borlaug himself acknowledged that such an agricultural breakthrough could at best only provide a temporary respite in facing the strains on global food systems, calling it a “temporary success in man’s war against hunger and deprivation” (Borlaug, in Powledge, 2010:260).

The biophysical conditions in different countries as well as diverging levels of state and private sector investment have resulted in differentiated productive capacities in different

regions and countries throughout the world. In relation to the global food system, these determinants are what have created differentiated supply. Clapp (2014a:7) argues that taken together with asymmetrical trade relations, this has resulted in differentiated access to food between and within countries and has a direct bearing on food security.

Of more recent concern are the effects that anthropogenic environmental damage and climate change are likely to have on global agriculture, food distribution and food security. These phenomena include rising and falling temperatures, erratic rainfall, more recurrent extreme weather events such as droughts and floods, increasing outbreaks of pests and disease, declining freshwater reserves, melting glaciers, rising sea levels and salinity, soil erosion and degradation, deforestation and increasing losses of biodiversity (Lang and Millstone, 2003:16-19; Powledge, 2010:261; McMahan, 2013:60-63). Agriculture flourishes or flounders in the matrix of these environmental factors. It is likely that the net effect will be rising productivity in some regions and falling productivity in others, depending on the geographical distribution of the multiple symptoms of climate change (McMahan, 2013:83). Factors such as declining biodiversity, soil degradation and water stress have more of a ubiquitous nature due to the dominance of destructive industrial practices and are likely to affect most regions.

## **2.6 Food Security and Food Sovereignty in the Fight against Hunger**

The issues affecting food security at all levels are increasingly diverse and often interrelated, from the policy prescriptions of the WTO to ecological changes on rural farms. This chapter has illustrated some of the more pertinent aspects of food security as a discourse and the significant phenomena and world events that shape it – from early thinking about hunger and famine to more nuanced analyses of the links between production, distribution, poverty and entitlements and finally to the “new fundamentals” impacting the food security of billions of people across the globe. Although by no means a comprehensive review of the literature, it has attempted to construct a truncated explanation of the political economy of food and some of the more pressing issues related to food security in the modern era.

The hegemonic position of national governments, international organisations and agribusiness should be clear enough but what has not yet been discussed are the ways that the poor and marginalised fight for inclusion within these important discussions. In this sense the chapter should function not only as a description of food security discourse but provide some

historical context to events unfolding today. These events include the increasing prevalence, activism and loquacity of social movements – connecting diverse farmers, workers, consumers, environmentalists and indigenous peoples in shared struggle. These movements might seem less influential alongside the WTO or agribusiness experts but have been persistently creating new spaces for debate and activism to initiate change in food systems and their governance. Referred to by Patel (2012:v) as “the everyday heroines and heroes”, these farmers, workers and other activists have occupied both the blunt end of predominant policies and power relations yet strive to mobilise for new social relations and food systems based on ecological sustainability and social justice. It is to the discourse of food sovereignty, borne out of these practices, which the following chapter will turn.



## Chapter 3: Feeding the World through the Alternative Praxis of Food

### Sovereignty

#### 3.1 A History of Food Sovereignty

Food Sovereignty as both a social movement and as a discourse is largely attributed to the international peasant movement La Via Campesina (henceforth LVC) which was formulated in Mons, Belgium in 1993, although it is also noted to have been used in a Mexican government program in the early 1980s (Schanbacher, 2010:53; Edelman, 2014a:959). The movement self-identifies as a conglomeration of diverse yet interconnected socio-political and environmental movements all concerned with agricultural, development, rural and urban issues. These movements have usually been unified in their advocacy against the impacts of economic and cultural globalisation on peoples and both natural and urban environs across the world. In its oft cited 2007 document the *Declaration of Nyéléni*, LVC describes its movement for food sovereignty as one pioneered by organisations of peasant and family farmers, landless peoples, rural workers, artisanal fisher-folk, indigenous peoples, pastoralists, migrants, forest communities, women, youth, consumers and other environmental and urban movements (LVC, 2007:2). The emergence of the food sovereignty movement (FSM) was in large part a response to what its members considered threats to food security emanating from market capitalism and neoliberal economic policies. More specifically these threats were seen to have particularly limiting consequences for healthy food systems, the environment and the cultural heritage of small producers, agricultural workers, indigenous peoples and consumers alike (Desmarais, 2007:46;62).

Just as was discussed regarding food security in the previous chapter, food sovereignty has also been a product of contemporary politics and characterised by a remarkable sense of fluidity and flux – to the extent that Edelman (2014a:967) comments the two concepts “have been protean concepts, frequently imprecise, always contested and in ongoing processes of semantic and political evolution”. The different voices, experiences and interests within the FSM have similarly had an effect on the way that it has been conceptualised, to the extent that Patel (2009a:663) comments it has become somewhat over defined, making it difficult to articulate what the concept essentially means. The expanding interpretations and accepted definitions (in both number and scope) are perhaps symptomatic of the sheer number of diverse groups and people involved in the FSM (with as many as 250 million members), all

with different perspectives and slightly different ambitions borne out of their own respective struggles (Cooperative and Policy Alternative Center [COPAC], 2014:33). Although the evolving definitions of food sovereignty may be of importance in understanding what exactly the concept means today, to avoid a rather unimaginative chronological account of the term's etymology, it is perhaps more important to explain its historical context and significance. Bernstein (2014:1055) stresses the importance of this when stating that "the radical project of [food sovereignty] cannot be adequately imagined, let alone feasibly pursued, while ignoring or bypassing so much of the agrarian history of the modern world". Part of this historical background needs to include the emergence of food sovereignty as a discourse and its place within discussions of food security.

The historical context of food sovereignty illustrates not only how the concept and movement have been formulated and practised, but also helps to frame it as a struggle for people the world over to reclaim power over and participation in local and global food systems. This is essential in understanding food sovereignty as a political process, borne out of collective struggle to create a more just and equal society. In this endeavour the movement has often been juxtaposed with the concept of food security, with the latter concept viewed as a productionist project largely consistent with the principles of neoliberal orthodoxy. In their use the two concepts are quite distinct, which is explained quite succinctly by Clapp (2014b), Akram-Lodhi (2013), Masioli and Nicholson (2010) as well as Winfur and Jonsén (2005). A critical perspective taken by food sovereignty activists is that food security has typically served only as a definitional concept. It has also been interpreted as an aspiration or goal which describes society free from hunger whereas food sovereignty is seen as more of a normative concept (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005:23; Clapp, 2014b:207). The analytical lense of food security has also been criticised for viewing food simply as a means of nutrition or a marketable good (hence its emphasis on availability, access and utilisation) – a somewhat narrow-minded view out of sync with many of the world's small-scale farmers and underserved communities (Masioli and Nicholson, 2010:33). In doing so, food security discourse has been criticised for being largely silent on the appropriate paths to achieve food security and more importantly for not being able to challenge the structural causes and global imbalances that have been the chief causes of hunger in the modern world.

In contrast, food sovereignty is seen as a more radical take on food security, concerned with debunking and challenging the relations of power and influence that shape global and local food systems (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:3; Fairbairn, 2010:16). More specifically, the crux of food

sovereignty advocacy centres explicitly on “the terms and conditions by which food is produced... what food is produced, who grows food, where and how that food is produced, the scale of production, as well as the environmental and health impacts of food production” (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:3). The movement takes as its starting point that any political project to achieve food security that neglects these issues can easily become a stillborn effort, making food sovereignty a prerequisite for genuine food security (LVC, 1996:1). These imperatives can be gleaned from many official food sovereignty statements since 1996. A statement jointly published by LVC and the People’s Food Sovereignty Network (a broad coalition of social movements, research institutes and NGOs) in 2001 for example, entitled the *People’s Food Sovereignty Statement*, defines food sovereignty as

The right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self-reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets; and to provide local fisheries-based communities the priority in managing the use of and the rights to aquatic resources. Food sovereignty does not negate trade... it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production. Governments must uphold the rights of all peoples to food sovereignty and security, and adopt and implement policies that promote sustainable, family-based production rather than industry-led, high-input and export-oriented production (LVC and the People’s Food Sovereignty Network in Rosset, 2006a:125-6).

This perception of food sovereignty stems from the understanding that the current global food regime is not accidental (nor naturally formed) but is formed by the influences of powerful state and non-state actors – a social construct which can be “modified by politically informed choices” (Young, 2012:71). Food sovereignty activists urge that the fight against hunger must include a critical assessment of the structures of power and control that determine the production of food, its trade and distribution. As such, the FSM is not preoccupied with the end goal of food security so much as it is with the means and normative principles used to achieve such an end. As the movement began to gain momentum, it was essential that “the power politics of the food system needed very explicitly to feature in the discussion” so that the eradication of hunger could occur in substantively more just and sustainable ways (Patel, 2009a:665). In doing this, the FSM has illustrated very clearly the hegemonic practices and relationships within the global food regime which have been destructive to both the environment and people – practices and relationships based on a myopic economic rationale resulting in environmental unsustainability, exploitation of producers and workers, unsafe

and poor quality food, the manipulation of consumer tastes and preferences and the negation of cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems (Mayet, 2011:09:30; LVC, 2007:2-3).

From an agrarian viewpoint, the most notable impacts of this hegemony can be gleaned from the far-reaching yet uneven proliferation of economic globalisation, agricultural modernisation and industrialisation more generally, epitomised in IMF and WB sponsored structural adjustment policies (SAPs) and other policies geared towards closer market integration (Bello and Baviera, 2010:63). Understanding these effects will help to clarify the very basis of the FSM's call for radical changes in agricultural and economic policies and why it has become so important for the millions of activists involved.

The power relations that the FSM is opposed to are, in a nutshell, the unchallenged primacy of neoliberal capitalism and its creation of the conditions of “de-agrarianisation” and dispossession in the Global South, swelling urban populations, declining wages, endemic poverty and the systematic undermining of domestic agriculture in the Global South (Desmarais, 2007:47; LVC, 2007:3; Halewood, 2011:120).<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, food sovereignty activists argue that the undermining of domestic agriculture in the Global South and global integration have resulted in food import dependency as well as limitations on how farmers are able to farm, the practices and inputs they are able to use and what kind of crops they are able to grow (Akram-Lodhi, 2013:2; Desmarais, 2007:62; Bernstein, 2014:1035). It is important to stress that for the FSM, these processes are not anomalies borne out of imperfect markets but are inherent features of neoliberalism which operates according to its own internal logic divorced from the interests of people, the prioritisation of their welfare or the social and ecological functions of food and agriculture. It is in this sense that food sovereignty can be understood as an alternative praxis in food, agriculture and development.

### **3.2 The Neoliberal Behemoth**

The policies used to support economic globalisation and market fundamentalism are quite numerous but there are a few of particular importance in the way that they changed farming and food landscapes across the modern world. More specifically, these policies had far reaching effects on food production, trade and how food has come to be valued in market

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<sup>4</sup> Bryceson (2000:1) describes de-agrarianisation as “a long-term process of occupational adjustment, income-earning reorientation, social identification and spatial relocation of rural dwellers away from strictly agricultural-based modes of livelihood”.

society. Edelman et al. (2014:914), Bernstein (2014:1033) and Shiva (1997:81) detail some of the more relevant aspects as follows:

- i. Trade liberalisation.
- ii. Removal of domestic support to farmers in the Global South together with export promotion and the modernisation of agricultural sectors.
- iii. Continuing state support for farmers in the Global North despite WTO regulations, resulting in imperfect competition and lop-sided trade relations.
- iv. Market concentration in agri-input and agri-food industries, resulting in greater market consolidation and power for fewer corporations in upstream and downstream markets.
- v. The “financialisation” of food caused by increasing hoarding and speculative behaviour on global spot markets and commodity futures markets, making food markets more volatile and risky.
- vi. Intellectual property rights regimes enabling the corporate takeover of genetic resources and the prevalence of biopiracy.<sup>5</sup> This is enabled most ubiquitously through the WTO’s agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
- vii. The shift to large-scale monocropping practices and new biotechnology in the form of GMOs which have come to be seen as a threat to biodiversity in agriculture and more traditional or culturally important farming practices.

The far reaching neoliberal market reforms and SAPs implemented since the 1970s had a number of implications for agricultural sectors in the Global South that started with increasing trade liberalisation and massive reductions in trade barriers and tariffs. These policies were consistent with the free market spirit of promoting global competition and efficiency in agricultural markets. Such a shift was argued to be beneficial for poorer countries by providing access to global markets for higher value export commodities, thus increasing farm incomes and foreign earnings to repay national debt and pay for imports (McMichael, 2010:168). These same trade regimes would ideally enable countries to import

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<sup>5</sup> Biopiracy is defined by Amankwah (2007:19) as “the unauthorised appropriation of plant related substances for development into commercial commodities – such as pharmaceuticals, cosmetics and pesticides”. It is also marked by a general disregard for indigenous knowledge systems and without the prior and informed consent and/or benefit sharing with local communities where such substances or knowledge systems are found.

food supplies from countries which (at face value) were able to produce food cheaply and efficiently through comparative advantage (as mentioned in chapter two) (Jarosz, 2014:171; Roberts, 2008:131-4;Beauregard, 2009:18).<sup>6</sup> In the decades that followed, this agro-export model proved to be severely devastating for many poor countries and their farmers as the types of export crops farmers were encouraged to produce were subject to boom-bust economic cycles and as farming inputs became more expensive. Additionally, a long-term decline in commodity prices ensued as more and more countries in the Global South were encouraged to grow the same export-oriented crops and compete with each other. This created a glut in global supply and made overproduction a particularly intractable problem, made worse by high levels of competition between producers and technological innovations enabling product substitution for agro-processors (McMahon, 2013:40). This is part of a morass referred to by Edelman et al. (2014:918) as the “age-old ‘scissors’ dynamic of rising costs and declining returns in agriculture” as costs of farming inputs rise and farm incomes decline. This trade dynamic was also further complicated by the underlying double standard in trade rules and practices under the WTO (discussed in chapter two) which enabled dominant countries to continue protectionist policies, giving them what is euphemistically dubbed an “acquired” comparative advantage (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005:28).

The global implications of this were such that richer exporting countries were able to dump cheap food on the global market at prices well below the cost of production, resulting in a crowding out of domestic producers in poorer countries and massive divestment in agriculture when small producers in particular could no longer compete with cheap imports (McMichael, 2010:168; Wittman, Desmarais and Wiebe, 2010:3). Following this, countries under conditions of SAPs were typically made to follow measures of fiscal austerity in reducing budget deficits which, *inter alia*, required the scaling back of state spending. This saw reduced state investment in agriculture, research, extension and other services which undermined domestic agriculture even further. Trade liberalisation and austerity had the combined effect of transforming many countries in the Global South from net exporters of agricultural produce to net importers, placing themselves at the mercy of global markets to feed their populations (Rosset, 2006b:305). In the case of Africa, for example, the continent now produces only 6,5% of all world grains, accounts for only 2,6% of all exported grain yet imports 21,5% of all grain traded on the international market (Agarwal, 2014:1250).

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<sup>6</sup> The global contention over artificially “cheap food” is quite an extensive issue, with the externalisation of social and environmental costs, low wages and substitution resulting in poorer quality food. These issues are covered quite extensively by Patel (2012:98), Roberts (2008:131-4) and Carolan (2011:140).

From the outset, the FSM opposed these policy trends on the grounds that persistent food dependency not only made countries vulnerable to market shocks but also had the danger of enabling food to be used as a political weapon (Menezes, 2001:33). This was a strategy that found open support in US food aid under both the Nixon and Ford administrations by Secretary of State for Agriculture Earl Butz (in Patel, 2012:99) who posited that “Hungry men listen only to those who have a piece of bread. Food is a tool. It is a weapon in the US negotiating kit”. Additionally, as became patently obvious during the recent 2007-8 food crisis, volatile food prices would wreak havoc on countries in the Global South as they remained dependent on imports (for food, farming inputs and fuel) with domestic agriculture unable to step in and ease food price volatility due to decades of systematic neglect.

The weakening of domestic agriculture in the Global South also had severe economic and social implications that extended beyond agriculture itself. As farmers in the Global South became non-competitive and as their national governments began to follow policies of liberalisation, privatisation and industrialisation, significant numbers of smallholder and family farmers were forced to give up farming and seek other livelihood opportunities (mostly available in burgeoning urban areas driven by new industrial development) (McMichael, 2010:172). This urban migration led to systemic de-agrarianisation of rural areas which resulted in a swelling of urban slums, pressure on already stretched public services, declining urban wages and the consolidation of rural farmland into privately held large-scale farms (Schanbacher, 2010:56; LVC, 2007:3). Bne Saad (2013:92) illustrates that the continuance of such trends in Africa will see less than 50% of the continent’s population living in rural areas by 2030, which also indicates the interconnectedness of both rural and urban spaces in food security challenges.

The FSM has attributed its struggle to the ways in which these global developments made cultural traditions of small-scale food production untenable, forced large swathes of the poor into deeper conditions of deprivation and hunger, undermined domestic agriculture across the Global South and fundamentally altered rural and urban economies. These developments also fundamentally changed the social fabric of households and communities as migration and changing livelihoods led to changes in social relations, institutions, cultures and traditions (Jarosz, 2014:173). In essence, many of the endemic issues relating to poverty and hunger today are attributable to processes in which the poor either:

- i. Lost their access to land, natural, genetic and financial resources and the means of food production (radically changing livelihood strategies).
- ii. Lost secure forms of employment, income and the real value of their income.
- iii. Experienced a whittling-down of their social rights of citizenship and social safety nets.
- iv. Experienced a combination of these three factors.

The response of the FSM is thus to call for the reversal of these detrimental processes so that people are able to reclaim access to resources and means of production, earn a liveable wage and reclaim sovereignty over local food systems that are better able to respond to market and ecological shocks as well as the social needs of communities. These ambitions of food sovereignty and its resonance with a host of divergent movements and groups of people are clearly evident in LVC's 2007 *Declaration of Nyéléni* which explained food sovereignty with further clarity as

The right of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations... It offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral, and fisheries systems determined by local producers. Food sovereignty prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal-fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Food sovereignty promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition. It ensures that the rights to use and manage our lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those who produce food. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations (LVC, 2007:2).

This statement explains quite broadly the grand strategy of the FSM – to radically alter food systems and take control in food and agriculture away from large consolidated corporations and unsustainable large-scale industrial production towards production and trade regimes that are more proficient in valuing food, the environment and in compensating people fairly, as well as towards governance systems that give people at all levels of food production, processing, distribution, retail and consumption a voice in food systems and how they are managed.



Akram-Lodhi (2013:2) points out that consequently, food sovereignty advocacy has been known not simply by its opposition to neoliberal globalisation and the influence of the WTO in agriculture but through the way it proffers a viable alternative to the corporate-led and industrial world food system. Although it is based at its broadest level as a movement for peoples and countries to take control of and define their own agricultural and food policies in autonomous ways, food sovereignty incorporates a number of shared and interrelated components that would create a world food system devoid of the hegemony of neoliberal market fundamentalism and its prior failings. Understanding each of these components in turn is important for understanding food sovereignty as an alternative praxis rather than being misconstrued merely as the antithesis of capitalist and industrial agriculture. Windfuhr and Jonsén (2005:13) elucidate the more recurrent themes in food sovereignty discourse such the right to food, the prioritisation of local food systems, the right to access productive resources and knowledge for small producers, the rights of consumers, the protection of domestic agriculture, a stance against dumping, gender equality, popular participation and agroecological production. Despite significant levels of plurality within food sovereignty depending on context, three significant policy areas relevant for food sovereignty in this thesis have included access to productive resources, agroecological production and local markets and trade regimes (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005:14).

### **3.3 Food Sovereignty and the Future of Agriculture**

Binding all of the thematic issues illustrated by Windfuhr and Jonsén (2005:14), what is perhaps the most important principle in food sovereignty is for people and countries to reinstate and support the social function and cultural meanings attached to food and agriculture (Edelman et al., 2014:925). The movement is vehemently opposed to what has been considered the commodification of food and life forms, treating food and the natural capital base of agriculture as commodities traded and valued like any other – a process seen as an anathema of the true use-value of food and agriculture (Akram-Lodhi,2013:2). This was stated unequivocally by delegates of the 2001 World Forum on Food Sovereignty (WFFS) (2001:2) who asserted “We affirm that food is not just another merchandise and that the food system cannot be viewed solely according to market logic”. The FSM advocates instead for food systems supporting the rights of individuals to adequate, sustainable, healthy and culturally significant food rather than excluding those who lack the means to access commodified food markets – aptly described as “food-based social exclusion” (COPAC,

2014:34; Akram-Lodhi, 2013:2). Desmarais (2007:41) suggests that the shift in the valuation of food to a simple commodity has been deeply imbedded within processes of economic and cultural globalisation. She laments that at a global level,

a significant shift occurred in how we “value” food... In 1974 food was considered a basic human right, and governments were committed to eradicating hunger within a decade; in 1996 the WFS [World Food Summit] opted to “reduce” hunger by half, and... the United States... disagreed with the concept of food as a right... the U.S. position considered the right to food as a “goal” or “aspiration” and it impeded efforts to improve international obligations in this area.

In the face of the ongoing global food crisis, the FSM has been a vanguard the world over for alternative agricultural models aimed at reinstating the social and cultural importance of food, growing food more sustainably, addressing climate change and doing so in ways dedicated to social justice and popular sovereignty (Patel, 2012:6-7). In this struggle, the movement has long advocated for localised small-scale food systems with agroecology at the foundation of agricultural production. Numerous commentators including Rosset (1999), Holt-Giménez and Patel (2009), Schanbacher (2010) and Akram-Lodhi (2013) have attested to the substantive impacts such farming models could have on global food production and food security. Based on principles of food sovereignty, these farming models are argued to be appropriate for addressing the interlinked challenges of global hunger and population growth; environmental degradation and climate change; inequality, unemployment and poverty.

### **3.3.1 Agroecology as a Science and Food Sovereignty Strategy**

The practice and science of agroecology has found itself at the heart of grassroots struggles to challenge the corporate-controlled and industrially-driven agriculture that has become the *modus operandi* of national agricultural policies. Agroecology is identifiable through a host of agricultural practices that rely on the symbiotic relationship between local ecologies and farms. Although it is a science based on plurality (allowing for a host of different practices according to local conditions, ecosystems and the choice of farmers), there are a number of common characteristics that mark agroecology as a form of agriculture radically different from modern large-scale commercial agriculture. It is in fact an old agricultural paradigm which has been developed and adapted by farmers for millennia (Holt-Giménez and Altieri, 2013:92). Its very foundations are agricultural practices and management that are knowledge and labour (rather than capital and technology) intensive and rely on optimal ecosystem functioning for both prosperous food systems and environmental preservation. At its most

basic level, agroecology relies on small micro-managed farms with minimal reliance on external inputs. Altieri (2002:8) defines agroecology as

the holistic study of agroecosystems, including all environmental and human elements. It focuses on the form, dynamics and functions of their interrelationships and the processes in which they are involved... Implicit... is the idea that by understanding these ecological relationships and processes, agroecosystems can be manipulated to improve production and produce more sustainably, with fewer negative environmental or social impacts and few external inputs.

Under agroecology, the productivity of farms is mostly dependent on both the resources available in the immediate environment and the cooperation between farmers to share knowledge, seeds, technology and practices (Holt-Giménez and Altieri, 2013:92). At a technical level, agroecology encompasses a wide range of agricultural models from organic agriculture to “sustainable agriculture, ecological agriculture, ecofarming... low-external-input agriculture... permaculture, and biodynamic agriculture” (Holt-Giménez and Patel, 2009:102). These are all founded on quite a number of common practices which share a common ethos in the belief that small-scale farm models, minimum use of synthetic inputs, preservation of agrobiodiversity, plurality and cooperation between producers are all essential components for farming systems that enable more food to be produced more sustainably (Akram-Lodi, 2013:11; Schanbacher, 2010:58).

Practices within agroecology include recycling organic nutrients to enhance soil fertility and reduce artificial fertiliser use; enhancing micro-biotic soil activity to increase crop productivity and soil quality; and using diverse plant species, intercropping methods and integrated pest management to reduce synthetic pesticide and herbicide use. The combined effect of such methods is to create farming systems that are naturally more resilient, more productive, preserve natural resources, reduce risk and improve biodiversity (Altieri and Toledo, 2011:588). Overall, the focus of cultivation is on increasing the productivity of all farm components and the efficient use of limited resources rather than focusing on yields of single species or a limited range of technologies and practices – to do this requires farmers to constantly adapt to different ecological requirements, technologies and different farming knowledge. As a response to ongoing and interrelated food, environmental and energy crises, agroecology has been promoted on the grounds that it provides a feasible as well as sustainable alternative more attuned to the socio-political ambitions of the FSM. These assertions are based on the understanding that managed within a small-scale local food system, agroecological farms can become more productive than conventional farming; are

more environmentally sustainable and resilient to climate change; conserve and strengthen biodiversity; are economically viable and can provide more jobs, higher incomes for farmers and better economic multiplier effects for local economies (Patel, 2012:313; Rosset, 2006b:308).

At the forefront of the debate involving alternative agricultural models is the long held belief that although more environmentally sustainable, small-scale agroecological farming remains limited by lower yields and an inability to scale-up production. Such limitations, it is argued, rule out agroecology as a viable alternative to feed the global population (Schanbacher, 2010:56). However, there now exists a plethora of scientific evidence to the contrary, as pointed out by numerous commentators such as Badgley et al. (2007), Rosset (1999), Holt-Giménez and Patel (2009) and Altieri (2002). For the sake of brevity, however, a meta-analysis conducted by Badgley et al. (2007) of 91 scientific studies conducted in both the Global North and Global South proves illuminating. The study concluded that a global shift towards organic farming (just one production strategy under the umbrella of agroecology) could increase global agricultural output by as much as 57% (Badgley et al., 2007:92). While the study does note regional differences between the Global North and Global South (with more potential in the Global South), their conclusions are still unequivocally optimistic for the ability of organic farming to feed the world population. The study suggests as an optimistic estimate that organic farming systems could produce as many as 4 381 calories of energy per capita per day at a global level, a figure that Holt-Gimenez and Patel (2009:107) argue could be sufficient to feed a global population of between ten and eleven billion people by the year 2100 and would also be more nutritionally diverse due to the use of polycultures.

Considering the above argument proffered for agroecological farming, it is still entirely feasible (and indeed occurs) that aspects of agroecology can be incorporated into a large-scale corporate-governed model of agriculture. Altieri (2000:89) warns that

Without actively battling corporate agriculture and without ensuring the social dimensions of alternative agriculture... and focussing on technical issues alone, alternative agriculture is in danger of ending up a mere arm of industrial agriculture for a “niche market”.

This is a criticism often invoked with the incorporation of agroecology (and also fair trade certification) within large agribusiness operations, seen simply as window-dressing underlying structural problems within industrial food systems; placating rather than actually addressing concerns of activists and consumers (Lyons et al., 2004:106; Friedmann,

2005:227-8). Such a scenario would be insufficient for ensuring food security within a food sovereignty framework and certainly not for ensuring popular participation and social justice in food systems. The science of agroecology is therefore only espoused by the FSM insofar as it is not depoliticised and remains an integral part of greater agrarian transformation ensuring the rights of marginalised producers, workers, consumers and indigenous people.

An integral part of agroecological farming within food sovereignty has been the position of family, smallholder and peasant farmers at the forefront of food sovereignty in practice. Their ability to feed large numbers of people whilst being custodians of the natural world is an important feature of food sovereignty advocacy. Despite the vast amounts of farmland dedicated to agro-export models (including for livestock and agrofuels), the bulk of staple crops required for human consumption is produced on small-scale farms measuring around two hectares by some 450 million farmers across the world (Holt-Giménez and Patel, 2009:112). This reality flies in the face of arguments presented by large corporations and multilateral institutions that large-scale industrial operations and technologies are feeding the world efficiently. Bello (2009:148-9) notes this flawed logic by reminding us that

despite the claims of its representatives that corporate agriculture is best at feeding the world, the creation of global production chains and global supermarkets, driven by the search for monopoly profits, has been accompanied by greater hunger, worse food, and greater agriculture-related environmental destabilisation all around than at any other time in history.

Holt-Giménez and Patel (2009:112) entreat that since small-scale farmers continue to feed most of the world's poor despite their declining numbers, even small increases in their productivity will have a far more pronounced effect on food security than further implementation of large-scale farming operations using high-input, high-yield hybrid or GMO crops. Rather, food sovereignty activists envision investment in and support of small-scale farming having greater potential to improve food security and to bolster national as well as popular sovereignty by making people less dependent on major producing regions, international markets and agro-food corporations for both upstream and downstream food operations.

Additionally, small-scale and localised agroecological farms are more resource efficient than large-scale industrial operations, being much better at converting farming inputs into agricultural outputs. The former make less use of external farming inputs, especially fossil fuels and synthetic fertilisers, pesticides and herbicides. They also favour local supply chains and markets, reducing the resources required for food transportation, storage and distribution

(Holt-Giménez and Patel, 2009:113). Polycultures used in agroecology also make more efficient use of water and land; reduce incidence of weeds and disease; provide a diverse range of nutritious foods; and provide non-food by-products and ecological services such as mulch, organic fertilisers, clean water, healthy soils and diverse ecosystems (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005:32). Food sovereignty activists insist that such farming models also provide more economic benefits for farmers and economic multipliers for rural economies as small-scale farmers typically sell their produce to local consumers and spend much of their income on labour, goods and services from local workers, artisans and businesses as opposed to highly centralised value chains in big agribusiness and retail (Rosset, 2006b:308). On the other hand, farms vertically integrated into large agribusiness are more likely to channel revenue to corporate headquarters elsewhere and individual large-scale farmers are more likely to spend additional income on capital-intensive technology and expensive inputs from large agribusiness (Beauregard, 2009:17; Rosset, 2011:90).

Small-scale farming also has high potential for increasing the incomes of farmers. Holt-Giménez and Patel (2009:116) point out that at least in the United States, farms averaging about two hectares in size can create about US\$ 2 902 per hectare annually in profit. In comparison, large-scale farms with an average size of 15 581 hectares tend to generate an annual net profit of only US\$ 52 per hectare. Due to their scale, however, large-scale farms will tend to generate higher incomes from much larger cultivated areas but what these figures indicate is that small-scale farms are a lot more efficient in using resources and generating more income from a greater range of foods using available land. The high productivity of small agroecological farms *vis-a-vis* their large-scale commercial counterparts correlates with the hypothesis of the “inverse relationship between farm size and output” whereby smaller farms are much more efficient in generating output for the total land area, which Rosset (2011:90) argues can make them between two and ten times more productive than large-scale commercial farms.

### **3.3.2 Access to the Foundations of Life**

The common experiences of small-scale and resource-poor producers across the world have seen many dispossessed or their livelihoods diminished in the face of intense global competition, disproportionate power relations and development models largely antagonistic to their needs. Consequently, the rallying cry for food sovereignty to protect the rights of “those who produce food” is seen as a corollary to the right to food itself and includes the

protection of access rights to productive resources (LVC, 2007:2; Rosset, 2006b:305). These productive resources include all the resources and inputs required in converting farming inputs into consumable and marketable agricultural outputs – including arable land; grazing land; natural resources; water; seeds and genetic resources; forests; fisheries; machinery and inputs; storage, transport and irrigation infrastructure; credit; extension services and public-sector support; as well as information, skills and knowledge (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005:14; Agarwal, 2014:1252-3; Akram-Lodhi, 2015:565; Edelman et al., 2014:917). This struggle for producer rights has also been identifiable through advocacy around more specific issues and similar calls for “land sovereignty” and “seed sovereignty” for example (Kloppenborg, 2014:1234; Borras, Franco and Suárez, 2015:610).

The understanding within these social demands is that the ability of marginalised and resource-poor producers to pursue their livelihoods and engage in agriculture is contingent on their ability to access and use productive resources in a secure manner, an ability that for most has been steadily eroded in the face of economic globalisation, limiting top-down models of agrarian development and the dominance of transnational corporations (TNCs) in upstream and downstream markets. The argument presented most broadly by organisations such as LVC is that there are millions of small-scale producers willing to take up the contemporary challenges facing global agriculture – issues such as growing populations, climate change and environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, poverty, joblessness and landlessness. The problem facing most smallholder producers (whether part of the FSM or not) is that they are often significantly disadvantaged at every level of agricultural production.

These disadvantages begin with the physical remoteness of smallholders from input and retail markets which inhibit their ability to grow and sell food. A lack of government support in agricultural research also has limitations for smallholders. Research tends to be more suited to large-scale farming while international trade agreements continue to limit the ability of governments to increase their commitment in this area (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005:28). Furthermore, smallholders typically have limited access to transport and storage infrastructure, meaning that they have to sell their produce at harvest time when prices are low. At the same time, food traders with better access to transport and storage infrastructure are able to capture most of the value of the food bought from smallholders as they are able to wait until prices change (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005:28). Market concentration in the input, trading, processing and retail sectors is further debilitating for smallholders as imperfect

competition and monopoly tendency within these sectors forces smallholders to become price takers in the markets that they buy from (upstream) and sell to (downstream) (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005:28).

Once the relegation of smallholder producers to the periphery of policymaking, legislation and trade becomes clearer, it is easier to see how they have occupied a residual role in national food security objectives. While smallholder producers have typically been associated with roles of marginal or subsistence production, this status has essentially been a symptom of the significant limitations and barriers to entry that bar many smallholders from markets and from contributing substantially to food output. Agarwal (2014:1052) also notes that these difficulties pits smallholders, even when they are able to gain access to markets, against dominant farmers in markets characterised by consolidated power and imperfect competition. Such imperfect competition has typically limited the viability of farming for many smallholders, a trend astutely observed by Rosset (2006b:303) when stating

Agricultural commodity chains – on both the input (i.e., seeds) and output (i.e., grain trading) sides – have become increasingly concentrated... which, by virtue of their near-monopoly status, are increasingly setting costs and prices unfavourable to farmers, putting all, especially the poorest, in an untenable cost-price squeeze, thus further encouraging the abandonment of agriculture.

Part of the food sovereignty agenda in this regard is for peoples to reclaim power in policymaking decisions in order that national and global policies affecting food and agriculture can better support and reflect the divergent needs of different producers, especially for the world's most marginalised and resource-poor farmers who paradoxically make up a large proportion of the world's hungry people (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005:25).

Owing to these problems and inequities, it is not surprising that one of the strongest themes in food sovereignty advocacy has been transformative agrarian reform to not only reverse past and ongoing processes of dispossession and enclosure but also to allow smallholders the policy space and opportunities to engage in agriculture as a viable livelihood avenue and to provide employment and enable more people to be custodians of their natural environments. Encompassing all manner of small producers and rural people involved in agriculture, LVC (2007:2) envisions a future where

There is genuine and integral agrarian reform that guarantees full rights to land, defends and recovers the territories of indigenous peoples, ensures fishing communities' access and control over their fishing areas and eco-systems, honours access and control over pastoral lands and migratory routes, assures



decent jobs with fair remuneration and labour rights for all, and a future for young people in the countryside.

The changes required to realise these food sovereignty objectives are quite extensive and require challenging all manner of entrenched power, from local landed elites to corporations, the state and even NGOs, intelligentsia, traditional authorities and household or family structures (Cousins, 2007:235). Regardless of the enormity of these challenges, they are seen as imperative to a broader transformational agenda of dispersing power in decision-making on the basis of equity and representation so that the interests of all those affected by food policies are reflected within the decision-making process itself. This is a vital component of the FSM's agenda for transforming social relations, calling for "new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social classes and generations" (LVC, 2007:02). Transforming gender relations is an urgent topic both within and outside of the FSM. As Agarwal (2014:1254) notes, the challenges facing smallholder farmers in the Global South are particularly acute for women farmers given their doubly marginalised positions within agricultural markets and social institutions. These gender dynamics are a cornerstone of the FSM's advocacy for "pro-poor, gender-responsive redistributive agrarian reform" (Akram-Lodhi, 2015:568). The centrality of gender issues within the FSM is also reflected in the 2007 LVC declaration in Mali being named after Nyéléni, a Malian peasant woman celebrated for feeding and nurturing her people in spite of discriminatory practices against women farmers (LVC, 2007:4). The issue of gender within the FSM is one which finds resonance with gender struggles in areas outside of agriculture too, considering the continuance of patriarchal norms, violence against women and either statutory or *de facto* discrimination that inhibits or neglects the significant contribution of women towards food security, social reproduction and the welfare of the world's population.

In the sphere of agriculture, this is no more evident than in the non-commodified labour and production by women, the continuing feminisation of agriculture in much of the world and the disproportionate responsibilities for household food security borne by women. Women often experience poor access to food due to limited opportunities for employment and education, unequal pay, poorer access to productive resources as well as discriminatory cultural practices or social norms that require women to prioritise the food needs of other household members before their own (Oxfam, 2014:3). Women are also disproportionately burdened by the incidence of sickness, old age and disability within the household which require them to commit their labour time and care to multiple household needs in addition to

food provision (Oxfam, 2014:3). In terms of the unpaid labour and production contributed by women, Agarwal (2014:1252) explains that in sub-Saharan Africa, India and China, women contribute between 60% and 70% of the labour needs required to put a meal on the table. Moreover, because men have been more likely to move to non-farm employment than women, women compose an increasing proportion of the agricultural workforce – 50% in Africa, 43% in Asia, and 78% in India more specifically (Agarwal, 2014:1252; Patel, 2009b:167).

Their increasing number in the agricultural workforce and dependence on agriculture-based livelihoods makes the rights of women extremely important for food sovereignty. Agarwal (2014:1252-4) acknowledges that the constraints facing smallholder farmers alluded to earlier affect farmers of both genders but in significantly unequal ways, posing a particular morass for the attainment of food security, gender parity and addressing the trap of “low productivity cycles” characteristic of many smallholder producers. She argues that women farmers typically own little land in their own right and have limited control over the land that they do have access to, with much of their contribution to agriculture existing as “unpaid labour on family farms owned by male relatives, or as labourers on the fields of others, or under insecure tenure arrangements on land obtained through male family members or markets” (Agarwal, 2014:1254). She notes further that “even when women have access to land, their control... to lease, mortgage, or sell it, or to use it as collateral tends to be more restricted than men’s” (Agarwal, 2014:1254). In addition to their tenuous access rights to the land that they work, women face gendered constraints in their ability to access other fundamentals of farming, such as producer cooperatives which are typically dominated by men, access to technical support and extension services, credit, agricultural tools, procurement of labour and profitable markets for their produce (Agarwal, 2014:1252-4; Jacobs, 2015:180).

Access to and control over seeds and genetic resources is also at the crux of many gender struggles in agriculture. With a significant proportion of the world’s smallholders being women, they are largely responsible for many production decisions such as what crops and varieties to plant at what time and under what conditions (Eastern and Ronald, 2000:3). These responsibilities also place women at the forefront of both food security and climate change simultaneously, needing to make decisions on the most beneficial and resilient crops to plant in changing climates. Such responsibilities are always held independently of the resources and income available to the household, meaning that ensuring household food security often falls squarely on the shoulders of women who “Traditionally... have been responsible for half

of the world's food production, and remain the primary producers of the world's staple crops... which provide upwards of 90 percent of the rural poor's food intake" (Sethi, 2006:89). It is for these reasons that diminishing agrobiodiversity is such a significant issue for food sovereignty and women activists in particular.

The global decline in agrobiodiversity is largely attributable to the conventional industrial model of farming which has extended economic notions of specialisation and standardisation to growing food, promoting only a limited number of high-yield (usually genetically modified [GM] or green revolution) crop varieties in the name of economic "efficiency" (Wittman, 2010:92). Schanbacher (2010:59) shows how due to corporate control, consolidation and the promotion of single species in seed markets, rice varieties in India have been reduced historically from some 30 000 to between 30 and 50 today, while in China 10 000 varieties of wheat have been whittled down to about 1000. Sage (2014:196) similarly shows how only 150 to 200 plant species are commercially cultivated across the world, with 90% of the world's caloric intake dependent on just 30 crops.

The food security and climate change implications of this are dire, as a smaller genetic pool and cultivated species means that thousands of varieties developed and adapted over hundreds if not thousands of years for specific traits or environmental conditions have been and continue to be lost. This has the overall effect of limiting the options available to farmers in mitigating the many symptoms of climate change (Eastern and Ronald, 2000:2). In addition to their resilience and adaptation, locally adapted seeds are also able to avoid many of the pitfalls of their industrial counterparts. These include the high throughput of industrial chemicals, soil degradation, pesticide and herbicide resistance and "terminator" technology (Wittman, 2010:93,100).<sup>7</sup> Ultimately most farmers (although disproportionately women farmers) are forced to make decisions important for both food security and climate change in spite of these growing limitations.

### **3.3.3 Localised Trade Alternatives**

In response to how global trade regimes have been fundamentally inequitable for producers and consumers, the FSM has proposed fundamental changes to the nature of agricultural trade and the places in which it takes place. In this endeavour the movement has advanced

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<sup>7</sup> "Terminator" technology is used to describe the engineering of seeds that destroys a plant's ability to produce life-giving seed, thus limiting the ability of farmers to use seeds for the next crop cycle. This typically keeps farmers dependent on seed markets for inputs, often through contractual agreements forbidding the saving of seed (Wittman, 2010:100).

localised agricultural systems more attuned to the needs of local communities and as a panacea for greater and more genuine food security. The effects of international trade regimes on smallholder producers and workers across the world have already been discussed earlier, originating from colonial and neo-colonial extractive relations which have typically been “predicated on and/or generative of severe land and social inequalities” (Edelman et al., 2014:915; Burnett and Murphy, 2014:1070). That being said, the FSM also understands the inherent possibilities for international trade to be used positively in livelihood strategies and in food security. Its advocates and smallholders, however, have realised through experience and struggle that under the predominant institutionalised trade policies, international trade has been easily used as a mechanism for “accumulation by dispossession” – described by Harvey (2010:48) as “legally sanctioned ways to assemble money-power through dispossession and destruction of pre-capitalist forms of social provision”.

Considering these two positions, it is easy to come to the conclusion that the FSM is irresolute in its stance on international trade, needing to compromise on its core principles of localisation and agroecology if it cannot provide a feasible programme to radically change market relations. The stance of the movement in fact is rather more complex and its misgivings about international trade lie more with the structures and policies which outline the macro-level economic environments in which agricultural goods may be traded. With liberalisation and privatisation at their core, these institutionalised policies have been disproportionately favourable to dominant countries and TNCs, hence food sovereignty’s call for the “WTO out of Agriculture” (Burnett and Murphy, 2014:1069; LVC in Rosset, 2006a:106). As far as structural issues are concerned, Windfuhr and Jonsén (2005:32) note that the

food sovereignty framework is a counter proposal to the neo-liberal macroeconomic policy framework. It is not directed at trade *per se*, but is based on the reality that current international trade practices and trade rules are not working in favour of smallholder farmers.

Considering this, the FSM’s scepticism over international trade and its leaning towards local, decentralised and more democratic visions for agricultural markets is well founded, but as Burnett and Murphy (2014:1068) mention, while the FSM is clear on the types of trade that it rejects, its ambivalence remains in deciding how a fundamentally “fairer” trade system would be implemented, the kinds of relationships, goods and trade distances acceptable within it and very importantly the institutional arrangements required to regulate such a system. What needs to be considered, however, is that despite the global hegemony of international

institutions, TNCs and dominant governments, trade relations and markets can in fact operate very unevenly and in very different ways. Du Toit (2009:7) explains this complexity when stating that

Markets are not abstractions, but always exist in locally concrete and institutionally specific ways; and therefore the nature of integration, inclusion, incorporation and participation in commercial markets always takes place in differentiated and locally specific ways.

Despite the systematic influence of global governance organisations such as the WTO, smallholders and peasants still engage with markets in multiple ways. Alonso-Fradejas et al. (2015:440) also explain that

the peasantry across the South-North hemispheric divide engage differently with the market and corresponding regulatory institutions. Thus, the notion of socially differentiated producers is a key analytical lense that remains relevant in the study of [food sovereignty]... This would include class and other social attributes and identities, such as race and ethnicity, as well as gender.

Owing to the immense membership of the FSM; multiple interests in international agricultural trade; and increasingly complex issues in food, agriculture and climate change, it is likely that the FSM does not have a definitive stance on international trade just yet (Burnett and Murphy, 2014:1069). This is understandable, but as the movement's relevance and momentum have increased, it is important that the movement articulates its position regarding international trade more clearly going forward.

In terms of what a fairer trade system would look like, the FSM has been fairly consistent in asserting its general outlook on trade issues, maintaining that it “promotes transparent trade that guarantees just income to all peoples and the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition” (LVC, 2007:2). A more nuanced stance can be seen in the *Peoples' Food Sovereignty Statement* (in Rosset, 2006a:125-6) which asserted that food sovereignty “does not negate trade, but rather, it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production”. According to LVC (2010), the kinds of conditions in which international trade in agriculture would be consistent with food sovereignty principles would be in instances where domestic production is unable to meet domestic food security needs or if domestic production prioritises production for local populations, leaving only an appropriate surplus traded through exports. As Burnett and Murphy (2014:1068) elucidate, such an international trade regime would be one in which countries could still command adequate sovereignty to craft their own domestic policies and strategies for food security, including supporting smallholder

producers, quotas, supply management mechanisms (such as marketing boards) and other commodity agreements. The essence of such a vision is essentially one that dismisses the primacy of free market fundamentalism in favour of “trade and investment that serve the collective aspirations of society” (Edelman, 2014a:965). That being said, Edelman et al. (2014:915) raise questions about where the divergent interests of millions of smallholders engaged in export industries would fit into this model and exactly how the shift from producing commodities for export to producing food crops for local markets would be made.

This is an important issue which should not be underexplored in any food sovereignty advocacy. Asymmetrical power relations in global commodity chains are rightly criticised, but the reconfiguration of smallholders away from international competition towards domestic food markets is also likely to expose them to declining incomes so long as domestic agriculture is undermined by chicanery in free trade agreements, dumping and inadequate investment. In total, smallholders exporting agricultural commodities continue to be at the blunt end of asymmetrical power relations, meaning their livelihoods are consistently vicarious in export markets whilst limited opportunities in domestic markets keep them locked in to these power relations. This is the essence of what it means not to be food sovereign as food producers and explains a great deal why the FSM seeks to transform global trade in a radical way.

Asymmetrical power relations and weak domestic alternatives exacerbate the uncertainty that smallholders (both within and outside the FSM) have to face. If the movement is to propose viable alternative markets to smallholders it needs to be more specific about the ways in which market reform is likely to happen, what this will entail for their livelihoods and the risks involved. As Burnett and Murphy (2014:1071) argue, despite the systemic exploitation involved in international commodity trade, the livelihoods supported by these relations are far too important to gloss over. It seems that the biggest challenge facing the FSM regarding international trade is that the movement needs to provide a clearer agenda for smallholders on exactly how alternative market relations can be achieved, policy proposals involved and how it will affect their livelihoods. Vaguely insisting that fairer trade will materialise as a matter of course through food sovereignty advocacy and by asserting food sovereignty’s principles does very little to convince smallholders to cast coffee farming aside and cultivate food crops for domestic markets instead – nor will it increase their bargaining positions in global commodity chains that they are locked into. These issues reflect many of the practical challenges currently facing food sovereignty, reflective of the need to “advance beyond

sloganeering and formulaic positions to grapple with the real nitty-gritty policy specifics of what a food sovereign society and political practice might look like” (Edelman, 2014b: 182-3).

At a domestic level, the kind of market structures promoted by the FSM lean towards localised, decentralised trading networks based on agroecological small-scale farming. The benefits of these kinds of farming and trading networks have been detailed earlier but their main characteristics are worth emphasising due to their juxtaposition to typical export-centred trade systems. Localised trade regimes reduce the dependence of local populations on far-flung and centralised value chains that require large throughput of resources as well long-distance trade and its associated transport, storage and distribution infrastructure requirements. Within a localised trade system, shorter distances as well as decentralised and more direct procurement strategies reduce the resources and infrastructure needed to get produce to the marketplace (Holt-Giménez and Patel, 2009:113). Such systems are also typically more intimately connected to local economies and are less dependent on big agribusiness and big retail interests. This creates greater potential to increase the autonomy of farmers, their incomes and their bargaining power whilst creating closer proximity (both spatially and institutionally) between producers, local retailers and consumers. As pointed out by Rosset (2006b:308), localised trading systems also create more forward and backward linkages in local economies, thus providing more economic multipliers, creating more employment and supporting local businesses. All of these factors, when taken together, mean that localised food systems have the potential to prioritise “trade and investment that serve the collective aspirations of society” as production and trade can be geared toward more locally sensitive and culturally significant food, employment and market needs (Edelman, 2014b:965).

### **3.4 Producers and Livelihoods within the Trajectory of Capitalism**

A clear component of food sovereignty discourse and advocacy is the central position of smallholder and peasant farmers within a new transformative agrarian movement. Within the uneven proliferation of economic and cultural globalisation across the world, these groups of producers have had to adapt their livelihoods in different ways in very different contexts. Because of this, smallholders and peasants can no longer be seen as consistent typologies but have adapted differently within the trajectory of capitalism in different regions and countries. A discussion of their composition and place in market society is important from a food

sovereignty perspective because it illustrates not only the possibilities for them to initiate greater agrarian transformation but also the challenges they might face in this regard.

This central position of the global peasantry and smallholders within the FSM stems from their dual positions in bearing the brunt of destructive practices in the current food regime and embodying many of the practices and principles seen as the solutions to current ecological and social crises in food and agriculture (Patel, 2009b:163). This position can be gleaned from representations of smallholders and peasants which describe their:

- Sustainable farming practices and “frugal” nature which allow them to be custodians of their natural environments (McMichael, 2010:176).
- Their preservation of indigenous knowledge and technologies which are more socially and ecologically sensitive, expressing “an understanding of our relationship to the natural world that is more... sustainable than those of western European heritage” (Altieri, 2010:125).
- A denunciation of limiting narratives of modernity in favour of their own context-specific practices based on an “alternative modernity”. This involves the incorporation of both traditional and new knowledge (where deemed appropriate) in order to overcome the challenges facing food and agriculture (McMichael, 2008:51; Desmarais, 2007:38).
- Their valuation of cooperation, autonomy and diversity in a global context of crisis capitalism marked by dependency, extreme competition, specialisation and exclusion (Bello and Baviera, 2010:74).

The idea of an “alternative modernity” is an important facet of food sovereignty advocacy rather than a misconstrued interpretation of the FSM as a movement longing for a bygone traditional era based on the “quaint but inefficient anachronism” embodied with the local, smallholder-driven model of agrarian development (Rosset, 2006b:308). It is instead an essentially modern praxis – of agroecology, cooperation, stewardship, justice and democracy – in response to the enduring modern crises of environmental degradation, unsustainability, inequality and exploitation in food systems. A fundamental issue within food sovereignty discourse is where exactly the peasantry or smallholders fit in to this “alternative modernity”, particularly within the current conjecture of global capitalism. Noting the complex and uneven development of capitalism and agrarian transitions across the world, commentators such as Bernstein (2014:1044) and Cousins (2010:9) suggest that the typologies typically



used to describe agricultural households often obscure more than they explain. The peasant farmer is one such typology (used popularly in social movements), as are smallholders or small-scale producers, with all these signifiers sometimes used interchangeably (Cousins, 2010:9). The denotations given to agricultural households are important as they affect how producers, their livelihoods and their position within market society are perceived and the nature of policies affecting them.

Typically, the term peasant is used to denote a small-scale farming unit (usually a household) for which farming constitutes the primary or sole means of social reproduction, using mostly household labour and selling at least part of its agricultural output for cash needs (such as education, healthcare and housing) (Cousins, 2010:9). The essential characteristic of peasant farmers is that their livelihoods and social reproduction are mostly (or entirely) dependent on their own farming and in a relatively non-commodified way. This characteristic has often created a connotation of the peasantry with subsistence or “survivalist” farming, which centres more on production for household consumption than a marketable surplus for non-farming populations. Bernstein (2014:1045) indicates that considering the modern history of capitalism (predating neoliberalism), most agricultural households cannot be considered peasants in any determinant sense because they have long since internalised commodity relations inherent in markets. Regardless of whether or not farming is the sole or primary basis of social reproduction, poor households have typically combined other avenues of social reproduction and livelihoods such as crafts, services, small businesses, waged labour, remittances and social security nets (such as income grants) to cater for all their socio-economic needs (Bryceson, 2000:3; du Toit and Neves, 2014:844). All of these strategies involve a range of different commodity relations which Bernstein (2014:1044,1057) infers entails the “commodification of subsistence”. The exact nature of this process might not be consistent in all processes of de-agrarianisation but in South Africa at least, it involved the incorporation of the rural poor into commodity relations “as consumers, social grant recipients, low-waged workers, informal-sector survivalists, or the dependents of these groups” (Neves and du Toit, 2013:95). The idea of a distinct and continuous peasant class is thus somewhat contested, considering the changing ways in which agriculture has contributed to the social reproduction of rural households and the amount of produce these households are able to produce for non-farming populations.

The term smallholder is also fraught with difficulty as a signifier for agricultural households. As Cousins (2010:8) explains:

The term “smallholder” is often defined and used in an inconsistent manner, referring... to producers who occasionally sell products for cash as a supplement to other sources of income; to those who regularly market a surplus after their consumption needs have been met; and to those who are small-scale commercial farmers, with a primary focus on production for the market.

Very importantly, the multiple characteristics used in classifying the peasantry and smallholders tend to obscure significant differences *between* households and the ways in which they engage in agriculture. This has two significant implications for the FSM, the first of which relates to the numbers of peasant and smallholders engaged in farming and in what capacity. The second issue concerns the amount of produce that they are then able to contribute to local (or global) markets. The obfuscation within these typologies, Bernstein (2014:1044) indicates, can inflate the numbers of the peasantry by including all producers regardless of their scale or purpose of production (even if they do not contribute to any marketable surplus) and can sometimes include all populations considered “rural”, even landless workers. The implications of treating the rural poor as a homogeneous group are significant, especially considering the vast numbers of the global peasantry claimed by the FSM and further claims of their ability to feed broader communities and even the global populace. It is for this reason that Bernstein (2014:1045) stresses his scepticism over

many guesstimates of the number and productivity of populations (especially non-farmers) supplied with food staples from small-scale farming, together with associated claims that because there are so many peasants/small farmers even modest increases in their output would add substantially to aggregate food supply.<sup>8</sup>

Agarwal (2014:1252) also cautions that even if the size of the peasantry is significant, the biggest food security challenge is to focus food production toward producing a surplus for non-farming populations rather than for household subsistence (if peasants choose to grow food crops at all). These reservations, however, need not lead to self-defeatism for the FSM. The issue lies in providing a feasible political programme for smallholders across the world and for reforming food systems across the value chain. This will begin by providing a self-critical assessment of the numbers of peasants/smallholders willing and able to take up the food sovereignty banner and whether or not they have the ability, through food sovereignty, to overcome their production challenges for a new alternative agriculture whilst still maintaining their sovereignty and food security. If not, this will mean that the FSM will probably need to be more specific about the position of producers and actors who do not fit

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<sup>8</sup> This is a stance taken by Holt-Giménez and Patel (2009:122) cited earlier.

neatly into the movement's peasant/smallholder idyll and localised food systems, such as medium to large-scale farmers, agribusiness and corporate retail.

Noting the central importance of the "peasant way" in the FSM, Bernstein (2014:1031) urges that it is important to critically assess both the composition and characteristics of peasants/smallholders today. Cousins (2010:9-10) also stresses the need to view peasant/smallholder households through a class-analytic perspective which is more sensitive to processes of social differentiation. This is an important lens because smallholder and rural households are not monolithic groups but embody inequalities reflected in social differentiation (Cousins, 2010:3). Social differentiation amongst rural households is in many ways attributable to the different and uneven ways in which they have been able to gain access to and utilise assets, skills, labour power, knowledge and social capital to support their livelihoods (Bernstein, 2014:1044; Cousins, 2010:9-10). A point made by Bernstein (2014:1057) is that these processes all lead to significant differences *between* rural households, determining who is able to produce on what scale for household consumption, for the market or who even farms at all. For the same reason Cousins (2010:3) implores that a class-analytic analysis is "essential for understanding the differentiated character and diverse trajectories of small-scale agriculture within capitalism". The crucial consideration for the FSM is that owing to the multiple livelihood strategies employed and the commodity relations or inequalities they might entail, many rural households might not fit neatly into the FSM's peasant idyll. This has significant implications for rural economies, how much food they are able to produce for non-farming populations, the commodity relations that may be internalised and the different choices made by a multiplicity of actors.

The arguments presented by both Bernstein and Cousins raise other issues around the livelihood strategies that agricultural households employ. As is quite evident above, the precarious situation of agricultural households and their integration into various commodity relations means that all too often agriculture is not sufficient to secure their requirements of social reproduction, food security and other socio-economic needs (Du Toit and Neves, 2014:838). As such, different forms of production, labour and social relations are employed in order to generate enough food, income and resources to meet a household's requirements. This is ensured through practices of own food production, natural resource use, waged labour, remittances, social safety nets as well as important social networks which all entail notable rural-urban connections (Shackleton, Shackleton and Cousins, 2001:582; Neves and du Toit, 2013:102). Processes of de-agrarianisation, industrialisation and then de-industrialisation

have forced a change in the livelihood practices of the rural poor, smallholders, or peasants in ways that they have had little control over (Neves and du Toit, 2013:94). The livelihoods of the rural poor in South Africa for example are no longer chiefly driven by agriculture (constituting less than 4% of Gross Domestic Product [GDP]) but encompass productive activities (both farm and non-farm), formal and informal employment, small-scale economic activities, public and private cash transfers (social grants and remittances respectfully), natural resource use and other networks of social reciprocity and support (Neves and du Toit, 2013:93-4,102; Shackleton, Shackleton and Cousins, 2001:582-3).

This is not to belittle the role agriculture plays in rural livelihoods – indeed it is still important for between 1,25 and 3 million people in South Africa – but it is important to recognise that the characteristics of the rural poor in South Africa today are probably better understood as “petty commodity producers” or “classes of labour”, as Bernstein (2014:1044) signifies, than “peasants” as understood by LVC (Neves and du Toit, 2013:102). As Bryceson (2000:4) explains for South Africa, there has been a historical “declining coherence of peasantries, with respect to their marketable farm production, family structures, class position and rural communities”. It is also important to caution against romanticising social networks of reciprocity in livelihood strategies as mentioned above. To do so would simplify and idealise understandings of the “community” and the relationships therein. As du Toit (2009:9) shows, benefiting from relationships of social reciprocity can depend on a household’s access to financial resources, influential benefactors and social status. People who do not have access to these or who are disadvantaged in circumstances of patriarchy and conservative communities (such as unmarried women, female-headed households and unemployed youth) can easily be marginalised and even exploited within these social networks (du Toit, 2009:9).

### **3.5 Linking Shifting Discourses to Policymaking**

This chapter has outlined some of the alternative narratives around agriculture, food security and development. Delineating some of the core tenets of food sovereignty helps to explain that alternatives to solving the modern day crises in food and agriculture do exist. Moreover, far from outlining a kind of bucolic utopia, these alternatives embodied in food sovereignty attempt to provide a viable praxis to the global food regime which has led us inexorably into crisis. Many of the historical trends and constraints to agriculture discussed in this chapter are also relevant for the current context in South Africa. Facing these challenges in the

democratic era has been a distinct part of government policy, as has tackling high levels of food insecurity. A discussion of food security policies in South Africa at the current conjecture is therefore important before analysing the implications of the shifting discourses in food security and food sovereignty for the ability of South African policy to achieve and sustain genuine long-term food security.

## **Chapter 4: Food (In)Security in South Africa – Policies Past and Present**

Food insecurity and hunger are as much contemporary phenomena as they are historically rooted. To contextually place food security policy in South Africa today requires a closer examination of the historical processes that have led to significant levels of individual and household food insecurity in a nationally food secure country (Drimie and McLachlan, 2013:220). Understanding this contradiction requires an exploration of the more significant political, economic and social dynamics of South African history that formed the basis of such a food landscape today. Doing so can also be helpful in understanding the formulation of food insecurity policy in the democratic era, as Hendriks (2014:1) indicates the socio-political foundations of current policies can be found throughout the settler-colonial history of South Africa and the apartheid era. While not all legislation and policies throughout this history affected hunger and malnutrition in explicit ways, the manner in which they were implemented and their social differentiation had a profound impact on the status of food security in the country as a whole and across its demographic populations.

### **4.1 The Status of Food (In)Security in South Africa**

Trends illustrating the trajectory of food security in post-apartheid South Africa are somewhat difficult to compare owing to the limited number of national surveys including food security indicators (only four since 1994), different methods used and small sample numbers included (Labadarios et al., 2011:891; Shisana, et al., 2014:346; Hendriks, 2014:13,18). Despite this, it is noticeable that the prevalence of household food insecurity remains stubbornly high. The 2012 South African National Health and Nutrition Examination (SANHANES-1) is perhaps the largest attempt to canvass the prevalence of household food insecurity, including 6 305 households (25 532 individuals) surveyed extensively on a number of health issues (Shisana et al., 2014:2-3). The study showed that of the households interviewed, 26% were considered food insecure with a further 28,3% at risk of hunger and only 45,6% were considered food secure (Shisana et al., 2014:10).

A notable feature of food insecurity in South Africa is its differentiated experience across social settings – it has typically been influenced by geography, class, race and gender (Oxfam, 2014:3). Across the nine provinces for example, both Limpopo and the Eastern Cape have household food insecurity rates in excess of 30%, with the Western Cape and Gauteng experiencing 16,4% and 19,2% household food insecurity respectively (Pareira, 2014:8).

Cutting across provincial differences, however, the highest rates of household food insecurity exist in formal rural (37%) and informal urban (32.4%) areas and demographically the black population shows the highest rates of household food insecurity (30,3%) (Pereira, 2014:8). Stunting is also particularly high amongst South African Children, affecting 26,9% of boys and 25,9% of girls up to the age of three (Shisana et al., 2014:351). Levels of vitamin A deficiency (VAD) and are also very high, affecting 43,6% of children younger than five years and 10,7% of children suffer from anaemia (Shisana et al., 2014:351). The chronic nature of diet-related illness in children is particularly debilitating for their cognitive and physical development, which has long lasting impacts on the lives of undernourished children and South Africa's workforce, exacerbating many of the inequality, education, poverty and labour productivity challenges facing the country (Oxfam, 2014:7). Food security is still a gendered phenomenon for the country's poor, with women-headed households facing some of the most severe food security limitations. A study conducted by Oxfam (2014:14) indicates that female-headed households suffer more from insufficient access to food, run out of money faster, are more likely to reduce the size of or skip meals and access a smaller variety of food than male-headed households.

An almost paradoxical phenomenon is the rising rates of overweight and obese South Africans even within the same households as the malnourished, along with associated non-communicable diseases (Chandrasekhar and Gosh, 2012:49).<sup>9</sup> Within the adult population, 20,1% of men and 24,8% of women are considered overweight, with 10,6% of men and an exceedingly high 39,2% of women considered obese (Shisana et al., 2014:350). These indicators also prove problematic for children, with 11,5% of boys and 16,5% of girls overweight, while 4,7% of boys and 7,1% of girls are considered obese (Shisana, 2014:350). The coexistence of both malnourishment and overnourishment is also symptomatic of a nutrition transition in South Africa. This is witnessed by a notable shift in dietary intake towards higher fat, sugar and salt content with lower dietary diversity and intake of fresh produce (Pereira, 2014:8; Shisana et al., 2014:348).

The above trends certainly indicate the complex food landscape in South Africa that determines the nutritional status of households. It is important that an analysis of this

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<sup>9</sup>The effect of these issues in South Africa also compounds the health challenges facing the country, with diet-related non-communicable diseases responsible for 7% of all deaths in South Africa in the year 2000 for example (Igumbor et al., 2012:1). The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) (2014:39) also points out that five of the leading causes of death in South Africa (heart disease, stroke, atherosclerosis, certain cancers and diabetes) are linked to dietary factors.

complexity include the fault lines of race, class, gender and geography that have played significant roles in the differentiated access to food for South African households. Understanding how the country got to this conjuncture requires delving into its historical past. The most significant ways in which past legislation and policies affected the status of food security in South Africa was through their impact on the distribution and provision of productive assets and services (such as land, inputs, machinery, state subsidies, credit and markets); the ways in which they affected income distribution and employment; and through the differentiated provision of social rights of citizenship such as primary healthcare, education and social security. Also significantly important are the ways in which past legislation and policies controlled public and private spaces in South Africa, determining areas of domicile, employment and retail for different segments of the population and thereby creating differentiated access to food. Once such an analysis is applied it becomes more apparent how the food system as it is today in South Africa is socially constructed. Equally important, this construction forms the context in which policy in the democratic dispensation has had to address food insecurity.

#### **4.2 Colonial and Apartheid Legacies for Food Security**

The starkest implications of past policies and legislation for food security today are the ones that affected food production, access to resources and access to markets. Critical accounts of South Africa's past and ongoing colonial land dispensation are well documented (see Ntsebeza, 2013; Hall and Ntsebeza, 2007; Thwala, 2006; Yanou, 2009), but what is important for food security policy today is the way a bifurcated agricultural landscape was created, separating dominant large-scale industrial (predominantly white) farmers from smallholder (mostly black) farmers, with the latter occupying a residual role in the country's agricultural production (Greenberg, 2013:15). On the one hand, much of South Africa's agricultural output is dependent on approximately 40 000 large-scale farmers, 20% of whom produce 80% of all agricultural output (Bernstein, 2013:26; Oxfam, 2014:21; Hendriks, 2014:10). These farmers are typically highly capitalised and have extensive access to input markets, credit, extension services and storage capabilities. They are also usually integrated into value chains which provide markets for their produce. On the other hand, there are approximately 2,3 million black smallholder and non-commercial farmers who operate on much smaller plots of land (usually of marginal or poorer quality) in the former homeland areas; use labour intensive methods and may have insecure tenure rights and weaker access to input markets,



infrastructure, storage capabilities, extension services and retail markets when compared to their large-scale counterparts (Greenberg, 2015:958; Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005:26). At the same time it is also important to remain cognisant of social differentiation between black smallholder farmers themselves in order to avoid their characterisation as a homogeneous group (Cousins, 2010:3). The disparate circumstances between farmers affect who is able to grow food and on what scale, what is grown, the determinants for production practices and the distribution of that food through different locales across the country.

Hendriks (2014:2) argues that the racially differentiated food system in South Africa finds its provenance as far back as 1652 with agricultural settlements supplying produce to shipping fleets of the Dutch East India Company. Later, as a new settler-colonial dispensation began to take hold in the country, new and expanding bases of formal agriculture were needed to supply burgeoning mining towns and new settlements with food. These new demand pressures were met by a combination of both settler farmers and indigenous black farmers with many of the latter eventually becoming tenant farmers on settler-controlled land (Hendriks, 2014:2). Whilst Satgar (2011:178) notes early processes of significant dispossession since the 1870s, the promulgation of the Natives Land Act in 1913 was the first attempt to enforce territorial segregation through statutory measures, limiting the black population to no more than 8% of agricultural land ownership (later extended to 13% through the 1936 Native Trust and Land Act) (Hendriks, 2014:2; Van Niekerk, 2008:150).

Both of these legislative measures enabled white farmers to consolidate control over agricultural land, eliminate competition from black farmers and for both white farms and mines to have access to labour reserves and resident farm labour (Evans, 1997:29; Hendriks, 2014:2; Van Niekerk, 2003:363). The cumulative effects of these Acts together with the 1950 Group Areas Act and 1958 Bantu Self-Government Act, were to create labour reserves in the former homelands where processes of forced proletarianisation began to take hold, ensuring a steady pool of cheap labour for commercial farms, mines and industry and with the social reproduction of cheap labour subsidised by the unpaid work of women in homeland areas (Thwala, 2006:59; Wolpe, 1972:433; du Toit and Neves, 2014:845).<sup>10</sup> In this new dispensation, dispossessed rural people were forced into labour relations in urban areas or on white farms out of the necessity to provide some or all of their living requirements through

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<sup>10</sup> Abrahams (In Groenmeyer, 2013:172) notes that this is a trend continuing today, calculating the value of unpaid labour in South Africa to constitute between 32% and 38% of GDP, with 75% of this labour contributed by women.

earning currency (Van Niekerk, 2008:150; Bundy, 1972:385; Legassick, 1974a:264-5). This process began in earnest much earlier with the imposition of a Poll Tax on all male adults in 1905 and continued with what Bundy (1972:369) calls a “cash nexus”, forcing many South Africans into deeper labour and commodity relations and prompting the dissolution of a coherent peasantry.

Greenberg (2010a:4) describes this legislative environment as creating a racialised “urban-rural spatial dualism in the agro-food system” whereby black farming was largely limited to former homelands for the purpose of subsistence (or social reproduction) and national food security objectives were hinged on supporting white commercial farmers (Hendriks and Olivier, 2015:556). The support of white farmers was not only limited to the systematic dispossession and undermining of black farmers but also through other policies of state support. Helliker (2013:75) and Hendriks (2014:2) describe the nature of these supports, including financial assistance and subsidies in land, credit, input and output markets; extension services; farm infrastructure; tax relief; preferential credit terms and lower interest rates from parastatals; as well as guaranteed pricing for commodities by marketing boards. Additionally, the agricultural sector fell outside of the auspices of labour legislation and the lack of trade unionism in the sector exposed farm workers to extreme levels of exploitation (Helliker, 2013:75). Hendriks (2014:2) also notes that over 80 acts of Parliament over a fifty year period contributed to the dualistic nature of South African agriculture and support for large-scale white farms.

In addition to the centrality of the land question in South Africa as outlined above, the political environment during the colonial and apartheid periods also had vast implications for labour, employment and living standards for the majority of the population. A number of illiberal and racialised policies in South Africa created the conditions for endemic poverty and chronic food insecurity by placing severe limitations on the social mobility and employment opportunities for the black population. Among the most significant Acts (and attendant amendments) include the 1856, 1911 and 1932 Masters and Servants Act; 1911 Native Labour Regulation Act; 1911 Mines and Works Act; 1923 Native (Urban Areas) Act and the 1953 Bantu Education Act (Evans, 1997:29; Magubane, 2004:22,24; Van Niekerk, 2008:116,179; Hendriks, 2014:2). These particular acts were designed for the purposes of controlling black labour to suit the interests of white capital in the country. They imposed draconian conditions on labour including the enforcement of obedience and punitive measures, limited civil rights such as collective bargaining and unionisation, imposed poor

education limiting blacks to largely unskilled work, reserved certain jobs for whites (creating a white “aristocracy of labour”), limited the pay of black workers regardless of job positions and controlled spaces of domicile and work where blacks were able to find employment (Magubane, 2004:22; Legassick, 1974b:11,20; Van Niekerk, 2008:199).

The circumscription of many social rights of citizenship for the majority of South Africans had a similar effect on their welfare. As is clearly elucidated by Van Niekerk (2003:363; 2008:74,172), the provision of social welfare to South Africa’s black population in both the colonial and apartheid eras was borne not so much out of a consideration of their rights of citizenship but out of the perception of state paternalism during the colonial era and out of the necessities of capital accumulation and labour reproduction during the apartheid era where the vision of “separate development” was unable to provide the needs of social and labour reproduction. In this way the provision of social welfare to most South Africans was extended with much hesitancy and flippancy toward their social needs, hence the fragmented and racialised nature of social welfare provision in the country during these periods. The provision of old-age pensions for example, one of the only forms of social security for South Africa’s discriminated populations to survive the apartheid era, was historically available to Asian and coloured South Africans at half the rate of the white pension and a third of the white pension for blacks, only reaching parity with white pensions by 1993 (Van Niekerk, 2008:116,211). The pervasive histories of the colonial and apartheid eras and their racially differentiated policies were unsurprisingly one of the chief issues facing South Africa by the 1990s, with deracialised social policy and an inclusive constitution two of the great hallmarks of democratic South Africa. Constitutional rights are important here as they have played a significant role in crafting social policy, with the right to food being a focal point of food security policy (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries [DAFF], 2014:24)

#### **4.3 The Right to Food in South Africa**

The compounding effects of the policy and legislative environments in both the colonial and apartheid eras had particularly pervasive implications for the incidence of food insecurity in South Africa by 1994. This was most notably so in the distribution of productive resources, income opportunities, healthcare, education and social security. The racially skewed policies and legislation in these eras go a long way in explaining the emergence of chronic food insecurity in a food secure country (Oxfam, 2014:6; Hendriks, 2014:4). By 1994, a new democratic government in South Africa was faced with, *inter alia*, the task of deracialising

economic and social policy – a process described by Van Niekerk (2008:9) as “the removal of those statutory or other restrictions based on race which hitherto resulted in differentiated access to government social provision”. A first step towards this was the formulation of an inclusive and socially progressive constitution which guaranteed social rights of citizenship to all South Africans without distinction and outlined the state’s obligations to respect, protect and fulfil such rights (Hendriks and Olivier, 2015:557-8). An outline of the constitutional background to food security is worth exploring for two reasons. In the first instance, it helps to frame the obligations upon the state to the food insecure and the impetus this should place on policymaking. Secondly, the right to food undergirds much of food sovereignty advocacy and will help to illustrate some of the common ground for both food sovereignty principles and food security policy in South Africa, although it does not necessarily follow that the policies themselves are framed around food sovereignty discourse (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005:14).

The right to food is explicitly included in section 27 of the constitution which states:

Everyone has the right to have access to –

- a) healthcare services, including reproductive healthcare;
- b) sufficient food and water and;
- c) social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependents, appropriate social assistance (RSA, 1996:11).

The obligations of the state in this regard are elaborated in subsection 27 (2) when stating that “The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights” although the protection of these rights as applicable to children (in section 28) is unqualified and not subject to the availability of state resources (RSA, 1996:11; Hendriks and Olivier, 2015:558). The right to food is also bolstered by the right to a clean environment under section 24 of the constitution (which also has significant relevance for food sovereignty). This section states that:

Everyone has the right –

- a) to an environment that is not harmful to their health or wellbeing; and
- b) to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that –
  - i) prevent pollution and ecological degradation;
  - ii) promote conservation; and

iii) secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development (RSA, 1996:9).

#### **4.4 Food Security Policy in Democratic South Africa**

Following the promulgation of food as a right within the South African constitution, food security in the country has followed a constitutional imperative to progressively realise the right of all South Africans to access food. It is difficult to provide a thorough explanation of food security policy owing to the fact that there are myriad policies that have consequences for food security even if they are not explicitly concerned with the concept as such (see McLaren, Moyo and Jeffery, 2015:31-7). This is true for both domestic policies and the international agreements and obligations to which South Africa is bound (Makhura and Mokoena, 2003:138). Owing to such complexity, the following discussion will focus on policies most explicitly concerned with food security. Within a global context in which food security has broadened as a concept and in its scope, the policies in South Africa that are most relevant in this regard are those that seek to address food security as a cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary issue. Since 1994 there have only been two bold attempts at a holistic policy approach for food security, namely the Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS) in 2002 and the National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security (henceforth the new National Policy) in 2014 (National Department of Agriculture [NDA], 2002; DAFF, 2014).

##### **4.4.1 The Integrated Food Security Strategy (IFSS)**

Although it lacked legislative backing, the 2002 IFSS was the first attempt to coordinate and direct different departmental mandates and programmes with the ambition to streamline and harmonize different programmes relevant for food security. As stated by the NDA (2002:5), the creation of an integrated food security approach was deemed necessary in order “to improve the unsatisfactory situation that was occasioned by the implementation of many food security programmes by many different [g]overnment departments in all spheres”. The IFSS is a clear indication of the South African government’s attempt to streamline global thinking about food security (particularly as outlined by the FAO) into a specific national policy framework attempting to address the multiple facets of food security in a coordinated and holistic manner.

Modelled on the FAO’s (2001) definition of food security, the IFSS stated its overarching mission to:

attain universal physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food by all South Africans at all times to meet their dietary and food preferences for an active and healthy life (NDA, 2002:6).

Following this vision, the IFSS focussed on the FAO's four determinants of food security – namely the availability of food, access (physical, economic and social), its appropriate utilisation and the stability of these factors over time. This policy direction was founded upon the recognition of food security challenges facing South Africa noted by the NDA. These included inadequate and unstable household food production, lack of purchasing power, inadequate safety nets and poor nutritional status (not only in energy intake but also micronutrient deficiency) (NDA, 2002:25-7). In addressing these food security imperatives and aspiring to see that they be carried out to the household level, the IFSS stated its overall objectives to:

- Increase household food production and trading;
- Improve income generation and job creation opportunities;
- Improve nutrition and food safety;
- Increase safety nets and food emergency management systems;
- Improve analysis and information management systems;
- Provide capacity building;
- Hold stakeholder dialogue (NDA, 2002:13).

Priority within the IFSS was clearly placed on enabling food insecure households to gain access to productive resources – this being in line with the policy's overarching focus on production. Evidence of this can be seen in the IFSS's main policy priorities or pillars. Within the policy document, the NDA (2002:13-4) stated that

Firstly, food security interventions will ensure that the target food insecure population gains access to productive resources; secondly, where a segment of the target food insecure population is unable to gain access to productive resources, then food security interventions will ensure that segment gains access to income and job opportunities to enhance its power to purchase food.

The remaining three pillars of the IFSS as expressed by the NDA (2002:14) were food nutrition and food safety, safety nets and relief measures as well as accurate information and monitoring. In terms of nutritional security, the policy's objective of improving nutrition and food safety was seen to be supportive of the other food security objectives, mostly in the form of nutritional education, the national school feeding programme, vitamin supplements and the fortification of basic staples (NDA, 2002:31). As another policy objective, the IFSS sought to institute a robust and efficient information management system in order to accurately monitor and respond to food security indicators and challenges (McLaren, Moyo and Jeffery,

2015:38). This objective was pursued in the hope that food security interventions would be based on timely, accurate information that enabled for responsive and efficient food security interventions over sustained periods of time (NDA, 2002:14).

The primary policy concerns within this thesis of the IFSS were its first four pillars – production and trade, income and employment opportunities, safety nets and emergency mechanisms and lastly nutrition and food safety. In terms of its institutional framework, the IFSS devolved primary responsibility for each food security pillar to a lead ministry which directed programmes in cooperation with other line ministries in order to achieve multiple food security objectives within a single pillar.

#### **4.4.1.1 Production and Trade**

Regarding its primary priority on production and trade, the first pillar of the IFSS fell under the remit of the NDA as lead agency together with the departments of Land Affairs, Health, Public Works, Water Affairs and Forestry as well as Trade and Industry (DTI) forming the broader cluster to achieve food security objectives related to production, trade and distribution (NDA, 2002:28). In order to boost household production and trade, the NDA (2002:28-30) proposed a host of policy prescriptions, as outlined below:

- Increased access to productive resources (such as land, credit, technology and training).
- The promotion of small-scale irrigation systems and rainwater harnessing.
- Investment in productivity-enhancing yet environmentally sustainable technologies at both farming and processing levels, especially for smallholder producers.
- Improved access to credit for the poor, especially for women.
- Agrarian reform to utilise idle agricultural land.
- Access to time and labour saving technologies for food insecure households, especially for women.
- Improved and comprehensive extension services attuned to the needs of smallholder farmers “who often practice mixed farming and undertake a variety of enterprises”.
- Monitoring the impact of liberalised trade regimes on food insecure households.
- The protection of food and agricultural industries from dumping.
- Conforming to WTO regulations regarding import duties whilst still ensuring support for vulnerable groups and state spending on social development.

- Improved rural infrastructure.
- Investment in food distribution facilities to open up food deficit areas to better food access.
- The commercialising of agriculture to improve “income and employment generation among food insecure households”.

At a more programme-specific level, however, interventions most relevant for this pillar initially included the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD) programme, the Comprehensive Agriculture Support Programme (CASP), the Micro Agricultural Financial Institutions of South Africa (Mafisa) programme and later on the Land and Agrarian Reform Programme (LARP) (Greenberg, 2010b: 7-8,11). LRAD was an initiative of the country’s broader land reform programme, initiated in 2001 with the intent of providing financial assistance to previously marginalised black farmers and landless peoples towards purchasing land specifically for agricultural use (Hall, 2004:216). CASP was initiated in 2003 and was intended to assist black farmers who either gained access to agricultural land via land reform programmes or through their own private means (Koch, 2011:6; Greenberg, 2010b:vii,7). The post-settlement support given to targeted farmers within CASP included assistance in the areas of infrastructure; inputs, information and technology management; advisory support in technical and regulatory issues; marketing and business development; training and capacity development as well as financial support (Koch, 2011:6). In terms of its financial backing, the programme had an annual budget in the region of R200 million in 2012 with which it was able to assist 72 856 farmers (McLaren, Moyo and Jeffery, 2015:44). By 2013 CASP had initiated 7 012 projects reaching a total of 387 311 beneficiaries whilst also creating 1 699 permanent and 3 677 temporary additional jobs (Hendriks, 2014:12).

An important strategy within CASP in recent years has been DAFF’s Extension Recovery Plan which has attempted to reinvigorate extension services after their inexorable decline due to privatisation in the commercial sector and limited budget in the public sector (Greenberg, 2010b:22). The privatisation of extension for much of the commercial sector, Greenberg (2010b:22) notes, created policy space for a reorientation of public sector extension services towards resource-poor and smallholder farmers, although the impact of such reorientation was constrained due to a shrinking agriculture budget. By 2008, for example, there were only 2 152 agricultural extension officers working in South Africa, with each of these supporting an average of 878 farmers (Greenberg, 2010b:22). The split between privatised and public extension, however, has also created differentiated access to high quality extension services.



As Greenberg (2013:20) notes, privatisation essentially “segments the market, allowing private service providers to ‘cherry pick’ who can afford quality services” and leaves others to “make do with a denuded public support infrastructure”. A significant drawback of public extension services has also been a shortage in the skills and training of extension workers as well as the resources available for extension officers to conduct fieldwork with large numbers of widely dispersed farmers. The Extension Recovery Plan intended to address these shortcomings by introducing 1000 new extension officers and retraining 2000 existing officers (Greenberg, 2010b:22). Strategies to support this goal have been the introduction of “competence-based skills programmes”; bursaries and compulsory education and training programmes for extension officers, managers and subject specialists (Greenberg, 2010b:23). Despite such initiatives, public extension services in South Africa have continued to be constrained by small budgets as well as staff and skills shortages. In many instances it seems that there is a problem of allocating staff and resources too thinly to assist vast numbers of farmers. The LRAD programme was integrated with CASP in 2008 to form the LARP under the national departments of Agriculture, Land Affairs and provincial departments of Agriculture. This new agrarian programme aimed to address the disparities between land reform and post-settlement support which in no small measure played a role in the failure of around 29% of LRAD projects by 2009 (Greenberg, 2010b:11).

While an extensive evaluation of the land reform programme in South Africa, its implementation and effectiveness on livelihoods are beyond the scope of this thesis, some pertinent issues about its conceptual limitations are worth mentioning due to their implications for the redistributive and transformative potential of land reform policies. There are a number of conceptual issues which have to date placed significant constraints on the ability of the land reform programme to redistribute its target of 30% of agricultural land and in so doing to deracialise land ownership in the countryside (Hall, Jacobs and Lahiff, 2003:1).<sup>11</sup> Foremost among these has been the shifting emphasis away from the poorest and most vulnerable groups towards considerable support for a new class of black commercial farmers (Hall, Jacobs and Lahiff, 2003:32). This is corroborated by Cousins (2007:228) who illustrates the entrenched commercial bias in agriculture and land reform policies. This, he argues, is based on a conceptual understanding of commercial agriculture as “real agriculture”, leaving smallholder or subsistence agriculture to occupy a residual role within

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<sup>11</sup> Greenberg (2010b:4) points out that by 2009, for example, only 6,9% of agricultural land had been redistributed through the land reform programme.

policymaking (Cousins, 2007:228). This is evident in the distribution of LRAD grants which, while no longer based on means testing, are distributed according to the capital or loan contribution provided by applicants, with the grant ranging between R20 000 and R100 000 (Hall, 2007:90). Beneficiaries with access to loans or their own capital are therefore better positioned to benefit from larger LRAD grants. Furthermore, these grants have favoured applicants who are either willing or able to pursue commercial farming enterprises and the risks involved therein. Applicants who are unable or unwilling to do so are thus at a disadvantage (Hall, 2007:91).

On a related point, Hall (2007:99) argues that three of the greatest challenges facing the land reform programme are the inflated land prices through market-led reform, the small grants given to beneficiaries and the discouragement of group initiatives when applicants attempt to pool their grants in order to afford high land prices. This is a significant limitation on the redistributive capacity and pro-poor stance of the land reform programme, given that social differentiation will enable some rural beneficiaries to benefit from larger landholdings and assimilate into the commercial sector better than others. This is a critique expressed by Chitonge and Ntsebeza (2012:89) who argue that a grant structure such as in LRAD might have the effect of “creating a class of black farmers at the expense of the poor”. A significant limitation of CASP, as elucidated by Hall (2007:100) is that the state has, in the past, simultaneously pursued policies of farmer support, liberalisation, privatisation and austerity, meaning that attempts to continue post-settlement support for land reform beneficiaries have been thwarted by macroeconomic policies leading to the dissolution or privatisation of agricultural extension systems, marketing boards or agricultural finance institutions. The policies of both post-settlement support and liberalisation have thus been inimical to each other and furthermore have created markets hostile to smallholder agriculture in particular (Hall, 2007:100).

Legislation and policies regarding tenure reform have similarly been fraught with difficulty, being unable to substantially support the tenure rights of many rural South Africans. The Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS, 2009:3) as well as Hall (2007:95) show how both the 1996 Land Reform (Labour Tenants) Act and the 1997 Extension of Security of Tenure Act did little to abate the two million farm evictions and displacement of four million rural dwellers between 1994 and 2003. Hall, Jacobs and Lahiff (2003:13) attribute this to unwillingness on the part of government to challenge the entrenched power of large landowners and enforce the rights of farm workers. Cousins (2007:224) argues further

that the 1997 Extension of Security of Tenure Act has had limited capacity to facilitate land ownership for farm workers, making them a neglected category in the LRAD programme. The Communal Land Rights Act of 2004, whilst attempting to bolster the land rights of rural communities, has faced further criticism by Hall (2007:97). She points out that communal lands under this act were placed under the administration of traditional councils according to unspecified “community rules”. She argues that considering traditional councils are made up in large part by unelected tribal authorities and their appointees (Hall, 2007:97), the democratic participation of communities can easily be circumscribed, as can the land rights of rural women if patriarchal norms and discriminatory practices go unchallenged (Jacobs, 2015:180).

#### **4.4.1.2 Income and Employment Generation**

The IFSS adopted as its second pillar a strategy explicitly focused on increasing income opportunities and employment to broaden the exchange-based food entitlements of the poor and unemployed. This kind of approach affects food security in two ways, firstly by ensuring that food can be afforded by poor households and secondly by increasing disposable income so that households are able to afford other necessary household expenditure and cash needs such as education, healthcare, housing, energy, sanitation, transportation and so forth. As Koch (2011:6) explains, the IFSS endeavoured to support labour creation in a “labour-intensive diversified agricultural sector with strong links to other economic sectors”. In creating these linkages, emphasis was also placed on creating opportunities and support for workers, entrepreneurs, small and medium scale enterprises; aiding local economies through skills training; creating opportunities to access credit; creating public works programmes; promoting livelihood diversification (including off-farm income); and in ensuring adequate infrastructure and market information to ensure these processes supported each other (Koch, 2011:6).

In these endeavours, the DTI became the lead agency with the departments of Agriculture, Public Works, Water Affairs and Forestry, Minerals and Energy, Public Enterprises and Transport and Communication forming the pillar’s cluster (NDA, 2002:30). Policy prescriptions advised by the NDA (2002:30) in this regard include:

- Support for local economic development, small and medium scale enterprises and diversified employment creation.
- Labour-intensive public works programmes, especially in rural agricultural areas.

- Boosting off-farm income generation.
- Strengthening access to rural credit facilities.
- Strengthening market systems such as information and infrastructure.
- Supporting skills training.

Specifically as a food security objective, this second pillar of the IFSS occupies a particularly obscure place within South Africa's macroeconomic context as policy initiatives aimed at tackling unemployment and poverty have typically been aligned with the 1996 Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, making the food security impact of IFSS or GEAR initiatives difficult to distinguish (Koch, 2011:6). Nevertheless, when considering the impacts of employment and income generating initiatives, the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) launched in 2004 is particularly noteworthy due to its scope and budget allocation (Koch, 2011:7). By 2009 this programme was able to create some 600 000 work opportunities between 16 869 projects across the country with 8420 of these jobs within the agricultural sector (in 204 separate projects) (Koch, 2011:7). An explicit aim of this strategy was its beneficiary targeting, attempting to incorporate the historically more marginalised and vulnerable – with 53% of its agricultural jobs employing women, 51% youth and 1.7% disabled persons (Koch, 2011:7). Although this programme was conducted with the express wishes of boosting the incomes of unemployed and vulnerable populations, it has been acknowledged that the EPWP has the capability only to provide a respite in the face of more structural and chronic unemployment problems. This is perhaps why the programme itself can only be viewed as a single strategy within the broader macroeconomic perspective of GEAR and why most of the jobs created under the EPWP have been characteristically low-skilled and in the areas of electricity supply and road infrastructure (Koch, 2011:7).

#### **4.4.1.3 Nutrition and Food Safety**

As was already covered in chapter two regarding food security, the utilisation of adequate and appropriate food is vital if other facets of food security are to have any meaning at all. In this regard, the health of individuals, the nutritional quality of food and its safety are paramount. Within the IFSS, these considerations are encompassed in its recognition that access to enough food at the household or individual level *per se* does not necessarily lead to adequate nutritional status (NDA, 2002:30). Under this third pillar the most significant policy prescriptions of the IFSS involved:

- Public education.
- Improved nutrition monitoring methods.
- Targeted nutrition interventions for vulnerable people, including vitamin supplements.

Vulnerable groups included children younger than six years old, pregnant and lactating women, primary school children, people suffering from chronic “lifestyle or communicable diseases” as well as the elderly (Koch, 2011:8). Under this third pillar, the Department of Health (DoH) was tasked as its lead agency with the NDA, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry as well as the DTI forming the broader cluster (NDA, 2002:31).

The prescriptions within this pillar can be seen in government programmes involving food fortification and vitamin supplements directed by the DoH as well as efforts to increase education around nutrition and food choices (McLaren, Moyo and Jeffery, 2015:37; Koch, 2011:7). The most significant nutrition interventions have been pursued within the Integrated Nutrition Programme (INP) initiated in 1995, which together with the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) focused priority of nutrition intervention towards children, with initiatives to promote balanced school meals, breastfeeding, improved nutrition throughout the weaning process, the fortification of staple foods and provision of nutritional supplements (McLaren, Moyo and Jeffery, 2015:49). The NSNP, first started in 1994 as the Primary School Nutrition Programme (PSNP), has undoubtedly been most effective in improving the nutritional status of children as a vulnerable group (McLaren, Moyo and Jeffery, 2015:45). The NSNP has seen an expanding mandate and budget since its implementation, providing meals for up to 8 million children with a budget of R4,578 billion in 2013 and helping to address the developmental and nutritional needs of underweight and stunted children (two of the most common nutritional disorders in the country) (Koch, 2011:8; Drimie and Ruysenaar, 2010:317; McLaren, Moyo and Jeffery, 2015:45).

#### **4.4.1.4 Safety Nets and Emergency Mechanisms**

Although not specifically on the top of the IFSS agenda, policies supporting the fourth pillar of safety nets and emergency relief have undoubtedly had one of the biggest impacts on food security in South Africa since 1994. Within the IFSS, the lead agencies in this pillar included the Department of Social Development (DSD) along with Provincial and Local Government joined by the NDA, Public Works and Water Affairs and Forestry in the cluster (NDA,

2002:32). Owing to South Africa's tumultuous past, a vast proportion of the population is unable to participate fully in the economic mainstream for lack of employment, productive resources, education, skills and other opportunities (Drimie and McLachlan, 2013:220). People in such positions often find themselves in obscure and changing employment positions between the formal and informal sectors – described by Seekings and Natrass (2005:244) as a “marginal working class”. Finding secure forms of employment and income is indeed a major food security prerogative for the unemployed and working poor, as are social safety nets and emergency responses. In conjunction with the second pillar of the IFSS, it was the hope of the NDA (2002:31) to create employment and appropriate social safety nets in order to “create an economic environment that is pro-poor, that enables food-insecure households to insert themselves into the economic mainstream”. This outlook is in large part the recognition that owing to their continued struggles with social-based exclusion, many South Africans require the adequate and timely provision social rights of citizenship for their basic needs. The policy prescriptions outlined by the NDA (2002:31-2) pertaining to this pillar were, however, focused more on information and knowledge systems than on safety nets, outlining support for:

- Enhanced infrastructure, information, research and public goods.
- Improved coordination and management of emergency relief operations at national and provincial levels.
- Compilation of “baseline information to assess the food insecurity and vulnerability situation of the country... updated at least once in every five years”.
- Periodic evaluations and feasibility studies to appropriately structure food security policy.
- Effective product dissemination.
- The establishment of a technical team for food security data and to establish a National Food Security Steering Committee.

This fourth pillar has in practice, however, provided some of the most significant interventions directly impacting household food security. The most obvious include the country's progressive and inclusive social grant system, mostly through the comprehensive social protection programme (Koch, 2011:8-9). In all, more than twenty different kinds of social grants are available under this programme, the provision of which is mandated to the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) under the DSD. The most significant of these grants include the Old Age Pension, Child Support Grant, Disability Grant, the Foster

Child Grant and the Care Dependency Grant (Koch, 2011:9; Pauw, 2007:14). In addition, SASSA is also responsible for the provision of a food security grant in the form of food parcels for targeted beneficiaries. Although specifically a grant for food security, this grant's impact is somewhat difficult to assess owing to its limited budget and scope and more importantly because its beneficiaries are also often covered by other major social grants as well. In any case, the delivery of food parcels is intended as a short-term emergency relief measure targeting children and child-headed households, orphaned children, the disabled, female-headed households and households affected by HIV when such households are unable to meet their basic food requirements (Koch, 2011:9). The delivery of social grants to vulnerable and poor South Africans has seen massive increases in the number of beneficiaries and budget allocation for the comprehensive social protection programme. Hendriks (2014:15) shows how while in 1998 2,5 million South Africans were recipients of social grants, by 2013 this number had increased to 16,1 million, with the total value of social grants equivalent to 3,4% of GDP. Social grants are also a focal point for the livelihood strategies of vulnerable groups, especially for the 22% of South Africans dependent on social grants as their main source of income (Hendriks, 2014:15).

#### **4.4.2 The National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security (new National Policy)**

Since the formulation of the IFSS in 2002, there have been intermittent new policy responses and legislative action connected to food security in South Africa – including but not limited to the formulation of the Food Price Monitoring Committee in 2003, the Social Assistance Act in 2004, the Zero Hunger Strategy in 2009, the actions of the Competition Commission in 2010 against price-fixing bread cartels and the 2013 National Development Plan (NDP) (McLaren, Moyo and Jeffery, 2015:35-36; Pareira, 2014:22). Most of these occurred in rather isolated ways and certainly not in the spirit of coordination envisioned by the IFSS in 2002. Over the years the IFSS framework has become a largely moribund policy framework for numerous reasons, including a lack of high-level political support in decision making and planning, poorly implemented institutional arrangements, lack of supportive legislation and a narrow conceptualisation of food security with emphasis placed on agricultural production and a distinct rural bias (Drimie and Ruysenaar, 2010:318,324,330; Hendriks and Olivier, 2015:556,561,568). In 2014, DAFF (in collaboration with the DSD) published a new food security policy framework, the National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security. This policy was published in an attempt to revive an integrated approach to tackling food insecurity, to

address some of the limitations of the IFSS and address new food security challenges (DAFF, 2014:24; McLaren, Moyo and Jeffery, 2015:36).

As outlined in its policy document, the new National Policy was borne out of recognition by government of the more endemic threats to household food security in the country in addition to the lagging household production, diminishing purchasing power, unemployment, inadequate safety nets, micronutrient deficiencies, weak support networks and weak disaster management systems already recognised within the IFSS (NDA, 2002:25-27). These incremental issues included “globalisation, international trade regimes, climate change... poor storage and distribution of food... the global economic slowdown... [and] increased food price volatility” (DAFF, 2014:27). Although not explicitly discussed in the policy document itself, the new emphasis on these factors was most likely a reflection on the changing dynamics of food security since 2002, some of which were discussed in chapter two. These were manifest most significantly during the 2007-2008 food crisis (insofar that it was linked to the global economic crisis); financial speculation in agricultural commodities; the intersections of food, energy and water markets; the increasing consensus around climate change issues and their direct impacts on food security as well as the rising importance of governance in tackling all of these issues (Burney, 2014:162; Candel, 2014:592; Sage, 2013:74). Complicating the issue of food security policy, these relations can be understood as a nexus in which changes in any one of these variables can have a significant impact on the others (Kumar, 2014:214). The new National Policy recognises this when stating: “Food and Nutrition Security is a complex issue characterised by inter-disciplinary approaches. This...policy... seeks to provide an overarching guiding framework to maximise synergy between the different strategies and programmes of government and civil society” (DAFF, 2014:28). In deliberating food security issues, DAFF (2014:28) outlined six major challenges in South Africa, those being:

- i. Inadequate safety nets and emergency management systems.
- ii. Lacklustre use of productive resources (especially farming inputs and skills).
- iii. Climate change and changing land use patterns.
- iv. Inadequate access to appropriate knowledge and resources for informed dietary choices.
- v. Limited access to processing facilities and markets for small-scale farmers, fishers and foresters.
- vi. The need for timely information on food security status and indicators.



The policy responses to these challenges are based on a similar conceptualisation of food security that was expressed in the IFSS. This is evident in the policy's definition of food and nutrition security as "Access to and control over the physical, social and economic means to ensure sufficient, safe and nutritious food at all times, for all South Africans, in order to meet the dietary requirements for a healthy life" (DAFF, 2014:32). Based on the FAO's 2001 definition of food security, the policy also emphasises the four pillars of food security espoused by the FAO but in a slightly different manner. This is most aptly illustrated in the policy document itself which states:

These definitions all incorporate four dimensions, which can be used as a platform for the structuring of a National Policy on Food and Nutrition Security:

- Adequate availability of food,
- Accessibility (physical, social and economic means) of food,
- Utilisation, quality and safety of food, and
- Stability of food supply (DAFF, 2014:32).

DAFF's focus on the stability of food supply is particularly telling in its divergence from more recent food security discourse. In recent food security discourse (see FAO 2001 or Otero, Pechlanar and Gürcan, 2013:267), the factor of stability is used to describe the consistent upkeep of all food security determinants (supply, access and utilisation) as temporal disruptions in any of these cause food insecurity. DAFF's explicit focus on only stable food supplies is worth noting due to its conceptual underpinnings and an emphasis on agricultural production.

The overall purpose of the new National Policy is clearly understood by DAFF (2014:29) as supporting the progressive realisation of the right to food, included within the policy's mandate. The policy outlines its ambitions in this regard to provide "a broad framework for the fulfilment of this Constitutional imperative and should serve as a guide to national, provincial and local government in pursuing food security at every level" (DAFF, 2014:29). In providing such a framework, the policy also stated its strategic goal "to ensure the availability, accessibility and affordability of safe and nutritious food at national and household levels" (DAFF, 2014:30). These policy imperatives are reflected in the new National Policy's five main pillars, those being:

1. Improved nutritional safety nets.
2. Improved nutrition education.

3. Increased agricultural investment aimed at local economic development and especially rural areas.
4. Improved market participation of the emerging agricultural sector.
5. Risk management (DAFF, 2014:31).

This strategic outlook by the new National Policy is in most ways similar to those espoused within the IFSS, yet with new emphasis on safety nets, a new pillar of risk management as well as a new strategy in incorporating government procurement programmes to support emerging smallholder farmers. What is interesting, however, is that despite the importance placed on accessibility and affordability stated in its strategic goal, the new National Policy (unlike the IFSS) has no specific strategy or pillar regarding employment creation and income opportunities (DAFF, 2014:31; McLaren, Moyo and Jeffery, 2015:42).

#### **4.4.2.1 New National Policy Strategies**

The pillar of great import within the new National Policy is the improvement of nutritional safety nets and emergency mechanisms for people struggling to realise their right to adequate and sufficient food (DAFF, 2014:31). Following from the IFSS, the new policy shows support for state-led nutritional programmes such as the NSNP, emergency food relief (through food security grants and food parcels) as well as interventions provided for by the private sector, NGOs and CBOs (DAFF, 2014:31). Other important nutritional safety nets and interventions advocated by the policy are the fortifications of foodstuffs and proposals for foodbanks and food kitchens (DAFF, 2014:43).

To address the issues of hidden hunger and the poor nutritional status of South Africans (hungry, vulnerable, overweight and obese alike), the new National Policy emphasises greater nutritional education and related services to enable better dietary choices and the monitoring of nutritional indices. To this effect DAFF (2014:43) proposed the establishment of coordinated “district level nutrition services” to help people in assessing nutritional indices and disseminating information around consumer literacy as well as improving household food management, preparation and meal planning to optimise nutritional intake. Another issue raised by DAFF (2014:39) regarding nutrition security is the residual role now played by indigenous crops in food markets. The policy notes the vast potential of indigenous South African plants to improve micronutrient intake compared to conventionally marketed crops. Additionally, DAFF (2014:39) notes the increased production and market potential through advocating indigenous crops as their increased consumption can bring new opportunities for

resource-poor and marginal farmers as well as for rural economies. On this note the policy also recognises, albeit in passing, the role of agroecology in food security objectives (DAFF, 2014:29).

Investment in agriculture is also seen as a lynchpin in improving food security in South Africa within the new National Policy. In this regard the policy is specifically concerned with agricultural investment geared towards local economic development (especially in rural areas) in conjunction with the provision of subsidised farming inputs, support services, the reinvigoration of irrigation schemes and improved food distribution and storage networks (DAFF, 2014:31,43). Investment is indeed an important policy issue as Greenberg (2010b:2) points out, with agriculture receiving only 1,6% of the national budget when combining both national and provincial government budgets. The issue of market participation for smallholders and emerging farmers is also a cornerstone of this policy framework. This is a problem most certainly endemic for smallholder farmers in the country who face significant barriers to entry in markets largely catering to the needs of highly capitalised and large-scale farming (Greenberg, 2010b:1). In order to address this, the new National Policy seeks to open up market participation for emerging farmers by promoting public-private partnerships, business take-off initiatives, government procurement programmes and through the implementation of the Agri-BEE charter, part of which “requires agro-processing industries to broaden their supply bases to include the emerging agricultural sector” (DAFF, 2014:31,43). This outlook by DAFF is largely congruent with general policy shifts towards smallholder farmers and land reform beneficiaries in particular, with policy focus on opening up markets for smallholders in order that they be given opportunities to “become commercial farmers in their own right” (Greenberg, 2009:7).

The pillar of risk management within the new policy framework is certainly very interesting due to its long-term outlook on food security issues. Risk management here is seen as a pre-emptive measure to help meet future food security challenges in the country. The main focus within this policy measure is for a greater commitment to investment in research and technology to “respond to the production challenges currently facing the country, such as climate change and bio-energy” as well as the protection of prime agricultural land from non-agricultural uses such as mining, game farming or property development (DAFF, 2014:31). The latter point is particularly salient in a context where the total area cultivated in South Africa decreased by 30% between 1994 and 2009 (DAFF, 2014:37). Another important part of this strategy is creating food security information systems, including regular scientific

reviews in order to make better decisions around the status of food security in the country and necessary interventions.

At an institutional level all the above pillars are envisioned to fall under the leadership of government, chaired by the deputy president and advised by a National Food and Nutrition Advisory Committee formed by numerous interest groups including “recognised experts from organized agriculture, food security and consumer bodies, as well as climate change and environmental practitioners and representatives of organised communities” (DAFF, 2014:42). The policy framework also outlines a number of important issues such as a proposal for a centralised framework for food safety and quality governance. In particular, it is proposed in the new National Policy that a singular body should be created to integrate the various entities currently responsible for food safety and quality regulations nationally. The current entities responsible for national food safety and quality standards include the DoH (for food inspection), DAFF (controlling the export of perishable products) and DTI (directing the South African Bureau of Standards) (DAFF, 2014:17). The policy therefore proposes an amalgamation of these functions, to review and develop legislation concerning food safety and for continuity between domestic and international standards (DAFF, 2014:17).

The policy document also briefly addresses the need for a supportive legislative environment for food security policy, although without much specificity aside from a reference to Green and White papers on the issue and a proposed Food and Nutrition Security Act. The lack of food security legislation is indeed a severe limitation in enabling food security policy to become enforceable and to gain high level political support. Hendriks and Olivier (2015:568) explain the limitations of this for food security policy thus:

The lack of food security legislation means that the right to food has no enforceable framework. No mechanisms for ensuring individual and household food security are provided... there is no provision for addressing the structural inequalities that cause food insecurity in South Africa, reneging on the DAFF and government responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the basic human rights of the food insecure.

#### **4.5 Changes in Food Security Policy**

The policy shifts regarding food (in)security since 1994 as discussed in this chapter have undoubtedly changed the ways in which food security has been approached and conceptualised. At the same time some conceptual understandings have remained fairly consistent, such as the prevailing tendency to view food security through a productionist and

rural lense. This is also evident in how, although policy emphasis has shifted significantly towards smallholder and emerging farmers, policy impetus still favours the promotion of commercial models of farming and the integration of black smallholders into the commercial sector (Greenberg, 2009:7). Nevertheless, the policy environment does show some significant changes from the IFSS to the new National Policy, some more beneficial than others, and will be the subject of the following chapter when trying to assess just how well the South African policy frameworks are suited to ensure improved access to food and genuine long-term food security.

## **Chapter 5: An Analysis of South Africa's Food Security Policy**

### **Frameworks**

The previous chapters have illustrated some of the contemporary shifts in discourse concerning hunger and malnutrition, poverty, development and environmentalism. Where the issues of food and agriculture are concerned, these shifts are most obvious in changing food security and food sovereignty discourses. It should be quite clear how despite some common ground between these two discourses, food sovereignty represents a distinctively political and radical discourse concerned with not only food security but with power relations within food systems, social and environmental justice, sustainability and popular sovereignty. A common concern within both food security and food sovereignty discourses, however, is the attainment of food security and preservation of its defining features – those being the availability of food, access to food (physical, economic and social), utilisation of food and the stability of these factors over time. Considering this, the following chapter will provide an analysis of South Africa's food security policy frameworks and their ability to progressively support increased access to food for the food insecure and for genuine long-term food security. In such an analysis a food sovereignty perspective will be favoured. The reason for doing so is that the radical nature of food sovereignty resonates quite clearly with many contemporary issues facing post-apartheid South Africa. These issues include chronic food insecurity; poverty and unemployment; dispossession, alienation and landlessness; poor education, skills and health; asymmetrical trade relations, a weakening currency and trade deficit; corporate consolidation and market concentration; a nutrition transition and poorer quality food; environmental degradation and climate change as well as social differentiation in access to food.

As is clearly explained by Clapp (2014b:207), despite a tendency for critics to conflate food security with a normative agenda that is typically productionist or neoliberal in nature, it is a purely descriptive concept that explains a scenario of society free of hunger and where the dietary needs of all people are satisfied. Food sovereignty, on the other hand, can be seen as a normative concept that is prescriptive in nature, advocating precise political, social, economic and ecological conditions under which genuine long-term food security can be supported and sustained (Clapp, 2014b:207). This is an important distinction to make as the argument presented within this thesis is that the policies supportive of food security and the right to

food under section 27 of the Constitution cannot be depoliticised in South Africa's contentious political environment. For food security and access to food to be supported in substantively more just and sustainable ways they need to be supported by a distinctive normative agenda that avoids the pitfalls of a business-as-usual approach to what is a deeply political issue. It is therefore argued that food sovereignty discourse provides this normative agenda in ways that are particularly relevant for contemporary issues in South Africa and as such an analysis of the country's food security policy framework is approached through a food sovereignty perspective. This analysis is formed on the basis of a number of core themes within food sovereignty discourse as they were discussed in chapter three – namely access to productive resources, agroecology as well as trade and localisation. The analysis looked at both the IFSS and new National Policy and assessed their ability to buttress these food sovereignty principles as well as constraints and limitations the policies face in this regard.

### **5.1 Access to Productive Resources**

Access to productive resources is one of the most topical issues within food sovereignty, being vital for supporting rural livelihoods and agricultural production. Some of the most important requirements for smallholders especially (discussed in chapter three) include access to farming land, grazing land, forests and fisheries; seeds and genetic resources; credit; extension services; and storage, transport and irrigation infrastructure. Access to these resources can mean the difference between market access for surplus produce, subsistence agriculture or the abandonment of agriculture altogether. Du Toit (2009:8) and Jacobson (2009:208) explain how the lack of investment in rural infrastructure in the Eastern Cape, for example, can explain in large part its political and economic isolation as well as the jobless de-agrarianisation and declining household agriculture that has been endemic across the province. Within the IFSS framework, these policy imperatives can be seen in the policy's main priority area and first pillar to increase household food production and trade. Within this pillar, the chief strategy of the IFSS was to promote household production and trade through supporting the ability of food insecure households to access productive resources. There are a number of policy prescriptions outlined by the NDA (2002:28-9) that are relevant in this regard, including:

- Increased access to productive resources (such as land, credit, technology and training).
- The promotion of small-scale irrigation systems and rainwater harnessing.

- Improved access to credit for the poor, especially poor women.
- Agrarian reform to utilise idle agricultural land.
- Access to time and labour saving technologies for food insecure households, especially for women.
- Improved and comprehensive extension services attuned to the needs of smallholder farmers.
- Monitoring the impact of liberalised trade regimes on food insecure households.
- Protection of food and agricultural industries from dumping and unfair trade practices.
- Conforming to WTO regulations regarding import duties yet still ensuring support for vulnerable groups and state spending on social development.
- Improving rural infrastructure.
- The commercialising agriculture to improve “income and employment generation among food insecure households” (NDA, 2002:28-30).

Whilst there are a number of policy initiatives outlined above that are problematic from a food sovereignty perspective, there are still some that could be supportive of a food sovereignty agenda, although they still lack the specificity required to support such an agenda in policy and practice. Access to land, technology, training and extension services are no doubt an important aspect in this regard. In the case of land, however, there is not much clarity within the IFSS about what kinds of land rights would be supported and for what purposes. The policy does not distinguish the different kinds of access rights to land – rights for agricultural, grazing, forestry or natural resource uses for example are not distinguished.

This also poses a particular morass for the policy’s position on land reform of “idle” land (NDA, 2002:29). Whilst the use and productivity of land is no doubt of great importance, the notion of “idle” land may differ significantly depending on a number of preconceptions around ideal land usage, different models of agriculture, efficiency and productivity (Schanbacher, 2010:56). The multiple uses of land employed by small agroecological farmers or pastoralists, for example, can lead to misperceptions of underutilisation. This is especially so for land uses such as grazing, growing mulch or leaving land fallow in order to rejuvenate soil quality. At the same time, practices under commercial large-scale farming can be viewed in a similar light, such as the abandonment of exhausted soils, large tracts of uncultivated land and empty spaces in fields required for manoeuvring large machinery. These two



examples are by no means a comprehensive analysis of debates surrounding appropriate or efficient land use but they do illustrate how the notion of “idle” land is a contested one (McMahon, 2013:197). The vagaries around the IFSS’s call for land reform of “idle” calls into question what kinds of land it is referring to, who such land would be distributed to and for what uses. Land reform in this regard for use in agrofuels, for example, is not likely to be conducive to food security.

Another reservation from a food sovereignty perspective would be that such proposals could in fact lead to worrying new patterns of land re-concentration and new enclosures. If the commercial, large-scale model of agriculture is viewed as being the most proactive and efficient in land use, proposals for redistributing “idle” land could lead to a wider distribution of land to large-scale commercial operations and large landowners whilst communally held land (for grazing or natural resource use) could come under enclosure and privatisation. McMahon (2013:197) notes, for instance, that similar conceptions of “idle” land and the notion of *terra nullius* (land belonging to nobody) were used to legitimise colonial conquest over indigenous peoples and enclosures of their land throughout the world. On the other hand, such proposals to redistribute “idle” land could lead to a wider distribution of land to small agroecological farm models, with a strong argument posed for their prudent and efficient use of resources and land presented in chapter three. The trajectory the aforementioned policy proposals would take thus depends on preconceptions of efficient land use and what can be considered “idle” land. Within the IFSS the classification of “idle” land is not made, leaving the prospects of these proposals for food security and food sovereignty a little difficult to decipher.

Policy proposals within the IFSS to support extension services, technology and training are particularly noteworthy in the emphasis the policy framework places on extension services responsive to “the needs of the small-scale farmers who often practice mixed farming and undertake a variety of enterprises” (NDA, 2002:29). This stance is congruent with the need for policy shifts towards extension for resource-poor smallholder farmers as discussed in chapter four. These proposals should, however, be placed in the policy context of budget constraints and shortages of skills and extension officers to provide the timely support that many smallholder farmers require. As a policy initiative, Greenberg (2010b:23) discusses the potential of community-based extension workers which have been introduced in pilot projects more recently. Similar to home-based care workers supported by the DoH, community-based extension workers with the right training and remuneration could act as “auxiliaries to the

formal [extension] system” in decentralised extension services. This has significant potential considering the obvious shortages in extension officers, the remoteness of many farmers and the resources required for extension officers to provide the personal and face-to-face services that farmers require.

From a food sovereignty perspective, the recognition of the divergent needs and ambitions of smallholder farmers is a positive step. This is evident in the proposal for extension services to cater for a plurality of different agricultural practices and for different scales and purposes of production. The focus on multiple enterprises also resonates well with the host of different livelihood strategies employed by the rural poor, which goes beyond agricultural production to off-farm income generation and various economic activities and businesses. This outlook within the IFSS could also simultaneously support some of food sovereignty’s other core tenets, including agroecology and a focus on local economic development and trade.

The importance of rural infrastructure is a vital policy issue in assisting resource-poor and marginal smallholder farmers to pursue agriculture as a viable livelihood strategy and gain access to markets. Particular emphasis needs to be placed on transport infrastructure enabling remote farmers access to other areas and available markets, as well as storage infrastructure not only to reduce waste but for farmers to manage supply and take advantage of changing market conditions (Windfuhr and Jonsén, 2005:28). The proposal within the IFSS to support small-scale irrigation and water harnessing also has the potential to support the rights of smallholders to produce. Such proposals, however, would require a broader discussion of water use rights and the types of irrigation used, as conventional irrigations systems, which use up to 60% of South Africa’s freshwater resources, lead to only 40% of applied water reaching targeted crops (Greenberg, 2010b:10). Larger issues also need to be addressed, such as the place of the commercial sector in gaining access to the country’s water supply and the promotion of water intensive irrigation schemes, not to mention the country’s controversial control of Lesotho’s water resources to provide Gauteng, Mpumalanga and the Free State with uninterrupted water supply (Kings, 2015:2-3).

Access to credit is another important issue, as credit is an important resource for farmers to increase investment in their land, to overcome production constraints and to engage in building rural enterprises (Schabacher, 2010:27). Support within the IFSS for increasing access to credit, especially for women, is also an important recognition of the central role that women play in rural economies and the need to support both farming and non-farming

enterprises. A significant challenge for smallholders in a macroeconomic context of privatisation and deregulation is their limited capability to access formal credit. Alternative services such as microcredit or informal credit, on the other hand, can be prohibitively expensive and even exploitative. A number of factors can limit a smallholder's access to credit from commercial banks, including insecure tenure rights, lack of collateral and comprehensive business plans, a non-commercial focus of production as well as a focus on long-term farming sustainability rather than short-term business considerations (Brenni, 2015:23; Greenberg, 2013:22). Access to other forms of credit such as through the Land Bank and the Mafisa programme, despite their contentions as illustrated by Greenberg (2010b:20), are therefore important in enabling smallholders to continue investing in agriculture, increase production and engage in rural enterprises. That being said, these strategies should also be sensitive to the multiple ways in which credit and debt affect the rural poor.

Whilst access to credit for smallholders is important in overcoming production constraints as outlined in chapter three, there are still inherent risks associated with increasing dependence on credit markets in agriculture-based livelihoods (Schanbacher, 2010:28). The high level of indebtedness amongst farmers is an increasingly global phenomenon leading to bankruptcy, abandonment of agriculture, re-concentration of land holdings and high rates of farmer suicide (Kaufman, 2012:24). This is a phenomenon explained quite comprehensively by Patel (2012:39-53). This is also a particularly pressing issue within the FSM, as high levels of indebtedness amongst farmers have typically been tied to the promotion of commercial agriculture dependent on increasingly expensive synthetic inputs, corporate seed and water-intensive irrigation. This has required farmers to take on increasing amounts of debt to purchase inputs, irrigation infrastructure and shoulder the high risk and volatile prices involved in farming. Access to credit is no doubt important in enabling farmers to purchase the resources they need to keep them farming and investing in their land, but what is perhaps paramount from a food sovereignty perspective is that they are able to do so without becoming dependent on credit markets or any particular farming model.

The focus on the commercialisation of agriculture and promoting access to “time and labour saving technologies” within the IFSS are definitely problematic from a food sovereignty perspective (NDA, 2002:29-30). Advocating for the commercialisation of agriculture on the part of the NDA, whilst still vague in its use of the term, requires further scrutiny due to its limitations for a pro-poor smallholder strategy for agricultural and rural development and the

commitment of the NDA to smallholders “who often practice mixed farming and undertake a variety of enterprises” (NDA, 2002:29). The promotion of commercial farming here would be congruent with broader policy ambitions to create a commercial class of emerging black farmers pursuing conventional farming models who could be integrated into existing agro-processing, retail and export value chains. From a food sovereignty perspective this would prove problematic owing to the dependence of such farming models on capital and chemical intensive, ecologically unsustainable farming methods and their limited contributions to local economic development and job creation (Rosset, 2011:90; McMichael, 2010:173). While the FSM is not wholly opposed to new agricultural technology and practices *per se*, caution would be given to the promotion in policy of labour-saving (capital intensive) technology in economies where capital-intensive technologies are increasingly imported and expensive, where levels of unemployment are high and where there is a surplus of largely unskilled labour, as is the case in South Africa (McMahon, 2013:239).

The access rights of farmers and rural populations to seeds and genetic resources is somewhat neglected in both the IFSS and new National Policy. Described by Shiva (in Schanbacher, 2010:58) as “a gift of nature” and “the first link in the food chain... the repository of life’s future evolution”, seeds are an integral part of the FSM and the rights of people to produce food. Within the FSM, genetic resources are treated as the common heritage of humanity and are important in rural livelihoods for food, medicine, building materials, and healthy ecosystems. Access to these resources in a non-commodified way is an important part of food sovereignty advocacy. Within the IFSS, issues surrounding seeds and genetic resources are not directly addressed. This is not surprising considering the policy’s food security outlook, but the protection of these rights could still be a progressive policy initiative in supporting the rural poor, whether informed by food sovereignty discourse or not.

The focus on gender issues is also important here, as the connection between seeds, genetic resources and gender in chapter three shows. Within the IFSS framework, the access rights of women are mentioned specifically in connection with credit and “time and labour saving technologies” yet do not mention access to other important resources such as land, seeds, irrigation or extension services (NDA, 2002:29). Owing to the increasing feminisation of agriculture and the historically undervalued role women play in rural life, addressing gendered constraints in access to productive resources is crucial for household food security and for smallholders to overcome gendered production constraints. As was mentioned in chapter four, the Communal Land Rights Act, whilst under the administration of tribal

councils, could pose a significant challenge in supporting the land and tenure rights of rural women. This legislative dilemma as well as the limited scope in which the IFSS addresses gender issues in agriculture poses a significant conceptual barrier for pro-poor, gender-responsive agrarian reform in South Africa.

Within the new National Policy, the issue of access rights is recognised as one of South Africa's foremost food security challenges. DAFF (2014:28) recognises this when stating "In cases where productive land is available, it is not always optimally utilised for food production, often for want of inputs (including finance, equipment and water), or skills". Problematic in this stance, however, is that access to productive land, even before it can be used optimally, is not discussed. Access to productive resources also resonates with the new National Policy outlook towards greater investment in agriculture in rural areas. Investment in agriculture is envisioned by DAFF (2014:31) to be targeted towards local economic development in rural areas, focussing on the emerging agricultural sector. Infrastructural deficits in remote rural areas are recognised by DAFF (2014:37) as an important policy issue in this regard. The policy framework proposes government-led storage facilities in particular to close gaps in access to rural infrastructure. Irrigation infrastructure is also recognised within the new National Policy as an important part in increasing the viability of agriculture for resource-poor and marginal farmers (DAFF, 2014:43). This is especially so for farmers dependent on rain-fed agriculture in water-scarce regions, although the irrigation models promoted can be quite contentious, as was alluded to earlier.

Another policy proposal within the new National Policy that resonates with the rights of producers is DAFF's (2014:31) proposal to protect prime agricultural land. The alienation of prime agricultural land for purposes such as mining, property development and game farming can have significant implications for agricultural productivity and food security in South Africa. Within a food sovereignty framework, this stance by DAFF (2014:31) would be congruent with the rights of rural people to produce food and utilise land sustainably for the benefit of local communities. The protection of prime agricultural land could also be useful in preventing the alienation of communal land from rural communities and in preventing new forms of enclosure. That being said, it is not clear under what circumstances and for whom prime agricultural land would be protected, nor for what exact uses (large-scale commercial farmers, smallholders or local communities for instance). From a food sovereignty perspective, such land would need to be protected for all people willing and able to utilise it for food production and sustainable livelihoods. Caution would be given against preserving

such land for use in environmentally and socially destructive large-scale commercial agriculture or for agrofuels, for example. These considerations are also borne out of the same dilemma facing the IFSS framework about preconceptions of ideal and efficient land use.

## **5.2 Trade and Localisation**

The issues of trade and place are very important determinants of food systems and the access to food that they provide for people living in different locales. The debate concerning the place of international trade in food sovereignty is still a contested one, as the different perspectives outlined in chapter three showed. What is clear in food sovereignty discourse though is that international trade regimes, such that they are, have not been beneficial for many of the world's poorer countries, their smallholder producers and consumers. These trade regimes have seen declining terms of trade for poorer countries, declining incomes for farmers and worse quality food for consumers – as is illustrated by Bello (2009:148-9). A lengthy discussion on international trade is beyond the scope of this thesis but what is important to stress here is the need to strengthen domestic agricultural markets caught between low levels of investment, decreasing areas of cultivated land, increasingly volatile international markets, a weakening Rand and ecological shocks that have strained South Africa's domestic agriculture (particularly the ongoing water crisis) (Hendriks, 2014:19; Pather, 2015:14; Kings, 2015:2-3; DAFF, 2014:37). Added to these issues are the high levels of corporate concentration and market consolidation in South African value chains, high rates of unemployment and high consumer inflation (COPAC, 2014:25). Consequently, much can be said for the alternative model of localised food systems advocated for the FSM in facing the aforementioned challenges in South Africa.

Within the IFSS, there are a number of policy prescriptions that could be supportive of localised food systems in both the first and second pillar of the policy framework. Within the policy's first pillar of production and trade a number of these have been discussed already, including access to productive resources (land, technology and irrigation), credit and extension services. Such policy interventions could be an integral first step in supporting local smallholders to supply non-farming populations with quality local produce, as well as facilitating local economic growth and enabling rural populations to participate in the agricultural sector and local enterprises. The proposals within the IFSS to monitor the impact of liberalised trade regimes and unfair dumping on South African markets are also important policy prescriptions when considering the possibilities for localised food and trade systems.

The NDA (2002:28) acknowledges the importance of this when stating that “unfair competition could damage local food production capacity”. Confronting WTO prescriptions detrimental to domestic agriculture and promoting localised, smallholder-driven rural development strategies would be an important policy directive from a food sovereignty perspective. Whilst these are important policy concerns considering their prominence in food security and food sovereignty discourse, the NDA (2002:29) advocates these policy prescriptions alongside conforming to WTO regulations in removing import duties whilst still maintaining “government expenditure on social development and empowerment of vulnerable groups”. This stance seems somewhat antithetical to the prevention of dumping and would be considered something of an oxymoron in food sovereignty discourse. The ways in which the IFSS seeks to reconcile these divergent interests is not made clear. The policy’s favouring of commercial agriculture (including the promotion of labour-saving technologies) also brings to question the ability or willingness within the NDA to challenge the entrenched power of agribusiness, retail or the commercial farming sector. This is important because the concentrated power and monopoly tendency in both upstream and downstream markets in South Africa can become barriers to promoting localised, smallholder-driven agriculture and trade.

On a related note, the support for comprehensive extension and support services for mixed farming practices and different rural enterprises within the IFSS can support the plurality espoused within the FSM regarding agroecology, production choices and livelihood strategies (NDA, 2002:29). This could be provided in the form of on-farm assistance, knowledge sharing, technical and skills training as well as information dissemination helping farmers to gain access to markets. With regard to rural enterprise, a reinvigoration of support services could provide support needed for livelihood diversification and a host of economic activities including creating businesses and petty commodity production – ranging from small enterprises such as selling firewood, natural resources and traditional medicines; to craft making; transportation; crèches; spaza shops; butcheries and restaurants for example (Neves and du Toit, 2013:97; Hajdu, 2009:142-3). This could also create potential forward and backward linkages between the smallholder sector and rural economies, creating economic multipliers and mutual dependencies between farmers and entrepreneurs. Market access is a significant issue in this regard, creating spaces and incentives for local farmers, artisans, businesses and entrepreneurs to produce goods and services catering to the needs of local economies in mutually dependent ways. The support for rural infrastructure in transport,

storage and distribution would also be important in this regard, yet structured to the needs of a diversified local economy instead of South Africa's commercial core.

Within the IFSS's second pillar for income and employment creation, localised trade and agricultural systems could be supported by proposals of the NDA (2002:30) to support labour-intensive public works programmes in rural agricultural areas directed towards creating rural infrastructure. Additionally, these policy proposals would be directed towards supporting small and medium scale enterprises, skills training as well as productive asset creation. The purpose of these proposals was to provide short-term opportunities for the low-skilled labour sector connected to longer-term skills development in rural economies, which could also provide spin-offs for rural infrastructure development and support for rural enterprises. The overall objective for the IFSS in this regard was to "create a labour-intensive and diversified agricultural sector with strong links to the other economic sectors" (NDA, 2002:30). Skills training is a very important proposal within this framework, as it is vital for the creation of a diversified rural economy and for enabling farmers as well as the rural poor to engage in farming and non-farm income generation, diversifying their livelihood strategies and spreading risk. As noted by Koch (2011:7), however, these policy prescriptions in the form of the EPWP have had limited abilities to create forward and backward linkages in rural economies, boosting rural infrastructure or creating productive assets due to the focus of the EPWP in the fields of energy and road infrastructure.

Within the new National Policy, initiatives relevant for localised trade and farming systems include its proposals to promote "investment in agriculture geared towards local economic development, particularly in rural areas" as well as proposals to increase the market participation of the emerging agricultural sector (DAFF, 2014:31). In the first instance, DAFF (2014:31) envisions improved agricultural investment in the form of subsidised inputs and support services for producers, adequate investment in storage and distribution networks as well as reinvigorating irrigation schemes. As a policy initiative, the focus of this proposal is to assist farmers and rural economies in overcoming production constraints and improving their access to infrastructure required to get produce to market. In the second instance, the aim of DAFF (2014:31) in facilitating market participation for the emerging agricultural sector is an explicit attempt to incorporate rural economies and smallholders into the economic mainstream. This is evident by the new National Policy's emphasis on the use of public-private partnerships, business take-off initiatives, government procurement programmes and implementation of the Agri-BEE charter (DAFF, 2014:31).



When talking about access to markets, however, it is important to pay attention to the kinds of markets that are made available and the terms and conditions under which market access is created. The issue of adverse incorporation is important here, as is described astutely by du Toit (2009). The marginalisation of rural areas from mainstream economies and markets is not as simple as the dichotomy between inclusion and exclusion from seemingly lucrative markets. Du Toit (2009:2) explains this when arguing that “poverty and disadvantage themselves can often flow not from exclusion, but from inclusion on disadvantageous terms, into a system that in itself is exploitative”. Within such models of adverse inclusion some smallholders and enterprises would be better positioned to take advantage of market access than others, while others still might be exposed to exploitation through market access – indeed the plight of many smallholders in global export commodity chains is indicative of the dangers of adverse incorporation. This is why a class-analytic perspective is also important within the theme of localisation in food sovereignty, in order to acknowledge the differentiated ways in which the rural poor might benefit from and interact with markets, the terms of market access and who might be disadvantaged within new markets (Du Toit, 2009:6-7).

Within the new National Policy the promotion of subsidised inputs and support services could have significant benefits for resource-poor farmers struggling with production constraints, bearing in mind that secure access rights to land are crucial if these supports are to have any meaning at all. Local markets for smallholders are also dependent on adequate infrastructure in the form of transport, storage and distribution. The proposals by DAFF (2014:31) to increase storage and distribution networks can facilitate the growth of localised markets for smallholders provided they are catered to the infrastructural requirements of local economies. Regarding irrigation infrastructure, DAFF (2014:42) acknowledges the need for unique blends of “traditional knowledge and innovative research” in order to produce research and technology more adept at facing the challenges of climate change, pollution and environmental degradation. Whilst still unspecific, this does show the recognition of the need to move beyond unconditional support for conventional and highly modernised practices. This might facilitate broader discussions around new irrigation strategies in agricultural policy. The promotion of public-private partnerships, business take-offs and the implementation of the Agri-BEE charter within the fourth pillar of the new National Policy aimed to improve market access for the emerging agricultural sector. These policy prescriptions were driven by an impetus to broaden the participation and ownership of black

farmers into the economic mainstream, particularly into South Africa's existing agricultural value chains. This policy directive is envisioned in the Agri-BEE charter itself, for example, which "requires agro-processing industries to broaden their supply bases to include the emerging agricultural sector" (DAFF, 2014:43).

These predominantly market-driven initiatives are largely consistent with South Africa's broader agricultural and land reform policy strategies to assist black smallholder farmers to become "commercial farmers in their own right" (Greenberg, 2009:7). From a food sovereignty perspective, the outlook of these proposals would not suffice in promoting localised trade and agricultural systems in policymaking. It is quite clear that the commercial outlook of these policy prescriptions favours the status quo in existing agro-processing, retail and export value chains, with significant ramifications only in ownership structures and procurement strategies. The long trade distances, ecologically unsustainable practices and exploitation of workers, consumers and the marginal position of most of South Africa's resource-poor farmers would remain largely unchallenged. This would be contra to the FSM's advocacy of pro-poor, gender-responsive agrarian reform (Akram-Lodhi, 2015:568). For such proposals to have any meaningful impact from a food sovereignty perspective, they would have to do more to challenge the entrenched corporate power within agricultural value chains and create policy spaces for the development of localised distribution mechanisms, multiple production practices, integration with rural enterprises and the provision of living wages for all workers within localised agricultural value chains.

That being said, the proposal within the new National Policy to promote government procurement of food from smallholders and community-based production initiatives (see DAFF, 2014:30) does have some progressive leanings from a food sovereignty perspective. This kind of government-led support is intended to open up market access to smallholders and rural communities by providing an alternative market for their produce where they might otherwise be excluded from conventional value chains and retail. Resource-poor farmers typically struggle to meet the high standards and specifications of conventional value chains regarding aesthetic properties, sanitation, packaging and economies of scale – measures that effectively act as barriers to entry from conventional markets (Fuchs, Kalfagianni and Arentsen, 2009:30). Government procurement programmes have the potential to create alternative markets for produce that, whilst still nutritionally adequate and of good quality, do not meet the stringent specifications of conventional markets. Such a government-led strategy also has the potential to reduce some of the food waste in value chains (at least at a

procurement and distribution level), as the exceedingly high procurement standards in conventional value chains has the consequence of high rates of rejection and waste (Patel, 2012:9-10; Cunnington, 2009:36;05).<sup>12</sup>

### **5.3 Agroecology**

As the literature surrounding food sovereignty discourse has shown, the FSM has promoted small-scale farming, agroecology and localised trade systems not as isolated issues but as development strategies that act in consort to have the biggest impact on local economies, smallholder producers, environmental preservation, sustainable livelihoods and social welfare. An analysis of agroecology within South Africa's food security policy framework is therefore important to see how policies have incorporated issues of environmental sustainability and agricultural productivity with other food security and rural development strategies. As chapter three illustrated, there are a number of arguments made within the FSM attesting to the desirability of agroecology in addressing food-related crises and to facilitate more radical and substantive agrarian reform. These arguments attest to the ability of agroecology to:

- i. Be more productive than conventional farming, especially when considering the productivity of all farm components, the use of inputs and land as well as ecosystem services (Rosset, 2011:90).
- ii. Produce healthier, more diverse and nutritionally rich foods (Holt-Giménez and Patel, 2009:107).
- iii. Be more ecologically sustainable (Altieri, 2009:103-4).
- iv. Conserve and strengthen biodiversity (Altieri, 2009:106).
- v. Create more employment and remain economically viable (Holt-Giménez and Patel, 2009:116).
- vi. Be more attuned to the needs of and benefit resource-poor farmers (Altieri, 2002:6).
- vii. Increase the incomes of farmers and create greater local economic multipliers (Rosset, 2006b:308).

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<sup>12</sup> Oxfam (2014:25) calculates the amount of food waste in South Africa to be in the region of 9 million tons annually, or 30% of the country's agricultural output. The bulk of this waste occurs at the distribution, processing and packaging stages in the food value chain (Oxfam, 2014:25). Wittman (2010:93) notes that at a global level, estimates of food waste throughout all levels of production, processing, distribution, retail and consumption can reach over 50% of all food grown globally.

Policy prospects for the development of agroecology within South Africa's food security policy frameworks are extremely limited. This is due mostly to the scant recognition and deliberation given to issues of environmental sustainability and alternative agriculture in both the IFSS and new National Policy. Although the policies are not written from a food sovereignty background, it is nevertheless concerning that they did not include significant environmental concerns. They are, after all, policies designed to direct South Africa towards achieving and sustaining long-term food security – the neglect of environmental sustainability in the policies thus seems like a significant oversight. For the most part, any prospects for alternative agriculture are only paid lip-service (as in the new National Policy) and issues concerning environmental sustainability are either only implied or made in passing. Nevertheless, there are a number of policy prescriptions provided that have implications for agroecological practices that deserve attention here.

Within the IFSS, the NDA (2002:29) supports the increased and comprehensive provision of extension services especially for smallholders “who often practice mixed farming and undertake a variety of enterprises”, which has been discussed earlier. In addition, the NDA (2002:29) promotes greater investment in “productivity-enhancing, environmentally sustainable technologies for the agriculture and agro-processing sector, targeting small-scale producers”. The focus within the IFSS on comprehensive extension services for mixed farming practices and environmentally sustainable technologies does have potential to accommodate the agroecological practices of smallholder farmers in need of state support. From a food sovereignty perspective this potential would be contingent on the agroecological training of extension officers and the incorporation of a multiplicity of farming practices within the public extension service. These would include a host of indigenous knowledge systems, new innovations and hybrid practices that aim to boost the ecological capacity of farms and improve synergy between the ecological and human components of farming systems (Altieri, 2002:8). Considering the ability of agroecology to support ecosystem functioning, preserve biodiversity, enhance resource conservation and its ability to increase the long-term productivity of farms, the incorporation of agroecological technologies and practices within policymaking could support the ambitions of the IFSS to increase investment in technologies that both increase the productivity of farms and are more adept at environmental preservation.

Within the new National Policy, the prospects for agroecology in policymaking are addressed most directly by DAFF's (2014:42) recognition of the need for improved agricultural

knowledge systems and greater investment in research and technology. The policy recognises the challenges facing South African agriculture and food security from environmental degradation in the form of soil erosion, pollution, declining plant and animal biodiversity as well as deforestation (DAFF, 2014:42). To meet these challenges the policy framework proposes increased investment in research and technology related to climate change, rising input costs as well as investment and research in crops adapted to adverse climates, pest and disease management, irrigation management and “biogas digesters” (DAFF, 2014:42). Investment and research in agroecology could certainly make headway in facing the aforementioned challenges.

The new National Policy also has implications for agroecology and food sovereignty through its promotion of indigenous crops. DAFF (2014:39) recognises the potential of indigenous crops to increase micronutrient intake, whilst also recognising the isolation of indigenous crops from conventional markets. The policy recognises that many indigenous foods such as cowpeas, amaranth, bambara ground nut and spider plant are richer in micronutrients than many commercially grown crops and therefore hold great potential for increased micronutrient intake (DAFF, 2014:39). The policy thus promotes the production of indigenous crops by food insecure households and recognises the potential for their marketability if consumption is increased, as was mentioned in chapter four (DAFF, 2014:39). From a food sovereignty perspective, the promotion of indigenous crops could advance the autonomy of smallholder farmers and consumers by widening the range of foods produced and sold as well as supporting their cultural significance and creating opportunities for rural economies. A significant limitation for indigenous foods is the limited markets for them, making their production by smallholders largely limited to household consumption. Broadening the production possibilities of smallholders in this way will also increase the economic viability of producing indigenous crops within the repertoire of polycultures used in agroecology.

#### **5.4 Nutritional Interventions and Social Safety Nets**

Although the analysis of South Africa’s food security policies has thus far focussed on their proposals and prescriptions most relevant for some of food sovereignty’s core themes, there still remain aspects of the policy frameworks that do not fit neatly into the core tenets of food sovereignty. Nevertheless, these remaining proposals and prescriptions are of great significance in their ability to increase the nutritional status of the food insecure and transfer

entitlements to food. These policy concerns have been largely consistent from the IFSS through to the new National Policy. Within the IFSS, the policies of most significance in this regard are subsumed in its third pillar of nutrition and food safety as well as its fourth pillar of safety nets and emergency mechanisms (NDA, 2002:30-31). Within the new National Policy these outlooks correspond with its first pillar to improve nutritional safety nets and in its second pillar to improve nutrition education (DAFF, 2014:31).

Within the IFSS, the target of improving nutrition and food safety was to be initiated most significantly through increased public education about nutrition, improved nutrition monitoring methods and targeted interventions for vulnerable groups including the fortification of basic staples, vitamin supplements and the NSNP (NDA, 2002:31). The new National Policy also pursued a nutrition strategy based on improving public education and continuance of the NSNP, with the further ambition to include district-level nutrition services which could help targeted communities and households in monitoring nutritional indices, consumer literacy and product dissemination as well as skills in food management and meal planning. While nutrition interventions such as these play a significant role in boosting the nutritional status of the food insecure and vulnerable, improving informed dietary choices and monitoring nutritional indices, there are a number of shortcomings from a food sovereignty perspective.

#### **5.4.1 Constrained Incomes and “Pseudo Foods”**

In the case of food fortification and vitamin supplements it is important not to gloss over the circumstances that make these interventions necessary in the first place. Their necessity is a product of two coexisting phenomena in current food systems and South African society – the inability of the food insecure to access and afford a diverse and nutritious diet as well as poorer quality food available across value chains. The poor nutritional status of many South Africans can be attributable to poor access to food and inadequate purchasing power. South African households are increasingly dependent on purchased food and – due to high rates of poverty, unemployment and consumer inflation – many households are unable to afford a diverse range of foods to satisfy their dietary needs (Pereira, 2014:10). This conundrum is also exacerbated by poor access to food, particularly in rural and informal urban areas where access to a more diverse diet is dependent not only on income but also on access to distant markets through transportation networks, further increasing the cost of procuring adequate food. The limited access to food and constrained income of many South Africans often means

that the bulk of their diet may consist of basic staples, leading to micronutrient deficiencies and hence the necessity of nutrition interventions. From a food sovereignty perspective, these glaring realities need to be addressed by better integration of nutrition interventions with the creation of production-based and exchange-based entitlements to food.

The reliance of poor households on basic staples (and increasingly on processed foods) brings to the fore another contentious issue that South African food security policy has been reluctant to address – the practices of agro-processing industries (Pereira, 2014:13). Modernised practices of agro-processing industries have been criticised widely by food activists for saturating markets with a widening range of energy-dense yet nutrient-poor processed foods, referred to by Winson (2013:25) as “pseudo foods”. Much of this criticism has been focused on the refinement and processing techniques developed by agro-processors. Patel (2012:266) and Lawrence (2004:184) provide illuminating expositions on these processes, including the removal of nutrient-rich components of basic staples to increase shelf-life or for value-adding enterprises such as animal feed or nutrition supplements. In processed foods, similar processes include the substitution of ingredients for cheaper but nutritionally inferior ingredients. Such practices are implemented for the purposes of reducing retail prices, increasing shelf-life, increasing the bulk of products or to cut production costs (Lawrence, 2004:184). These processes can also significantly increase levels of fats, sugars, salt and synthetic additives in processed foods, which has been a notable feature in the rising rates of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, obesity, cardiovascular diseases and certain cancers (Igumbor et al., 2012:1; Lawrence, 2004:196; Winson, 2013:143).

The net effect of these shifts in production and processing techniques in agro-processing industries has been to significantly alter the range and quality of goods available on the shelves of the modern day supermarkets at prices the poor can afford. The declining nutritional quality of many basic foodstuffs has, needless to say, reduced the nutritional intake of the poor – for the hungry, overweight and obese alike (Patel, 2012:9). These processes are part of the increasing necessity of nutrition interventions in policymaking as the poor find their purchasing power inadequate to afford a diverse diet and where they can afford food, its declining nutritional quality has had an adverse impact on their health.

From a food sovereignty perspective, these policy interventions are no doubt an important strategy to intervene where nutritional standards are suboptimal and where access to food is

not translated into improved nutritional intake of food insecure and vulnerable populations. At best these interventions are, however, only able to provide short-to-medium term measures to address some of the symptoms of food insecurity and malnutrition rather than their more structural causes. These policies have, at a more critical level, been silent on the impact of corporate power in shaping the South African food landscape. The power and monopoly-tendency of big agribusiness, agro-processors and retailers in South Africa has played an important (but not isolated) part in determining who gets access to what kinds of food and at what environmental, social and monetary cost (Patel, 2012:16,316; du Toit and Neves, 2014:838). Nutrition interventions in the form of fortification schemes and vitamin supplements are, at their most basic level, end-of-the-pipe solutions to the declining nutritional standards in the food value chain. The outlook of these interventions is largely consistent with a business-as-usual approach to food security, which from a food sovereignty perspective is wholly inappropriate for the attainment of genuine long-term food security. This is also evident in the proposal of the new National Policy to promote the use of foodbanks, food kitchens and private sector, CBO and NGO interventions to deal with a structurally inequitable food system (DAFF, 2014:31,43).

The NSNP in South Africa is also faced with a similar conundrum. The impact of the NSNP on the nutritional status of South African children is itself quite astounding and probably points to one of the most significant achievements of food security policy in the country. Providing nutritionally balanced meals to more than 8 million children is no small feat (McLaren, Moyo and Jeffery, 2015:45). The implications of this programme are wide-reaching, helping to address the problems of stunting, wasting and low weight in children. The consequences of these nutritional illnesses on the cognitive and physical development of children are dire, affecting their educational and skills attainment as well as their long-term health. The developmental implications for South Africa are also noteworthy, illustrating the need for skilled, productive and healthy citizens to meet the country's developmental needs and challenges. The importance of the NSNP therefore cannot be understated. Nonetheless, a deeper analysis of the programme can also point to some more serious structural deficits in South Africa. The fact that upward of 8 million South African children are dependent on transfer entitlements to food through the NSNP is particularly telling.

The growing importance of the programme since its creation as the PSNP in 1994 is indicative of the increasing inability of households to provide the basic nutritional needs of their children. This is not to imply that all children within the NSNP face the same household



circumstances; the programme itself is not based on any means-testing and is made available to all children in schools where the programme is implemented. What the growing scope, budget and importance of the NSNP signify, however, is that the production and exchange-based entitlements of South Africans continues to be constrained. The continuing struggle of South African households to produce, exchange and earn enough to provide for their household nutritional needs means that the NSNP will continue to be an important lifeline for vulnerable and food insecure children in the foreseeable future (Pereira, 2014:11). What this illustrates is the increased interconnectedness of this policy intervention with others already discussed within the policy frameworks, in increasing access to productive resources, increasing income generation, employment opportunities and ensuring living wages as well as ensuring the nutritional adequacy of food that is produced and made accessible to households. Within a holistic framework, food security policies in South Africa need to be more clear and comprehensive to ensure they bolster more than one kind of entitlement to food. Transfer entitlements are no doubt important but without strong linkages to policies creating production and exchange entitlements, the long-term feasibility of nutrition interventions and their ability to contribute to genuine long-term food security seem uncertain.

#### **5.4.2 Nutritional Choices Within the Modern Food Landscape**

Another strategy to effect change in the nutritional status of individuals is through the promotion of nutrition education in both the IFSS and new National Policy frameworks. Nutrition education is intended to provide households with the necessary skills and knowledge required to translate improved access to food into improved nutritional status at the individual level. Within both policy frameworks the kinds of skills and knowledge supported include consumer literacy, capability to monitor nutritional indices, district-level nutrition services and the planning of meals and correct handling of food in ways that ensure nutritional diversity and optimal utilisation (NDA, 2002:31; DAFF, 2014:43). These are all important knowledge processes considering that the availability, accessibility and affordability of foods are necessary yet insufficient for improved nutritional status (Pereira, 2014:12). Better access to quality food needs to be matched by the suitable knowledge of what to do with that food and how to distribute it at the household level. An increase in the purchasing power of households, for example, does not necessarily lead to increased nutritional intake, as resources within households may be disproportionately distributed and

lead to differential food and nutrient intake of individual household members (Pinstrup-Anderson, 1993:124). Furthermore, it is also possible that when higher incomes and access to a broader range of foods is experienced by households, they might shift consumption habits along the nutrition transition, eating larger quantities of meat and processed foods and less fresh fruits and vegetables (Igumbor et al., 2012:1). The same conundrum exists for boosting home production of food when food is sold instead of utilised for home consumption. The issue of nutritional education is thus an important part of any food security strategy, ensuring that increased production, income and access to food are more likely to translate into increased nutritional intake at the individual level.

The difficulties in pursuing such a strategy from a food sovereignty perspective lie in removing the constraints households face before nutritional knowledge can be utilised effectively. One obvious limitation is that households need to have adequate resources to make informed dietary choices. Imparting nutritional information to households which can afford little more than basic staples or have poor access to clean water or fuel for cooking can be somewhat pointless. The utilisation of nutritional knowledge is also influenced by the distribution of resources within households. The entitlements to food of individuals within a household can also be contingent on the social relations that govern that household, determining who gets what share of household resources (Pinstrup-Anderson, 1993:124). The attainment of improved nutrition in this sense may also require challenging household relations of patriarchy and hierarchy if they constrain the allocation of food resources to vulnerable household members.

Another significant challenge that can face effective nutrition education is the impact that food and beverage industries can have on the dietary preferences and consumer behaviour of individuals. This is most acute in the marketing and retail of packaged, processed and fast foods, which can play prominent roles in the choices of poor consumers especially (Igumbor et al., 2012:4). Pereira (2014:14) explains how the use of sales promotions, discounts and advertising campaigns which are mainstays of retail sales strategies can shape how budget-constrained households make purchasing decisions. What is more, these sales strategies typically favour highly processed, energy-dense but nutritionally-poor foods that are often the most profitable products for big manufacturers and retailers (Winson, 2012:35). Patel (2012:275) points out, for example, that every US\$1 spent promoting healthy foods globally is spent alongside another US\$500 promoting processed and unhealthy foods and beverages. Igumbor et al., (2012:4) attribute the nutrition transition in South Africa (towards more

packaged, processed and fast foods) to strategies in which large food manufacturers and retailers have attempted to make these kinds of products more available, affordable and socially acceptable as a regular part of people's diets. The availability of these kinds of foods is now ubiquitous in the South African food landscape. Packaged and processed food products now dominate the shelves of major retailers and have also penetrated the informal trading sector, including street vendors and spaza shops (Pereira, 2014:17; Igumbor et al., 2012:4). In addition, where supermarkets have begun to penetrate rural markets, packaged and processed foods have typically been the first products introduced, followed by semi-processed and then fresh produced only once markets have become well established (Pereira, 2014:14). The euphemistic establishment of "consumer segments" by South African retailers has also done much to entrench spatial dualism and social differentiation amongst consumers. This has, for example, enabled retailers to provide low-income consumers who shop at Shoprite or Boxer stores with typically cheaper but poorer quality food on the one hand, whilst providing shoppers at Checkers Hyper and Pick n' Pay stores with better access to higher quality food, fresh produce and closer to where shoppers live, albeit at a higher price (Pereira, 2014:14,17).

The consequences of these factors in the South African food landscape can be quite limiting for policies promoting nutrition education. These kinds of initiatives on the part of government are made to improve dietary choices in spite of the influence of the food and beverage industries. As is illustrated above, nutrition education is put into practice within food environments where there is disproportionate access to poorer quality processed foods which are typically more affordable than fresh produce (Igumbor et al., 2012:4). From a food sovereignty perspective, increasing the nutritional education of people also requires an enabling food environment in which nutritional knowledge can be put to good use by autonomous consumers. Doing so requires fundamental changes within the current food and consumer environment, awash as it is with cheap processed and convenience foods. In such an environment, the choices and agency exercised by individuals are no doubt important but as Patel (2012:260) shows, of greater significance are the factors beyond the control of most individuals. He points out that "Most of what we consider our choices at the consumer end of the food system have been narrowed and shaped before we even begin to think consciously about them" (Patel, 2012:260). In order for nutrition education within the IFSS and new National Policy to have a more substantive long-term impact, it will need to correlate with other new strategies to improve the nutritional quality of food produced (and not merely

through *ad hoc* fortification). This will also require curtailing the influence of food manufacturers and retailers in determining which kinds of foods different consumers have access to and the factors that influence their consumer choices. This will require curtailing not only the monopoly power within the food system but also changing the very ethos within the food system itself with regards to what kinds of foods are promoted and made available to consumers on an equitable basis – a colossal challenge in the South African socio-political environment.

#### **5.4.3 Safety Nets to Fill the Entitlement Void**

The importance of social safety nets in the form of social grants is perhaps one of the most notable features of social policy in democratic era South Africa. Social grants have not only played an important role in providing social assistance to vulnerable groups but also as a measure (although not sufficient in itself) for wealth redistribution in a deeply inequitable country. As a food security strategy, social grants have had a significant impact in a national context where increasing numbers of rural and urban South Africans are dependent on purchased food and where household incomes have been squeezed by chronic unemployment, rising inflation, stagnating wages and declining remittances (Pereira, 2014:10; du Toit, 2009:7). From a food sovereignty perspective, social grants can be viewed as important lifelines in a context where access to food is increasingly dependent on market-driven distribution mechanisms rife with food-based social exclusion. In this sense social grants can assist in increasing access to food for food insecure and vulnerable households, provided they are able to access adequate markets for food. There are a few reservations from a food sovereignty perspective, however, relating to the long-term implications of social grants in obtaining genuine long-term food security.

The first reservation concerns the position of social welfare beneficiaries and the food insecure as active agents within food systems. As elucidated in chapter three, there lies an inherent risk in food systems in which a large number of people are dependent on the largesse of another entity for their food entitlements, be that largesse through food aid, the state or charitable and humanitarian organisations. The inherent risk is that the long-term longevity of transfer entitlements such as social grants are never certain, with the terms and conditions under which people may access those entitlements largely outside of their direct control. An issue within a food sovereignty perspective is therefore the ways in which social safety nets can either facilitate or inhibit the sovereignty and autonomy of people. On a related note,

Hendriks (2014:19) also raises the issue of the long-term feasibility of social grants in South Africa. As vital as social security nets are, they are marked by increasingly high numbers of beneficiaries and a low tax base due to high rates of chronic unemployment (Hendriks, 2014:19). Furthermore, under conditions of fiscal strain and global market volatility as discussed in chapter two, the long-term sustainability of social security nets looks more uncertain. From a food sovereignty perspective, these questions surrounding social safety nets in food security policy are only likely to be resolved if social policy is coordinated with food security strategies in ways which shift food entitlements more towards production-based and exchange-based entitlements. Within the food security policy frameworks, this would require a shifting focus towards substantive pro-poor, gender-responsive agrarian reform; increasing support for smallholders that is sensitive to their divergent needs and aspirations; as well as a renewed focus towards income and employment generation.

## **Chapter 6: The Future of Food in South Africa**

### **6.1 Food Security and Food Sovereignty as Mutually Beneficial**

Contemporary issues surrounding malnutrition, agricultural development, international trade in agricultural commodities, global governance and domestic policies related to food and agriculture are increasingly being framed within the discourses of food security and food sovereignty. Diverging narratives and different worldviews presented within these discourses have often led to an understanding of them as fundamentally antagonistic, indeed Schanbacher (2010) even characterises this as a “global conflict” between the two concepts. Other authors such as Clapp (2014b) have shown how the construction of the two as binary concepts is problematic and prone to attach a normative agenda to food security where, at a conceptual level, it is only descriptive in nature. Rather, the two discourses have coevolved in a global context of shifting paradigms and world events in which ideas around food security and food sovereignty have been used by different groups for different agendas. The research presented here shows how the concepts have not remained static but have changed due to the influences of social movements, international organisations, corporations, nation-states, academics, scientists and activists alike. These changes have also been accentuated with the growing need for both discourses to address their own limitations and contradictions in a context of deepening global crises.

Within the discourse of food security, this is evident in the paradigmatic shifts in thinking about food security from concerns of national and global food supplies to the importance of food access and entitlements for the food insecure at household and individual levels. This shift is also evident in the broadening scope of food security concerns, from health, quality, safety, cultural acceptability and temporal stability to the influences of financial deregulation, commodity speculation, agrofuels policies, biophysical limitations and climate change. Within food sovereignty, similar conceptual shifts are evinced in its advancement as both a discourse and movement. Since its formulation in opposition to economic and cultural globalisation, the concept of food sovereignty has gradually become associated with a political programme propagating a new alternative praxis in food, agriculture and development. This political evolution has also seen food sovereignty develop a refined ideological as well as policy grounding, advocating around specific policy issues such as agroecology, access to productive resources and localised trade regimes. This refinement has

also opened up space for critical discussions within food sovereignty discourse concerning its own conceptual limitations and contradictions, including its stance on international trade, ideals of peasant and smallholder farming, plurality, democratic choice and the institutional arrangements required to make food sovereignty into workable policy. Outlining these changes in food security and food sovereignty discourses also helps to situate food security policy in South Africa at the current conjecture. While the policy frameworks themselves have not been framed from a food sovereignty perspective, this thesis has endeavoured to show the usefulness of using a food sovereignty perspective in assessing some of the long-term implications of South Africa's food security policy frameworks and their ability to not only feed the hungry but to create a more inclusive, participatory and sustainable food system. Furthermore, the thesis has also attempted to show how the inclusion of food sovereignty discourse within policymaking has the ability to ensure the attainment and continuance of genuine long-term food security, as well as making further headway in some of South Africa's more contentious political issues such as land reform, gender equity, unemployment, rural development and ecological degradation.

## **6.2 Findings of the Research**

The primary aim of this thesis was to examine South Africa's food security policies from a food sovereignty perspective and to comment on their ability to achieve and sustain genuine long-term food security. A second aim of this thesis was to then assess the implications of South Africa's food security policy frameworks for broader issues of transformation and agrarian reform in the country. The research found that there are a number of policy issues within the IFSS and new National Policy which have potential to integrate food sovereignty principles within the country's food security policy framework and in so doing bolster the policy effort to achieve genuine long-term food security. Within the IFSS these include the promotion of comprehensive extension services for mixed farming methods and multiple enterprises, monitoring the impact of liberalised trade regimes and dumping on domestic markets as well as increasing investment in technologies that enhance both farm productivity and environmental sustainability. Within the new National Policy the most supportive proposals include those for greater investment in rural storage, distribution and irrigation infrastructure; the provision of subsidised inputs and support services; protecting prime agricultural land; promoting indigenous crops; government procurement strategies and the

synthesis between indigenous knowledge systems and new research innovations for technologies appropriate for climate change and environmental degradation.

Some of the policy proposals analysed in the research were also found to have mixed or indistinct implications for food sovereignty principles and genuine long-term food security. This ambivalence is due either to the lack of specificity in some of the proposals or the different ways in which these proposals could function in either facilitating or inhibiting food sovereignty principles and the livelihoods of smallholders and the food insecure. These proposals include those within the IFSS to redistribute “idle” agricultural land, increase access to credit markets and the proposal of the new National Policy to increase the market participation of the emerging agricultural sector.

On the other hand, there were a number of policy proposals analysed within the research that are likely to be antipathetic to food sovereignty principles and could also inhibit food security objectives and the attainment of genuine long-term food security. Within the IFSS, these include policy proposals for the commercialisation of agriculture and the decision to adhere to WTO regulations regarding import duties, with the latter proposal being diametrical to the policy’s proposal to monitor liberalised trade regimes and prevent dumping on domestic markets. Equally important in the analysis were the policy issues that were either neglected or not discussed within the policy frameworks. Quite significantly, issues of alternative agriculture or long-term sustainability in food security are largely absent from both policy frameworks. Whilst they both mention issues of environmental sustainability briefly, neither policy framework proffers any proposals for food security policies to ensure the adaptation of sustainable practices or to deal more directly with issues such as climate change, declining biodiversity, water scarcity, soil erosion and deforestation among others. Aside from proposals for environmentally sustainable technologies in the policy frameworks, they do not discuss with much seriousness how policies ought to meet food security and sustainability objectives to ensure the longevity of the policies and genuine long-term food security. This is a significant oversight considering the growing importance of these issues within food security and food sovereignty discourses.

Overall, the policy frameworks analysed in the research provide some vital policy interventions for the food insecure and vulnerable. Interventions such as the provision of social grants, the NSNP, vitamin supplements and the fortification of basic staples have all played their respective roles in addressing some of the food and nutrition needs of some of



South Africa's most vulnerable people. At the same time, they have also been important government interventions to tackle some of the more debilitating diet-related illness which are prevalent in the country. That being said, a policy analysis from a food sovereignty perspective illustrates the ways in which the policy frameworks fail to address some of the more structural causes of food insecurity in South Africa. This deficiency is in no small measure a result of the reluctance of government to challenge the status quo in the South African food landscape. This reluctance begins with the country's land reform programme and its shift towards a commercial focus and the integration of a new class of black commercial farmers into the economic mainstream, along with an unwillingness to challenge the power of big agribusiness and corporate retail (Greenberg, 2010b:7).

As Cousins (2007:228) illustrates, this policy emphasis is the result of a conceptual understanding of commercial agriculture as "real agriculture" with the connotation of smallholder agriculture as residual or occupying the role of subsistence and survivalist farming. From a food sovereignty perspective, this sentiment within policymaking negates the diverse role of smallholder agriculture and limits the pro-poor impetus of the land reform programme (Hall, Jacobs and Lahiff, 2003:32). Such a commercial focus is also unlikely to alter a market environment which is hostile to most resource-poor smallholder farmers and poor consumers. The policies analysed are also unlikely to challenge the modern practices of the food industry. Many of these practices have increased access to nutritionally inferior foods, have created differentiated access for consumers based on consumer segments and are increasingly influential in shaping the decisions of consumers through sales and marketing strategies. A failure to challenge these structural causes of food insecurity and nutritional illnesses has meant that interventions such as nutritional supplements and fortification have functioned as end-of-the-pipe solutions to poor nutrition. Additionally, policies promoting nutrition education are required to succeed in spite of the access constraints and limitations on households to utilise nutritional knowledge effectively.

These limitations are also evidenced in the shifting policy priorities from the IFSS on production and exchange-based entitlements towards transfer entitlements within the new National Policy. While the IFSS prioritised increasing household production, trade and income opportunities, the shift to the new National Policy saw new priorities in social safety nets and nutrition interventions (NDA, 2002:13-14; DAFF, 2014:31). These shifting priorities are significant due to their implications for genuine long-term food security. From a food sovereignty perspective, policy interventions need to create more production and exchange-

based entitlements to ensure their long-term feasibility and to increase the autonomy of people. This is most evident in food sovereignty advocacy around the rights of people to produce food, to access productive resources and to earn a living wage. Although transfer entitlements are invaluable within the struggle against food insecurity, they might become fraught with difficulty due to uncertainty about their longevity and risks of increasing the dependency of beneficiaries and reducing their autonomy.

### **6.3 Limitations of the Research and Directions for Future Research**

In an endeavour to provide an analysis of food security policy in South Africa, the research was met with some limitations which further research may be able to address. Foremost among these was the focus of the research on the policies themselves rather than their implementation. An analysis of the implementation of these policies is important to assess how their theoretical underpinnings and political commitments are translated into policy effectiveness at the ground level. Such an analysis would require extensive fieldwork and an investigation of the institutional capacity, resource allocation and high-level political support required to successfully implement policies. While such an approach was outside the scope of this thesis, future research in this regard would prove invaluable in creating a more nuanced understanding of the suitability and effectiveness of food security policy in South Africa. That being said, the analysis of the policies as presented within this thesis illustrates some of the more structural and conceptual limitations which, even if policies were to be implemented successfully, could prove to be significant obstacles in creating entitlements for the food insecure and in maintaining genuine long-term food security.

Another limitation was that the policy analysis was unable to reflect the multitude of different policies and legislation that have a bearing on food security in both overt and unseen ways. While the research restricted its analysis to policy frameworks aiming to address food security as a multidisciplinary issue and in a coordinated manner (in the IFSS and new National Policy), future research around other related policies and legislation will prove beneficial in providing a broader understanding of the complex nature of food security in South Africa. The research was also met with difficulties in its attempt to canvass a discourse as complex and diverse as food sovereignty. In focussing on the core themes of access to productive resources, agroecology and localised trade, there remain a number of other important themes and policy concerns from a food sovereignty perspective that could be explored within future research of South African food security policy. These include issues

such popular democracy, multiple sovereignties and the organisational structures required to make food sovereignty into workable policy.

Future research in South African food security policy also needs to explore issues around the role of grassroots movements in advocating for food sovereignty principles. The evolution of a broad-based social movement such as LVC, for example, finds its virtue in being able to create solidarity in diversity and in creating broad coalitions between various urban, rural, labour, consumer and environmental movements. These kinds of coalitions will be crucial in effecting future change within South Africa's food landscape. As the history of much of the world has shown, the rights of people are not progressively realised through the benevolence of the state but are affirmed through processes of collective struggle. As such, the rights to food, to access productive resources, to earn a living wage and the struggle for gender equity as advocated within food sovereignty are likely to be reflected in the policymaking process more substantively through political pressure from below. As the research could not provide an assessment of these issues in the South African context, it could not make any claims about the readiness or ability of grassroots social movements in the country to carry forward a food sovereignty agenda in their activism similar to that of LVC. Further research in this regard will illustrate the importance of grassroots activism in affecting change within South African food security policymaking. Although the bulk of this kind of advocacy is likely to exist outside of the political mainstream, it should also be noted that there is still a risk in not engaging with the formal policymaking process. To do so risks weakening the prospects to strengthen the voices of those who are most affected by policies within the policymaking process itself (Burnett and Murphy, 2014:1079).

#### **6.4 Towards a Food Secure Future for South Africa**

Despite notable progress in food security objectives, the right to access sufficient food in South Africa is sorely lacking for over half of the country's households who are either food insecure or at risk of future hunger (Shisana et al., 2014:10). As well intentioned and as beneficial many of government food security interventions have been, this thesis has expounded why the food security policy frameworks in South Africa are not likely to achieve genuine long-term food security from a food sovereignty perspective. The current policy frameworks, such that they are, are mostly capable of palliating the symptoms of food insecurity, providing *ad hoc* responses to poor nutritional status and addressing structural causes of food insecurity through a business-as-usual approach. There is a need for greater

policy effort to prioritise the creation of production and exchange-based entitlements to food through more substantive agrarian reform, localised economic development, employment creation and support for a multiplicity of rural enterprises and livelihood strategies. Although these measures are necessary from a food sovereignty perspective, they are by no means sufficient in themselves. South African policy also needs to address some of the more inhibiting structural constraints to achieving food security which have created differentiated access to food and enabled the coexistence of hunger and obesity in high proportions.

From asymmetrical trade relations to the country's colonial dispensation in land and the monopoly tendency of big agribusiness, agro-processors and corporate retail, South Africa's food landscape needs radical reform if it is to be able to respond to the dietary needs of current and future generations as well as the natural environment. Changing the ethos and practices of influential actors in food security is no easy task. To do so also requires a concomitant shift in policy to recognise the significant potential of South Africa's 2,3 million smallholder farmers who need to feature more prominently in the country's food landscape as well as the needs of millions of consumers who cannot afford adequate diets (Greenberg, 2015:958). Widening the inclusion of a multiplicity of actors within food security policymaking in South Africa is an absolute necessity for agrarian transformation and the attainment and maintenance of genuine long-term food security. This inclusion should extend to all forms of collective decision-making, the distribution of economic assets, economic activity, technologies and the collective custodianship of South Africa's natural environment. Participation within these important aspects of social life and policymaking is not the privilege of the few with economic clout or the power to govern but the right of all. Cognisance will still have to be given to the complex political terrain in which these changes need to be made but the discourse of food sovereignty provides a vital although imperfect platform for these kinds of policy shifts and agrarian transformation to occur. The inclusion of food sovereignty principles within South African policymaking is thus a crucial first step towards formulating a food security policy framework adept at achieving and sustaining genuine long-term food security for all who live in south Africa.

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