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## Who will make the 'best' use of Africa's land? Lessons from Zimbabwe

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### Abstract

Conflict over African land – between small holders and large industrial farmers and between domestic farmers and global agribusinesses – raises key questions about who will make the best use of African land and which farmers do most to decrease poverty and produce more food, industrial inputs, and exports. Zimbabwe has already gone through two major changes in land occupation, and thus provides an important test of what is the 'best' use of the land. Three measures of 'best' use have been cited in Zimbabwe: reward for military victory, poverty reduction, and agricultural production. Initial evidence indicates that commercial small holder production is a better use of the land than larger, more mechanised farming.

**Key words:** Zimbabwe, land, reform, smallholder, agricultural productivity, poverty, veterans

### Introduction

'The ultimate possessors of the land will be the people who can make the best use of it,' the Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia, Godfrey Huggins<sup>1</sup> said in 1952. But how do we define what is the 'best use'? Indeed, the last century in Rhodesia and Zimbabwe has seen a conflict between different groups who claimed they would make the best use of the land. That history can be used as a test of some of the current debates about land in Africa.

The debate can be characterised by what might be called the Obama and Annan models for agriculture in Africa. In Washington, DC, in May 2012, G8 leaders adopted a New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition proposed by President Barack Obama and USAID 'to accelerate the flow of private capital to African agriculture'.<sup>2</sup> The idea is that giant agribusinesses will employ their technology and expertise to end hunger in Africa. One of the first projects is to support Cargill, the

giant grain trader and largest private company in the world, to farm large tracts of African land. Cargill would not make enough profit from the investment, so it must be subsidised from G8 aid. This could be called the Obama model.

The Africa Progress Panel (APP) is chaired by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and its members include a former IMF head and a former US Treasury Secretary. 'Raising the productivity of smallholder farmers is critical', a 2012 report says. 'Smallholder agriculture must be placed at the centre of a green revolution in Africa.' This will require more government action and more support for small farmers. This could be called the Annan model. The panel goes on to say that one of the biggest dangers in Africa is the growing inequality between rich and poor, which is creating a threat of social instability. In sub-Saharan Africa 'the current pattern of trickle-down growth is leaving too many people in poverty.' It calls for 'fundamental change' in both donor and African government policies.<sup>3</sup>

Proponents of the Obama model argue that large-scale industrial agriculture driven by foreign investment is the only way to feed the world's growing population. Critics says it is a 'land grab' taking farms away from smallholders who could be equally productive.<sup>4</sup>

The division between the Annan and Obama models is about land and who occupies it. And land is not just a means of agricultural production; it has symbolic value as well. Land is a significant form of property in most parts of the world linking to the economic, cultural, political and legal dimensions of social life.<sup>5</sup> Economic dimensions of land go beyond economic empowerment and food security, as land is also regarded as a place to reside safely and a source of livelihood. For the majority of rural people, and increasingly for more urban people engaged in vegetable gardening and urban agriculture, land is a primary means of food security and generating a livelihood. It is also an important means for investing, accumulating wealth and transferring it between generations.<sup>6</sup> In some regions there has been a transition towards alternative uses of land, such as for lifestyle purposes, tourism ventures and biofuel production schemes, which are currently attracting higher market values for land previously used for agriculture.<sup>7</sup>

### **Zimbabwe as an experiment in different forms of land holding**

In the past century there have been two transfers of a large part of Zimbabwe's farmland – first to large scale farming in the mid-20th century, and then, following a post-independence land reform, to small holder farming in the 1980s and in 2000-2. The 1930 Land Apportionment Act defined that 51% of the land – the best land with high agricultural potential - was for whites only (see Table 1). The Act explicitly defined 'European' and 'native' land areas and marks the first attempt in Southern Africa to segregate European and African peoples, a decade before formal apartheid was introduced in South Africa. The 1930 law gave 30% of land – the poorer land, drier and less fertile, to one million Africans.<sup>8</sup>

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## Tables 1 and 2 near here

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African smallholders were evicted to create the new large 'European' farms; in just one decade, 1945-55, 100,000 Africans were moved, often forcibly, into reserves and inhospitable and tsetse fly ridden unassigned areas.<sup>9</sup> Houses were burned, people could not take their cattle, and they lost all investments that had been made on the farm.

The children of those evicted became the core of the liberation movement in the 1970s, fighting not just for independence but also for land. When they won the war and independence came in 1980, the victorious warriors expected land. And there was a first, limited land reform. During the 1980s 75,000 families received 11% of the total farmland of Zimbabwe, in one of the biggest land reforms in Africa. The Lancaster House agreement that brought independence also said that land could only be transferred from white to black farmers on a 'willing-seller, willing-buyer' basis. Not surprisingly, only the least successful farmers with the poorer land offered it to the government at an affordable price.

Most land was still held by large farmers. Finally, in 2000-2, seventy years after the Land Apportionment Act and 20 years after independence, 170,000 Zimbabwean families occupied most of the remaining white farms, and took back the land (See Table 2). Thus Zimbabwe has gone through both models and can provide a partial test of land and farming systems.

In the 2000-2 land reform there were three categories of distributed land. Approximately 146,000 families received small farms, under the A1 model, where typically each white farm was divided into 40 to 50 farm units of six hectares of arable land. Nearly 23,000 families received medium size farms, under the A2 model where a white farm divided into three to seven farms.

New farmers received little support from the government. A1 farmers were largely occupiers and were dependent on cattle they brought from communal lands or a family member with a job in order to buy the initial seed, fertiliser, ploughing that they needed to start. A2 farmers had to apply for the land and had to show they had capital to develop the farm. For both groups, any growth has come from reinvestment.

Mismanagement of the economy led to massive hyperinflation in the period 2005-8, making the Zimbabwe dollar virtually worthless. Political conflict was also hugely disruptive. Finally in 2008 ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front) and the two opposition factions of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) signed a Global Political Agreement, which led to a unity government and the abolition of the Zimbabwe dollar. Government accounted and paid civil servants in United States dollars, but any currency can be used, and South African Rand also circulates.

Land is an important asset for Zimbabwe and should be used in the 'best' way, for economic growth, social equity and environmental sustainability. Tension runs through all land reform between justice, welfare and production. Should the land be given to those who risked their

lives to gain it? Or the poorest and most in need to provide immediate help to them? Or should the land be given to those who can increase production and create jobs and economic growth through multiplier effects, as new production is sold and the earnings used to buy more goods locally, thus creating jobs both on the farm and in town.

In this paper we look at the history of land in Zimbabwe, and note that three definitions of 'best use' have been in contention through the whole period:

- That land is a reward for military victors.
- That land should be used to reduce poverty, create jobs, and empower disadvantaged groups.
- That production and productivity are the measure of best use.

We also see three questions which come up repeatedly:

- Which people and groups have a 'right' to the land?
- Should subsidy be used to promote the best use of land?
- Do large or small farms make best use of the land?

We hope the responses to these questions will be used to evaluate the post-independence land reforms and contribute to the broader debate on African land and agriculture.

This paper is based on research for our book *Zimbabwe Takes Back its Land*.<sup>10</sup> It draws on the substantial research and fieldwork on the 2000 land reform in Zimbabwe which has been carried out in the past decade, detailed research on the 1980s land reform, and our fieldwork with farmers was carried out in Mashonaland Central and Mashonaland East Provinces in 2010 and 2011 with teams of researchers from the University of Zimbabwe and the Zimbabwe Women Farmers Land and Agricultural Trust. In addition there have been two other recent books on the 2000 land reform.<sup>11</sup>

### **Criteria 1: land for the victors**

Wars and invasions have often been used to gain control of new lands, and frequently the victorious soldiers were given land as rewards. Over two thousand years Britain has been occupied by a series of invaders, the majority of whom settled on the invaded land. During the last five hundred years Europeans have invaded and occupied land in regions all over the world.

In Europe, North America, and Rhodesia after the Second World War, land was seen as a reward for those who risked their lives or suffered in the war. Canada, which has a tradition dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century of settling ex-soldiers on the land, passed the Veterans' Land Act of 1942 after World War II, providing returning war veterans who wanted to farm with loans to buy land, stock and equipment.<sup>12</sup>

When Cecil Rhodes won a military victory in 1889 in what is now Zimbabwe, he gave large tracts of land to victorious soldiers – evicting the occupants. Barry Floyd in his 1959 PhD thesis noted that: 'The historic fact that Southern Rhodesia was finally occupied and subdued by force of

arms, and that the Europeans are thereby the heirs to land by right of conquest, is also advanced as justification for land apportionment'.<sup>13</sup>

White veterans of World War II were next to be rewarded with land. There had never been enough white farmers to use the land of half the country, and many thousands of blacks still farmed and lived on their ancestral lands – although the law defined them as 'squatters'. Land was given to white Rhodesian veterans and white European veterans were encouraged to settle with a range of inducements, including two years of free training in farming. Black veterans of World War II did not receive land or any meaningful benefits.<sup>14</sup> One of the new farmers was a World War II Spitfire pilot, Ian Smith, who tells in his memoirs how he evicted black farmers from his land.<sup>15</sup> Smith went on to rule Rhodesia, announce the Unilateral Declaration of Independence in 1965, and then fight a brutal war to keep Rhodesia white ruled.

Such land alienation and dispossession often invoke land as a potent symbol of historic injustice and oppression, especially where poverty and inequity prevail.<sup>16</sup> Liberation wars are fought to regain control over lost alienated land, and land subsequently takes on a symbolic as well as economic and social value, and many land reforms incorporate aspects of restitution. The liberation war in Zimbabwe was fought in part to reclaim the land, so simply taking it back is an important goal.

From independence in 1980, Zimbabwe was under pressure: in the 1980s from destabilisation by apartheid South Africa and in the 1990s by economic structural adjustment which squeezed the economy. Poverty levels increased from 26% in 1990 to 55% in 1995.<sup>17</sup> War veterans became increasingly restless and began to take action. There were more than 1,000 occupations of white commercial farms between March and April 2000. The occupations were known as *jambanja* ('force' or 'action in anger' in Shona). The former soldiers used their military skills to organise unemployed people from towns and landless people from communal areas, and then structuring the occupation of the farm in an orderly way. Reconnaissance teams tried to negotiate with white farmers and also tried, sometimes successfully, to involve farm workers. There were relatively few war veterans and they were overstretched, so employed veterans came to help on weekends. There was a big push of occupations on the Easter weekend 21-24 April 2000.

At local level there was some support from the ruling political party, ZANU-PF.<sup>18</sup> But ZANU-PF at national level was unsupportive. In March and April 2000 police were sent to evict occupiers. But the party's position began to shift. A new Land Acquisition Act was passed on 23 May 2000. On 15 July 2000 the Accelerated Land Reform and Resettlement Programme, the 'Fast Track', was approved. In mid-2001 Parliament passed the Rural Land Occupiers Act which said any occupation after 1 March 2001 was illegal and must stop (while protecting occupiers from before 1 March). However, 42% of occupations took place in 2001 and 2002, most after the law was passed.<sup>19</sup>

As did the white veterans before them, the victorious veterans of the liberation war believed that they had a right to the land and would make 'best' use of it; they led the land occupations and

are actively farming that land. It is a reminder that history matters, and that national ownership of land is seen as an important mark of independence and national pride. Ownership of large farms by international agribusinesses will be seen by some in Africa as a form of neo-colonialism.

## **Criteria 2: poverty, jobs, empowerment**

Most rural Zimbabweans are relatively poor and cannot support themselves only from farming in the communal areas. The Poverty Income Consumption Expenditure Survey (PICES) of 2011/12 found that 76% of rural households were under the Total Consumption Poverty Line and classified as poor.<sup>20</sup> Thus an alternative 'best use' of the land is the one that does the most to reduce poverty, create jobs and empower local people, particularly women. During the land reform process, the majority of recipients were ordinary people: subsistence farmers from communal lands and the urban poor.<sup>21</sup>

Land reform has an obvious and immediate poverty reduction effect, simply because more people have land and can grow food. Surveys indicate that resettlement had an impact on alleviating poverty in Zimbabwe.<sup>22</sup> Bill Kinsey has been following 400 of the 1980s resettlement families for nearly two decades, which gives him a unique perspective. By 1997 Kinsey and colleagues concluded that there had been a 'dramatic increase in crop incomes observed in these households' and that resettled households have higher and more evenly distributed income than their communal land counterparts.<sup>23</sup> Also, there has been an impressive accumulation of assets by these households. Notable was the entry by a number of households into the production of higher-value crops such as cotton, groundnuts, and sunflowers.

There has been a similar growth in income and asset accumulation among the 2000 resettlement farmers.<sup>24</sup> Clearly 244,000 land reform families is a very large number, and a reform which has taken most of that group out of poverty must be seen as a success. But there are four times that number of families still squeezed into the communal areas, which are over-grazed and degraded. Furthermore, structural adjustment and hyperinflation forced more than two million Zimbabweans to emigrate to South Africa and elsewhere. Simply having more farmers on the land is not enough though, and job creation becomes a key issue.

Lack of employment has been identified as a major driver of poverty.<sup>25</sup> The 2000 land occupations were immensely disruptive, and initially reduced employment as tens of thousands of farm workers lost jobs and homes. This is similar to the large numbers that were displaced by structural adjustment in the 1990s. But recent studies have shown that the 2000 land reform has subsequently created a substantial number of jobs and is a net generator of employment.

Agriculture was Zimbabwe's largest employment sector, with 26% of the wage labour force in 1999.<sup>26</sup> Throughout the first two post-independence decades, the number of permanent, full time farm workers remained steady at 167,000.<sup>27</sup> There were 146,000 casual and seasonal workers in 2000 of whom 55% were women. Numbers are very hard to determine, but it appears that between 75,000 and 100,000 full time workers retained their jobs on the remaining plantations, large estates,

and large farms.<sup>28</sup> Thus 75,000 to 100,000 lost full time jobs and often their homes. Of those, perhaps 15% gained land during the land reform. Surveys by Moyo and by Scoones found that about 9% of A1 allocations and 5% of A2 allocations were to former farm workers.<sup>29</sup> Other former farm workers are working on farms or doing gold panning. Nevertheless, this indicates a serious and disruptive job loss.

By 2011, the total number of people working full time on resettlement land had increased five-fold, from 167,000 to over one million, according to Walter Chambati of the African Institute for Agrarian Studies (AIAS) in Harare.<sup>30</sup> He estimated in 2011 that 240,000 people were full time employed on A1 farms and 115,000 on A2 farms. But equally important, 510,000 people from the A1 farmers' families were 'self-employed' full time and 55,000 from extended families on A2 farms. With nearly 100,000 still employed on corporate and other large scale commercial farms, this means more than one million people are now working full time on this land, compared to 167,000 before land reform. Most of these self-employed farmers are not 'peasants' or simply subsistence producers, but are small scale commercial farmers. Thus, this is a huge gain in rural livelihoods. In part, this is because small farms tend to be much more labour intensive due to less mechanisation.

Many of the new farm workers live on the farms, as they did in the past, and many receive food. Nevertheless, as in the era of the white farmers, they are poorly paid – sometimes only half the minimum wage. Many jobs have been created, but not well paid. A recent World Bank study noted that 'the social and economic conditions of hired farm workers are in general precarious, as farm wages remained between US\$30 and US\$50/month during 2011 in all the farming sub-sectors'.<sup>31</sup>

The land reform has improved women farmers' livelihoods. It has increased their production enabling them to strengthen their household's food security, thus helping them to move out of poverty. Although 38% of rural households in Zimbabwe are female-headed, the share of women who own or control farms has always been small. Only 4% of large white farms were owned by women, and only 5% of 1980s land-reform farms were given to women. For the 2000 land reform, government set a target of 20% of farms being allocated to women, and of the 146,000 smaller A1 farms, 18% were allocated to women-headed households.<sup>32</sup> Women are now increasingly inheriting land, which follows directly from campaigns to ensure that married couples had both names on the letters granting them their farms. Besides the farms allocated directly to women, in our action research with the Women Farmers Land and Agricultural Trust we found many more women making decisions about farming and in some cases, taking the lead.<sup>33</sup>

Three women with the small A1 farms show the range of the new women farmers. Gertrude Chimbwanda in Goromonzi says 'as a widow and woman farmer, I think I have done well for myself because I managed to build a homestead, I own a few goats and road runners [chickens]. I am honoured to be a woman land owner and it has helped to look after my family after my husband passed away.' Agnes Matsira, who joined the liberation war as a teenager and lost her leg to land mine in Mozambique, was one of leaders of occupation in Goromonzi District in 2000.<sup>34</sup> She was



then allocated a six hectare plot and has built a brick house and looks after her three grandchildren since her daughter died. Her main crop is maize and her yields are higher than the average of the white farmers, despite her disability. Agnes has become a small commercial farmer. Esther Makwara an A1 farmer who has a six hectare farm in Craigengower, Mazowe, some of the best farm land in Zimbabwe. Her maize yields are double the former white farm average. She employs six workers.

Although patriarchy has not gone away and land reform is still male-dominated, the decade after the occupations saw dramatic changes in ensuring that women receive land in their own right and have their names on offer letters and leases of joint farms. And with that has come a real change in attitudes, within families and communities, as women claim the right to be seen as commercial farmers. A decade on, many women are successful farmers and have transformed their lives – politically, socially, and economically.

Zimbabwe's land reform process is taking people out of poverty. It has provided more and better land to more people and it has provided more employment, thus complying with the criteria that the 'best use' of land should be to reduce poverty and create jobs. Zimbabwe also shows that if there is political support, it is possible to empower women as part of smallholder commercial farming. Any discussion of African agriculture policy and the role of foreign investment must look at how land use decisions affect local people, and about their local impact on poverty.

### **Criteria 3: Production and productivity**

Land is a fixed asset in relatively short supply, which means there will always be some system to allocate land to some people and not others. Southern Rhodesia Prime Minister Huggins expressed the broad hope that those with land would make 'best use' of it. That is often seen as maximizing production, both of food and export crops.

The Rhodesian government from 1940 made huge investments to increase 'European' agricultural productivity and production. Extensive research developed modern hybrid seeds, there were guaranteed markets paying white farmers more for the same crop than black farmers, and a range of other support was available to white farmers. It is estimated that by the mid 1970s, the subsidy was the equivalent, in current money, of US\$ 40,000 per white farm per year.<sup>35</sup> Many of these large farms became highly mechanised. Starting from very little and with huge support over several decades, some farmers were spectacularly successful. But these were not many.

White farmers never succeeded in occupying their half of Southern Rhodesia. The three Mashonaland provinces have 75% of Zimbabwe's prime farmland. In 1965 the chairman of the Rural Land Board wrote: 'Just get into an aeroplane and fly over Mashonaland's European farming areas. On practically every farm you will see acres of land lying idle, good grasslands ..... given to these farmers by God and the Rural Land Board. ... It is a national disgrace that so much land is lying idle and not being used'.<sup>36</sup> A decade later, the position had not improved. In 1976 Roger Riddell calculated that only 15% of potentially arable European land was being cultivated. Even in

the early 1970s, many of these farms were only being used for residential purposes, or as weekend farms.<sup>37</sup> Another estimate was that in Mashonaland, less than one-third of arable land was actually being used.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, these large farmers were not producing very much. The Rhodesian National Farmers' Union in 1977 found that 30% of all large farms were insolvent – kept alive by loans, price supports and subsidies. Riddell notes that in the 1975/76 season, 60% of large farms (4,023 of 6,682) were not profitable enough to qualify for income tax, while 52% of all taxable income was accounted for by just 271 large farms.<sup>39</sup>

Former white farmers have created a myth of Rhodesia as the breadbasket of the region, which is still being perpetuated. Maize was exported in good rainfall years and imported in bad years. In the two decades before independence, the 1960s-70s, Rhodesia imported maize in seven of 20 years.<sup>40</sup>

Rhodesian policy was to support large (white) farms, and actually to try to prevent competition from smaller (black) farmers, most of who were squeezed into the native reserves, later renamed 'communal areas'. At independence in 1980, the new government totally reversed the policy. In the 1970s, communal land farmers produced only five% of marketed maize; and only 5% used fertiliser because of high prices. The new government decided to shift rain-fed maize to the smallholder sector.<sup>41</sup> Subsidised fertiliser, better seed, loans, agricultural extension services, rural markets, and higher prices had a dramatic impact. By 1985 communal farmers were supplying one-third of the maize bought by the Grain Marketing Board.

Meanwhile the first resettlement had begun. By 1987/88 resettlement farmers with just five hectares each were responsible for 11% of all of Zimbabwe's agricultural production.<sup>42</sup> The results were all the more dramatic considering that willing-buyer, willing-seller meant most resettlement farmers were on poorer land and had received limited government support.

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Despite the economic and political problems, the 2000-2 land reform farmers quietly expanded their farms, supporting themselves and providing an increasing amount of food (often simply bartered during the hyperinflation period). Dollarization in 2009 brought a dramatic change (see Table 3). In the 2009/10 season, the first season under dollarization, food production returned to 79% of the 1990s average. The World Bank in a December 2012 report showed that in the 2011 harvest, maize at 86% of the 1990s average, tobacco 66%, and cotton 109%.<sup>43</sup> Tobacco was the most profitable crop for white farmers, who always stressed that it needed high skills to produce successfully. Production is returning to former levels and the number of smallholders growing tobacco has increased from a few hundred to over 85,000 in 2013, with a further 26,000 new growers registered for the 2014 season<sup>44</sup>. In the 2012/13 season, tobacco production

increased to 87% of the 1990s average production<sup>45</sup>. The increase is largely due to the support for small scale tobacco farmers from tobacco companies, and currently tobacco provides the best economic return per hectare amongst all major annual crops. Maize does not receive similar support and production declined in 2012/13<sup>46</sup>. Fifty five per cent of the maize was produced by resettlement farmers<sup>47</sup> and 41% from communal farmers, in 2012/13<sup>48</sup>. Finance Minister Tendai Biti reported that in 2011, 40% of the tobacco came from resettlement farmers<sup>49</sup>.

The experience of the white farmers of the 1950s and 1960s, and of the 1980s land reform farmers is that it takes a generation, about 20 years, for a new farmer to dominate the farm and maximize production. Only halfway through their two-decade settling in period, and with none of the support given to the white farmers, the new 2000-2 smallholders are on a trajectory to be more productive than the white farmers they replaced.

In broad terms, white farmers used less than one-third of the land; their successors appear to be using about half the land, although so far less intensively. Furthermore, there is a spectrum of success. One-third are already serious commercial farmers, using each inch of their land and marketing substantial amounts; the best smallholders earn more than school teachers or middle-level civil servants. One third are comfortable but lack investment capital and cannot use all of their land productively. And as with the farmers they replaced, one-third are not doing well and struggling.

Regarding the criteria of production and productivity being the measure of 'best use' of land, production by the present occupants is increasing steadily. Currently however, they are not yet making maximum use of the land and need more support.

### **Bootstraps, subsidies, capital, and poverty**

While there was huge support for the white farmers and World War II veterans, there has been little support for the 1980s or 2000-2 resettlement farmers. There have been intermittent subsidies and support, but largely they have had to find their own capital. Initial funding came from relatives or their own resources, as well as reinvestment of profits. In other words, resettlement farming has been a bootstrap operation, and any accumulation has come from reinvested profits; harsh choices must be made on spending money on fertilizer or shoes for the children or to fix a leaking roof.

Zimbabwe practices high-tech agriculture, with hybrid seeds, fertiliser, pesticides, mechanical ploughing, and hired labour. Minimum input costs are US\$100 per hectare, but to get high maize yields inputs cost US\$500 per hectare and tobacco inputs are US\$800 per hectare. Maize yields are directly proportional to fertilizer use; not buying a US\$35 bag of fertiliser can reduce production by 500 kg.

'In maize and other commodities, 2011 yields remain far below potential,' notes the December 2012 World Bank report.<sup>50</sup> It does not appear that yields are limited by poor farming skills, insecurity of tenure, or lack of land as collateral. Although government's support for land reform farmers remains limited, the Ministry of Agriculture's AGRITEX agricultural extension

service remains excellent; extension officers are known and respected locally and provide useful technical support. The parastatal Grain Marketing Board (GMB) continues to operate, albeit with problems such as late payment, providing a guaranteed market and selling some fertiliser. Education in general remains very good, and UNICEF reports Zimbabwe has the highest education levels in Africa – this means farmers are literate and cope well with higher tech farming.

Thus it is capital scarcity that lies behind the low yields. The World Bank study notes a dramatic rise in contract farming of export crops, with more than 280,000 cotton contract farmers, 15,000 in horticulture, 13,000 for tobacco, and smaller numbers for tea, coffee, sugar, beef and sugar beans.<sup>51</sup> Contract farming is important because inputs and technical advice are provided on credit and the market is guaranteed – although the product must be sold to the contract company.

So far, however, contract farming applies mostly to export crops, so there is no support for food crops. This is an issue, because the trade-off is clear. A six-hectare farmer could concentrate on one hectare of tobacco, but would get a similar income by growing five hectares of maize at three tonnes per hectare. Both require farming skills and similar inputs, but there is support for tobacco and not for maize. And there is increasing concern that the new farmers are growing export crops rather than food because of this support.

In one respect, Ian Smith and the white Rhodesian regime were right – new farmers need substantial subsidy, and without subsidy they cannot be expected to produce food. Land reform farmers are pulling themselves up by their bootstraps. Considering the lack of support, the new smallholders are obviously doing better than the large farmers they replaced, but they cannot do it totally on their own.

### **Evidence from Zimbabwe on the land debate**

This debate on the relative merits of small scale versus large scale farms as being more productive, politically and socially equitable, as well as ecologically sound, is not new. In the 1960s, Schultz's influential study, 'Transforming Traditional Agriculture' argued the case for the efficiency of small-scale farm productivity and their responsiveness to new markets and technologies.<sup>52</sup> More recent studies have confirmed the potential of small farms for poverty reduction.<sup>53</sup> Zimbabwe shows that what small farmers lack in large machines they make up for in detailed knowledge and in management of their farms. And because they use more labour, smallholders do more to reduce poverty.

Nevertheless, other studies challenge this view and find that small farms are not able to cope with the challenges of contemporary agricultural development. Collier argues that large farm organisations are better suited to cope with investment, marketing chains and regulation.<sup>54</sup> Current debates are about the extent to which small farms can link to changing markets and technology.<sup>55</sup> The small farms created by Zimbabwe's land reform have shown that these links can be made. Institutional innovations such as contract farming and the formation of farmer groups are being

explored and expanded and have the potential to overcome transaction costs and technology limitations.

How representative is Zimbabwe? One factor makes Zimbabwe unusual. The liberation war was fought for land and Zimbabweans have a real passion for farming. The 2000 occupiers were people who wanted to farm and had the initiative to occupy land and make it flourish. Farming is extremely hard work, even with the mechanical ploughing by cattle or tractors as in Zimbabwe. Do South Africa, Namibia and other African countries have a similar land hunger, of people who really want the extremely hard work of farming?

One of the controversial factors of the Zimbabwe land reform is that the factor that made it most disruptive has also made it a success: the land was occupied. It was not distributed 'fairly', either by picking names out of a hat, or by giving the land to people whose ancestors had once owned it. Instead, a group with initiative and a passion for farming took the land and went through a process of formalisation as the plots were officially allocated to them, and over a decade have made it their own. They are not subsistence farmers, but have become small commercial farmers, largely producing for the market.

There is no single measure of 'best' use of land. It is a mix of higher productivity, poverty reduction, and redressing historic wrongs. The smallholder commercial sector can make the best use of the land, but only if the most dynamic farmers are promoted – those with a passion for farming – and only if they are appropriately supported. That is a political decision, and as Ian Smith showed, even large farmers need support to be productive. With that level of support, smallholders will also be successful and productive.

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**Table 1. Land Apportionment Act, Southern Rhodesia, 1930**

<b>Designation</b>	<b>Land (million hectares)</b>	
European Area	19.9	51%
Native Reserves	8.5	22%
Native Purchase Area	3.0	8%
Other	7.5	19%
Total	38.9	100%

**Table 2. Farmland in 1980, 2000, and 2010**

	Area (million hectares)					
	1980		2000		2010	
	mn ha	%	mn ha	%	mn ha	%
<b>Smallholders</b>						
Communal	16.4	50	16.4	50	16.4	50
1980s resettlement			3.7	11	3.7	11
2000 land reform					5.8	18
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>16.4</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>20.0</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Middle farms</b>						
African purchase	1.4	4.3	1.4	4.3	1.4	4.3
2000 land reform					3.0	9.1
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Large farms</b>						
2000 land reform					0.5	1.6
Black large scale			0.5	1.6	0.5	1.6
White large scale	12.5	37	8.7	25	0.1	0.4
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>3.5</b>
<b>Agro-estates</b>	2.6	7.9	2.6	7.9	1.5	4.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>of which</i>						
<b>Total land reform</b>			<b>3.7</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>40</b>

(Sources: Moyo, 'Three decades', Table 4, 512; Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart, *Zimbabwe Takes*, Table 1.1, 8.)

**Table 3: Zimbabwe national agricultural production: 1990s average and selected other years**

<b>Agricultural production (000 tonnes)</b>							<b>As % of 1990s average</b>		
<b>Crop</b>	1990s average	2007/8	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
<b>Food</b>									
Maize	1686	575	1323	1458	968	799	86%	57%	47%
Wheat	284	35	42	12			4%		
Small grains	165	80	194	156	109	111	95%	65%	67%
Ground-nuts	86	132	186	230	120	87	267%	140%	101%
Soya beans	93	48	70	84	71	77	90%	72%	83%
<b>Export</b>									
Tobacco	198	70	123	132	120	173	66%	61%	87%
Cotton	201	226	260	220	255	133	109%	127%	66%
<b>Estate</b>									
Sugar	439	259	350	450	372		103%	84%	
Tea	11	8	14	13		24	118%		218%

(Sources: Binswanger-Mkhize and Moyo, Zimbabwe from Economic Rebound, 46; Ministry of Agriculture, Second Round Crop, 4-6.)

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Rifkind, *Politics of Land*, 106. Citing *Rhodesia Herald*, 22 May 1952. Godfrey Huggins was named Viscount Malvern of Rhodesia and of Bexley in the County of Kent (and thus a member of the British House of Lords) in 1955.
- <sup>2</sup> Camp David Declaration of the G8, made at Camp David, Maryland, US, 19 May 2012 at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2012/05/19/camp-david-declaration>. See also <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/18/fact-sheet-new-alliance-food-security-and-nutrition>
- <sup>3</sup> Africa Progress Panel, *Jobs, Justice and Equity*, at [www.africaprogresspanel.org](http://www.africaprogresspanel.org)
- <sup>4</sup> Cotula, *Great African Land Grab*; and Deininger and Byerlee, *Rising Global Interest*, 42-43.
- <sup>5</sup> Budlender and Alma, *Women and Land*, xv.
- <sup>6</sup> World Bank, *Land Policies for Growth*, xix-xx
- <sup>7</sup> Reed and Kleynhans, 'Agricultural land purchase', 323-343; and Hall, 'Politics of Land Reform', 351.
- <sup>8</sup> Jennings, 'Land Apportionment in Southern Rhodesia', 308–311.
- <sup>9</sup> Palmer, *Land and Racial Domination*, 242-3.
- <sup>10</sup> Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart, *Zimbabwe Takes Back its Land*.
- <sup>11</sup> Scoones, et al., *Zimbabwe's Land Reform*; and Matondi, *Zimbabwe's Fast Track Land*.
- <sup>12</sup> Wright, 'Veterans Land Act', 1.
- <sup>13</sup> Floyd, 'Changing Patterns of African', 280–81.
- <sup>14</sup> Tapfumaneyi, 'A Comparative Study', 21-24, 28, 36, 77.
- <sup>15</sup> Smith, *The Great Betrayal*.
- <sup>16</sup> O'Laughlin, et al., 'Introduction: Agrarian Change, Rural', 1-15.
- <sup>17</sup> Chimhowu, Manjengwa and Feresu, *Moving Forward in Zimbabwe*, 9; and Government of Zimbabwe, *Zimbabwe 2003 Poverty Assessment*, 65.
- <sup>18</sup> Sadomba, *War Veterans in Zimbabwe's*, 170-181.
- <sup>19</sup> Moyo, et al., *Fast Track Land Reform*, 20.
- <sup>20</sup> ZIMSTAT, *Poverty and Poverty Datum*, 44.
- <sup>21</sup> Matondi, *Mazowe district report*, 26-28; Moyo, et al., *Fast Track Land Reform*, 30-31; and Scoones, et al., *Zimbabwe's Land Reform*, 53-55.
- <sup>22</sup> Deininger, et al., *How land reform..*, 1-2
- <sup>23</sup> Dekker and Kinsey, 'Contextualizing Zimbabwe's Land Reform', fn 2.
- <sup>24</sup> Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart, *Zimbabwe Takes Back its Land*, 25.
- <sup>25</sup> Manjengwa, Feresu, and Chimhowu, *Understanding poverty, promoting wellbeing*, 96.
- <sup>26</sup> Chambati, 'Restructuring of agrarian labour', 1060.
- <sup>27</sup> Chambati and Moyo, *Land Reform and the Political Economy*, 10-11.
- <sup>28</sup> Chambati, 'Restructuring of agrarian labour', 1052; and Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart, *Zimbabwe Takes Back its Land*, 193.
- <sup>29</sup> Moyo et al., *Fast Track Land Reform Baseline*, 32; and Scoones et al., *Zimbabwe's Land Reform*, 53.
- <sup>30</sup> Chambati, 'Restructuring of agrarian labour relations', 1060.
- <sup>31</sup> Binswanger-Mkhize and Moyo, *Zimbabwe from Economic Rebound*, 34.
- <sup>32</sup> Government of Zimbabwe, *Report of the Presidential Land Review Committee*, 25; Government of Zimbabwe, *Zimbabwe 2003 Poverty Assessment*, 25-26; and Moyo, 'Three Decades of Agrarian Reform', 504.
- <sup>33</sup> Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart, *Zimbabwe Takes Back its Land*, 165; and Scoones et al., *Zimbabwe's Land Reform*, 206.
- <sup>34</sup> Women war veterans displayed singular determination and perseverance to acquire and secure land, acting as catalysts for mobilizing other women. In the 20 years after independence, these women fighters had become housewives and mothers, but they never lost the initial passion for land that drove them to join the liberation struggle. Women were at the forefront of *jambanja*, participating alongside men in the struggle to gain access to land. Lyons, *Guns and Guerrilla Girls* (chap 9); Sadomba, *War Veterans in Zimbabwe's*, 126, notes that during the invasions in

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Goromonzi, the War Veterans Committee was led by three powerful women, more active and senior than the men in the committee.

<sup>35</sup> Hanlon, Manjengwa and Smart, *Zimbabwe takes back its land*, 39.

<sup>36</sup> Rifkind, 'Politics of land', 205, quoting 'Idle Land a National Disgrace', *Rhodesian Farmer*, 9 Apr 1965.

<sup>37</sup> Riddell, *The Land Question*, 13

<sup>38</sup> Weiner, et al., 'Land Use and Agricultural Productivity', 251-285; and Moyo, 'The Land Question', in Mandaza (ed), *Zimbabwe: The Political Economy*, 174.

<sup>39</sup> Riddell, *The Land Question*, 11-13

<sup>40</sup> 'Zimbabwe Corn Imports by Year', Index Mundi, at <http://www.indexmundi.com/agriculture/?country=zw&commodity=corn&graph=imports>.

<sup>41</sup> Masst, 'The Harvest of Independence', 83, at <http://www.open.ac.uk/technology/mozambique>.

<sup>42</sup> Weiner, 'Agricultural Restructuring in Zimbabwe', 405.

<sup>43</sup> Binswanger-Mkhize and Moyo, *Zimbabwe from Economic Rebound*, 46. Rainfall during the 2011/12 growing season was variable and some regions experienced drought, resulting lower production as seen in Table 3.

<sup>44</sup> Tobacco Industry and Marketing Board, *TIMB Weekly Tobacco Report*, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, *Second Round Crop*, 5.

<sup>46</sup> Although overall rainfall was normal, rainfall distribution was erratic and many parts of the country experienced late onset of the rain season, violent storms coupled by very heavy rainfall, long dry spells and premature ending of the season.

<sup>47</sup> A1: 23%, A2: 21%, and 1980s resettlement: 11%.

<sup>48</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, *Second Round Crop*., 15.

<sup>49</sup> *Financial Gazette*, Harare, 2 Nov 2011, citing T Biti, Mid-year Review.

<sup>50</sup> Binswanger-Mkhize and Moyo, *Zimbabwe from Economic Rebound*, 13.

<sup>51</sup> Binswanger-Mkhize and Moyo, *Zimbabwe from Economic Rebound*, 72.

<sup>52</sup> Deininger and Byerlee, 'The Rise of Large Farms', 701-714.

<sup>53</sup> World Bank, *Agriculture for development*. World Development Report 2008. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2007; Lipton, *Land Reform in Developing Countries*; and de Janvry and Sadoulet, 'Agricultural growth and poverty reduction', 1-20.

<sup>54</sup> Collier, 'The politics of hunger', 67-79.

<sup>55</sup> Wiggins, et al., *Agricultural development policy*, 34.