

2. WHY LAND REFORM?

Introduction

According to the White Paper on South African Land Policy “the case for the government’s land reform policy is four-fold: (1) to redress the injustices of apartheid, (2) to foster national reconciliation and stability, (3) to underpin economic growth; and (4) to improve household welfare and alleviate poverty.”¹ Furthermore, the White Paper identifies a range of “issues which must be addressed if the proposed land policy is to be effective”. This includes environmental issues – “The land reform programme, which aims to reduce poverty, diversify sources of income and allow people more control over their lives and their environment, is expected to reduce the risk of land degradation. Nonetheless, the land redistribution programme is not without environmental risks”.²

Chapter one touches on the issue of redressing injustices, but more particularly this issue is addressed in chapter six on the Restitution Programme. The case for national reconciliation and stability is alluded to throughout this thesis, but is addressed specifically in chapter eleven. The case for “economic growth” – understood as agricultural and rural growth – is addressed throughout, but specifically in chapter three. The case for “improving household welfare and alleviating poverty” is analysed in discussed in this chapter in conjunction with the closely related issues of food security and environmental sustainability.

This chapter has a three-fold purpose. First, it peruses whether land reform in general will alleviate poverty and contribute to food security and environmental sustainability. Second, the chapter examines whether land reform in South Africa will alleviate poverty and contribute to food security and environmental sustainability. And, third, the chapter attempts to emphasise the complexities of these issues and the fact that there are no absolute answers, by building on evidence from a variety of local and international case studies.

Section one of this chapter explores the extent of poverty in South Africa and questions whether land reform presents a unique opportunity to alleviate poverty, particularly in rural South Africa, as is argued by many land reform activists. Section two illustrates the high prevalence of food insecurity in South Africa and similarly examines whether land reform will reduce food insecurity. The section on food security in this chapter is also closely linked to the subsequent discussions on agriculture (chapter three) and gender (chapter ten). Section three, then, is a similar investigation of the relationship between land reform and environmental sustainability or degradation, with particular emphasis on local – e.g. Makuleke and Richtersveld – and international - e.g. Brazil and Kenya – case studies.

¹ Department of Land Affairs, White Paper on South African Land Reform Policy, Pretoria, April 1997, p.

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² Ibid. p. vii

1. Poverty Alleviation

1.1. Poverty in South Africa: rural and gender dimensions

As the following discussion will show, poverty is widespread in South Africa, particularly in rural areas and among rural African women. Land reform presents a unique opportunity to alleviate poverty in South Africa. In rural areas, people continue to depend on access to land for their economic and social survival. *“Control of the land is the strongest force in shaping their economic, social and political structures”*.³ There is thus a correlation (not necessarily causal) between poverty and lack of access to land.

In 1999, South Africa’s total population was estimated at 43 million (with Africans accounting for just over 33 million).⁴ In 2001, some 46% of the total population lived in rural areas (56.7% of the African population, 16.6% of the coloured population, 2.7% of the Indian population and 9.4% of the white population⁵) and probably most of the urban population had strong ties to the rural areas.

In 1995, the Human Sciences and Research Council estimated that 35.2% of South Africa’s households were poor. Of the African population, 54.5% of rural households were classified poor and the figure for urban African households was 41.5%. The corresponding figures for white households were 4% in rural areas and 2.1% in urban areas.⁶ By 1999, poverty among the African population had increased to 60%, while poverty for the white population had decreased to less than 2% (61% and 1% respectively in 2000)⁷. Seventy-two percent of the people in the poorest provinces lived in rural areas in 1999 and 70% of all rural people were poor.⁸ In addition, at least 20% of rural households had no assets of any kind in 1995. This meant that 20% of rural households had no safety net, were unable to liquidate assets to cover unexpected expenses and were therefore extremely vulnerable to any loss of income. Furthermore, they had no way of investing in new opportunities as they lacked resources to use as security for credit.⁹ The National Land Committee also estimated that some 5% of the rural population were destitute, with no prospect of livelihood security. A further 15% were highly vulnerable to falling into this position. These two groups (20% of the rural population) would be excluded from the potential benefits of a land reform programme that requires any form of monetary “own contribution” to qualify as a participant (notably the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development Programme).

³ Christodoulou D, "Introduction", *The Unpromised Land*, Zed Books, London, 1990

⁴ Statistics South Africa 2000, Pretoria, 2000

⁵ Central Statistics Service, The people of South Africa Population Census, 1996, Report 03-01-19, 1996

⁶ HSRC, A profile of Poverty, Inequality and Human Development in South Africa, Pretoria, 1995

⁷ May J, “The structure and composition of rural poverty and livelihoods in South Africa”, in Cousins B (ed.), *At the Crossroads: Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa into the 21st Century*, PLAAS, UWC, 2000, p. 22

⁸ Hanekom D, Speech at the International Consultative Conference on Food Security and Nutrition as Human Rights, SAHRC, March, 1999. Also see May J, Poverty and inequality in South Africa: poverty and inequality report to the Office of the Deputy President, Praxis, Durban, 1998

⁹ National Land Committee, Land Reform Policy Proposals, Braamfontein, August 1995

In 1996, out of a total of 9.1 million South African households, 4.2 million lived in formal houses or brick structures on separate stands, 1.6 million households lived in “traditional” dwellings and one million lived in shacks in informal settlements.¹⁰ In Gauteng alone, there was an estimated backlog of 500 000 housing units in March 1996.¹¹ The government claimed that by 2001 it had built approximately one million houses for people who had no formal housing before.¹² Figures released by the Department of Housing in December 2000 claim that 1 129 612 cheap houses had been built in the six years since the 1994 elections at a cost of R40 billion. These houses provided accommodation for five million of the 12.5 million people requiring proper housing.¹³ Despite this huge demand for housing the percentage of the national budget allocated to housing has decreased from 3.4% in 1996 to 1.4% in 1999/2000.¹⁴

The Development Bank of Southern Africa estimated, in 1995, that 65% of the rural population did not have access to an adequate water supply. Also, 95% of the rural population did not have adequate access to sanitation facilities and there was a backlog of 152 clinics, 29 556 classrooms and 100 000 kilometres of road.¹⁵ The situation had not changed much by 1996. According to the Population Census, just over half of South Africa’s total number of households had access to flush or chemical toilets, while 68% of African households in rural areas used a pit latrine and 27% had no facilities at all. According to the Department of Water Affairs, standpipes had been installed within 200 metres of the dwellings of approximately 1.3 million rural people by 1998.¹⁶ The government also claimed that by 2001, 9 million people had obtained access to clean water since 1994 and about 1.5 million more households had access to electricity.¹⁷ This still leaves 3 million households with no electricity and at least 8 million people without access to clean water.¹⁸

Only 26% of African households currently have access to land for the cultivation of crops. Although there are substantial provincial differences, the average land size for a rural African household is 2.2 hectares. This means that there is such a shortage of arable land in the former bantustans that households can only practice sub-subsistence agriculture and that income generated elsewhere becomes increasingly significant.¹⁹ Furthermore, according to the National Land Committee, approximately one quarter of

¹⁰ Central Statistics Service, The people of South Africa Population Census, 1996, Report 03-01-19, 1996

¹¹ Eales K, “Rural and Urban Residential Land Demand”, Down to Earth, Marcus T, Eales K & Wildshut A (Eds.), LAPC, Indicator Press, Natal, March 1996, p. 27. Also see May J, Carter M & Posel D, The Composition and persistence of poverty in rural South Africa; an entitlement approach, Policy Paper no. 15, Land and Agriculture Policy Centre, Johannesburg, 1996

¹² Economist, “Africa’s big black hope”, March 17 –23, 2001

¹³ Mail & Guardian, “South African housing delivery unsurpassed”, February 23, 2001 & Mail & Guardian, “Housing shortage still desperate”, June 29, 2001

¹⁴ Pottie D, “Housing the nation, the politics of low-cost housing in South Africa since 1994”, Paper presented at the South African Political Science Association, Durban, 2001, p. 10

¹⁵ Development Bank of Southern Africa, Rural Infrastructure Investment Framework, Phase 7, Draft 1, June 1995

¹⁶ The Star, “Asmal punts his achievements”, August 25, 1998

¹⁷ Economist, “Africa’s big black hope”, March 17 –23, 2001

¹⁸ Economist, “Africa’s big black hope”, March 17 –23, 2001

¹⁹ National Land Committee, Land Reform Policy Proposals, Braamfontein, August 1995

rural African households own livestock with an average holding of 5.4 mature livestock units valued at approximately R4 300. Only 18% of rural African households own agricultural equipment such as ploughs and harvesters, placing severe limitations on initiatives to increase agricultural production.

In terms of education, in 1996, there were 4.1 million people in the country aged 20 or older who had never attended school. There are clear urban/rural, gender and racial dimensions to education. There were 1.3 million people with no formal education living in urban areas as opposed to 2.8 million with no formal education living in rural areas. In addition, of the 2.8 million people with no formal education living in rural areas, 1.1 million were Africans, 564 000 of whom were African women. Thus, 10% of people in urban areas aged 20 years or more have never attended school, the figure for rural areas is 33%.²⁰

Members of the Sheba community in Mpumalanga (where I conducted fieldwork), for example, have no formal housing, no electricity, no water and no recreational facilities. At least 70% of the community are unemployed. Most of the working members of the community are farm workers earning, on average, R200 per month. Only 30% of community members have undergone formal education (mostly primary school). The nearest school, shop and clinic are approximately 25 kilometres away. Crippling transport costs limit access to these institutions. As Elizabeth Nkosi explains, *“life is terrible. There are many days when we have nothing to eat”*.²¹

1.2. Land reform programmes and poverty alleviation

The overwhelming rural dimension of poverty in South Africa is not unique. There are strong rural dimensions to poverty all over the world. In 1996 in Brazil, for example, the rural population was 40% poorer than the urban population.²² In Honduras, where 60% of the total population are directly involved in the agricultural sector, 70% of the rural population still lived on less than \$20 per month in 1980.²³ What is unique about South Africa is that this highly inequitable economic situation is the consequence of more than 300 years of oppression culminating in the Apartheid policies of the mid to late 1900s. Poverty alleviation should thus become an important focus of land reform programmes for social justice and economic reasons.

As the following discussions will show, land reform programmes can, if designed and implemented with adequate input from the “poor” individuals/communities such programmes are intended to benefit, alleviate poverty. It will be shown, for example, that land reform can result in increased agricultural production. In turn, growth in the

²⁰ Central Statistics Service, The people of South Africa Population Census, 1996, Report 03-01-19, 1996

²¹ Interviews with Sheba community members, June 27,28 & 29, 2001 also see bibliography for details of interviews with individual members of the community.

²² Grappo P, "Evaluating and Planning of Development Support Activities for Settler Areas in the State of Sao Paulo, Brazil", Land Tenure Service SDAA, FAO Rural Development Division, March 31, 1996

²³ De Walt B.R, Stonich S.C & Hamilton S.L, “Honduras: Population, Inequality and Resource Destruction”, Population and Land Use in Developing Countries, Jelly C.L & Torrey B.B (Eds.), National Academy Press, Washington D.C, 1993

agricultural sector can alleviate poverty because it can reduce consumer food prices and increase employment rates and/or opportunities in rural areas.²⁴ Increased employment in turn raises rural wages and has spill-over effects on urban informal sector wages. It further appears (and India is an example) that rural economic growth tends to reduce national poverty, while the same is not true of urban economic growth.²⁵ What is clear from the case study discussions that follow, however, is that rural economic growth (in part) depends on the redistribution of economic resources, including land.

Land reform programmes that have resulted in poverty alleviation were implemented in the following countries - Kenya, China, Zimbabwe, Taiwan, South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cuba and India.

In Kenya, the high rates of growth in agricultural production in the 1960s and early 1970s at least maintained the living standards of the rural poor. In addition, much of the growth in marketed agricultural output came from small-scale farmers. Despite the fact that 20% of the Kenyan population continued to fall below the poverty line, the *“overall feature of the 1960s and 1970s was increased prosperity”*.²⁶ Increased production and prosperity were the results of improved marketing opportunities, support for small-scale farmers and the increased availability of land. The Kenyan experience suggests – and this issue is discussed at length in chapter three – that land reform programmes for agricultural development/subsistence farming, require substantial public and private sector input and support in order to succeed and/or alleviate poverty in a sustainable way.

Further (perhaps more convincing) evidence can be found in Zimbabwe. Kinsey²⁷ argues that the effects of large-scale resettlement programmes cannot be determined based on short-term evidence. The Zimbabwean land resettlement programme, however, spans a period of 20 years or more and the preliminary effects of the programme on poverty are starting to emerge. Kinsey conducted a panel study in 1996 in which he compared the economic situation in three resettlement areas to that in the communal areas from which the land reform beneficiaries originally came. With regard to farm incomes, Kinsey found that the crop output of the average resettled family was worth over four and a half times that of the average in communal areas and, in terms of revenue, resettled farmers earned from crop sales 6.8 times what communal farmers earned.

According to Kinsey, the proportion of output marketed was also striking: resettled households sold 78% of the value they produced whereas communal area households marketed only 53%. Kinsey also found that the value of the average livestock holding in resettled areas was roughly double that in communal areas and the average resettled farmer earned in 1997 some 3.4 times as much in livestock revenue as his communal area counterpart. In terms of expenditure on non-food items, a 1997 survey reported that

²⁴ For a detailed discussion on land reform and agriculture see chapter three.

²⁵ Binswanger H.P, *Agricultural and Rural Development: Painful Lessons*, Address to the Agricultural Economics Association of South Africa, Pretoria, September, 1994

²⁶ all from Heyer J, “Agricultural Policy in Kenya from the Colonial period to 1975”, in Heyer J, Roberts P & Williams G (Eds.), *Rural Development in Tropical Africa*, Macmillan Press, London, 1981

²⁷ Kinsey B.H, “Land Reform, Growth and Equity: Emerging evidence from Zimbabwe’s resettlement programme”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 25, number 2, June 1999

expenditure for resettled areas was 1.6 times that of expenditure in communal areas (the fact that families in resettled areas were on average bigger than families in communal areas may have some influence here). Kinsey also found that communal area households spent nearly four times as much as resettled household on purchasing grain, indicating that the need to purchase food items was less widespread in resettled areas. With regard to material well-being (housing, domestic water supply, sanitation facilities, fuel for cooking, lighting, furnishings, farm transportation) Kinsey found that, on average, the index of material well-being increased by 52% between 1980 and 1992.²⁸

Nevertheless, improvements to the economic position of resettled families have apparently not translated into better nutrition for children. Kinsey found that under-nutrition was unexpectedly high in both communal and resettled areas, but severe chronic under-nutrition was higher in resettled areas. It appears therefore that increases in agricultural productivity and income have not translated into better nutrition for children – this can be explained by the failure of policy developers and implementers to take account of women's particular status within patriarchal societies (see chapter ten).²⁹ It does appear, based on Kinsey's panel study, that land reform can lead to genuine poverty reduction.

Land reform programmes in China (in the early 1980s), Cuba (in the late 1970s) and Kerala (in India) also significantly reduced poverty. Estimates for China are that between 1979 and 1984, agricultural output as well as grain output respectively grew at 11.8% and 4.1 % annually, partly as a result of land reform. In addition, household savings and investments increased, absolute poverty was reduced from 60% to between six and 11% and the number of very poor decreased from 240 million to between 50 and 80 million.³⁰

In Cuba, following a large-scale land reform programme that was accompanied by investments in education and healthcare, illiteracy rates declined by 89% and infant mortality decreased by 54% between 1960 and 1985. Cuba was transformed into one of the most egalitarian societies in the world and the Gini-coefficient inequality measure declined from 0.35 in 1962 to 0.21 in 1978.³¹ The state of Kerala in south-western India has been heralded as a land reform and social development success story. Following the land reform programme, Kerala's citizens have the life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy rates of first world countries. Furthermore, the number of poor has fallen from 10 to five million.³²

A spectacular example of a land reform programme alleviating poverty can be found in South Korea. Less than two decades ago, average incomes in South Korea were lower

²⁸ All from Kinsey B.H, "Land Reform, Growth and Equity: Emerging evidence from Zimbabwe's resettlement programme", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Volume 25, number 2, June 1999

²⁹ For an explanation on this phenomenon see the chapter on Women, Patriarchy and Land Reform in South Africa

³⁰ Lin Y.Z, "Institutional Reform and Chinese Agriculture: Retrospect and Prospect", *Economic Reform in China: Problems and Prospects*, Dorn J.A & Xi W (Eds.), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989

³¹ El-Ghonemy M.R, "Cuba", *The Political Economy of Rural Poverty*, Routledge, London, 1990

³² Heller P, "Land reform led to Kerala's success", *Land and Rural Digest*, December 2000

than average incomes in the Republic of Congo and Sudan.³³ As a result of a centrally planned, market-based land reform programme, preferential pricing and taxation policies and significant investment in rural education and national employment creation³⁴, average farm incomes per household increased by 4% in real terms between 1963 and 1975.³⁵ The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation found that the average daily calorie intake in South Korea increased by 39% between 1961 and 1981. Illiteracy was reduced from 80% in 1940 to 20% in 1965. Infant mortality fell from 285 per thousand in 1945, to 34 per thousand in 1980. Life expectancy rose from 52 to 62-years for men and from 56 to 71-years for women in the same period.³⁶ The particular nature of the South Korean land reform programme (i.e. land to the tiller programme with minimum social and economic disruption) may also have contributed to this success.

There are also cases in which land reform and increased agricultural productivity did not alleviate poverty. Countries like India, Brazil and Mexico were able to achieve substantial levels of growth with equity, but were unable to sustain advances in the long-term. By 1990, following decades of land reform, Mexico had a huge accumulated external debt and high interest rates. The poor in Mexico were not only increasing numerically but were also becoming poorer.³⁷

There is no single explanation why land reform programmes sometimes contribute to poverty alleviation and sometimes do not. This is because land reform programmes are shaped and influenced by multiple factors and interests. Evidence from the case studies discussed above points to the influence of market-based land reform and the importance of investment in human capital (i.e. investment in education, healthcare and employment creation, as well as support and subsidies for emerging farmers) in determining the impact of land reform on poverty.

Successful land reform programmes in East Asia (South Korea, Malaysia and Indonesia) are often presented as evidence³⁸ for the argument that market-based land reform will contribute to economic growth as well as greater equality in terms of access to resources. In fact, not one of these three countries adhered strictly to free-market principles and land reform policies were characterised by strong and active state involvement.³⁹ Land reform policies placed considerable emphasis on poverty reduction and were supported by significant investment in social and human development (for example, state-sponsored provision of education and health services). In Malaysia, the colonial agricultural economy, dependent on the export of tin and rubber, was also transformed into a more diversified and more urban and industrial based economy (although the importance of the

³³ Oxfam, "Growth with Equity: Three East Asian Lessons", Oxfam International, UK, 1997

³⁴ The South Korean example, therefore, also points to the importance of state and private sector support and investment in the land reform/emerging agricultural sector – an argument that is emphasised in the next chapter (chapter three).

³⁵ El-Ghonemy M R, "South Korea", *The Political Economy of Rural Poverty*, Routledge, London, 1990

³⁶ El-Ghonemy M R, "South Korea", *The Political Economy of Rural Poverty*, Routledge, London, 1990

³⁷ Otero G, "Agrarian Reform in Mexico: Capitalism and the State", *Searching for Agrarian Reform in Latin America*, Thiesenhusen W.C (Ed.), Unwin Hyman, 1989

³⁸ including by the developers of South Africa's land redistribution programme

³⁹ Oxfam, "Growth with Equity: Three East Asian Lessons", Oxfam International, UK, 1997

agricultural sector remains relatively high). The Malaysian government adopted the New Economic Policy in 1970, which has generated a host of development initiatives directed towards the rural population. These include massive public investment in drainage and irrigation, restrictions on imported rice, generous fertiliser and price subsidies, and other forms of state intervention in the market to benefit producers.⁴⁰ Similar policy approaches are evident in the Zimbabwean and Cuban case studies. Furthermore, in all three East Asian countries, as well as, in Cuba, economic growth was managed to ensure that it contributed to greater equity and that it did not exclude the poor. The success of these programmes in terms of poverty alleviation was based on the redistribution of land, assets and income and, thereby, the creation of social foundations that allowed the poor to benefit from economic development. “*Wealth in East Asia did not trickle down to the poor, it was redistributed*”.⁴¹ In India (with the exception of the state of Kerala), Brazil and Mexico, economic growth and increased equality were not sustainable precisely because of the absence of investment in human and social development.

The arguments (and lessons) above are accepted as premises in this thesis. This thesis will, therefore, argue that the South African approach to land redistribution will not contribute significantly to poverty alleviation. This statement must be qualified in terms of what is meant by poverty alleviation. In a country like South Africa, where organisations are campaigning for a Basic Income Grant of approximately R100 per month, one can assume that a land reform programme that increases households' monthly income by only R200 per month will contribute to poverty alleviation. Nevertheless, South Africa's land redistribution programme is essentially market-based (i.e. willing buyers and willing sellers with the state playing only a facilitative role). The Department of Land Affairs has argued for the market-based approach in terms of economic efficiency – i.e. that the market-based approach will ensure that agricultural productivity is maintained while the poor are assisted (through government grants) in accessing land on the market. This argument is underlined by the belief that resources will be allocated efficiently in a market system. Yet, for a market to function effectively there should be “*perfect competition. Perfect competition is characterised by many buyers and sellers, homogeneity of products, the ability to enter and exit the market freely and information symmetry. Transaction costs are assumed to be zero*”.⁴² None of these factors exist in South Africa, where access is skewed due to apartheid policies, where land reform beneficiaries lack access to adequate information and where high transaction costs further exclude the poor from participation in the market economy. In other words, the free-market system is efficient in distributing resources only where it operates in an environment of equal opportunities, which is clearly not the case in South Africa. Furthermore, unequal opportunities are often the result of discriminatory policies such as Apartheid. It therefore appears that land redistribution based on market principles will,

⁴⁰ Discussion on Malaysia and for more information on Malaysian policies see Ghee LT & Said MI, “Malaysia: Rice Peasants and Political Priorities in an Economy Undergoing Restructuring”, in Hart G, Turton A & White B (Eds.), Agrarian Transformations: Local Processes and the State in Southeast Asia, University of California Press, London & Los Angeles, 1989

⁴¹ Oxfam, “Growth with Equity: Three East Asian Lessons”, Oxfam International, UK, 1997

⁴² Bonti-Ankomah S, Land Redistribution Options for South Africa, NLC, 1998. This is an issue that re-emerges throughout this thesis and is discussed in more detail in chapter seven on the Redistribution Programme.

not only not alleviate poverty but, will perpetuate inequality and injustice by maintaining the economic status quo.⁴³

Other relevant factors include beneficiary participation and vested interests. Land reform programmes can only alleviate poverty if the programmes are compatible with the needs and conditions of beneficiaries. This is predicated on beneficiary participation in the development and implementation of the programme. When land reform and development programmes that are not compatible with the needs and realities of potential beneficiaries are too strictly imposed, the reaction of beneficiaries is often simply to circumvent the programme. This happened in the Gezira Scheme in Sudan where farmers diverted irrigation water from commercial cotton to food crop production.⁴⁴ Participation should not mean “*getting people to do what outsiders think they should do*” as Adams⁴⁵ found was the case in Senegal. Adams writes about the conflict that emerged between the development agency and the peasant farmers in Jamaane in Senegal when the small-scale farmers formed a peasant association and hired their own agro-economist. Beneficiary participation is also crucial because, in cases where beneficiaries are settled in areas with which they are familiar, they tend to be more knowledgeable about the social environment and the local production conditions than government or development organisations.

It is crucial to identify vested interests as well as whose interests are actually being served by any land reform programme. The interests of governments and/or organisations that implement land reform programmes are not necessarily compatible with the interests of potential beneficiaries. The interests of beneficiaries are also far from homogenous with class, gender, language, cultural and many other significant differences.

A further factor relates to the amount of capital invested in land reform and/or rural development projects. There are cases where investment and the costs of providing services and support to land reform beneficiaries and potential small-scale farmers have made production more expensive without improving the economic position of the beneficiaries concerned (e.g. Nigeria).⁴⁶

2. Food Security

2.1 What is food (in)security?

⁴³ This argument will be developed throughout this thesis and relates to the lack of (potential) beneficiary participation in the policy formulation and implementation process. It also raises questions around (1) “who” participated in the policy process and “who” was excluded and (2) the failure to account for socio-economic differentiation in the policy process.

⁴⁴ Barnett T, “Evaluating the Gezira Scheme: Black box of Pandora’s box”, in Heyer J, Roberts P & Williams G (Eds.), Rural Development in Tropical Africa, Macmillan Press, London, 1981

⁴⁵ Adams A, “The Senegal River Valley” in Heyer J, Roberts P & Williams G (Eds.), Rural Development in Tropical Africa, Macmillan Press, London, 1981

⁴⁶ for more detail see Wallace T, “The Kano River Project, Nigeria: The impact of an irrigation scheme on productivity and welfare”, in Heyer J, Roberts P & Williams G (Eds.), Rural Development in Tropical Africa, Macmillan Press, London, 1981

Malnutrition, starvation, famine and hunger (i.e. food insecurity) remain pressing problems internationally and locally. Food security can be defined as the ability of countries⁴⁷ or households to meet target consumption levels. Target consumption levels are determined by the amount of food required for an active and healthy life.⁴⁸ Further, the essential elements of food security are the availability of food and the ability to acquire it.⁴⁹

2.2 Food (in)security in South Africa

In South Africa, few of the approximately 20 million people living in rural areas can be regarded as food secure in terms of the Food and Agricultural Organisation's standards. In fact, estimates in 1999 indicated that 14 million (rural and urban) South Africans were vulnerable to food insecurity.⁵⁰ Among these, women, children and the elderly are the most vulnerable. The incidence of malnutrition in children under five in the rural areas has been estimated at 60%.

In the early 1990s, between 30 000 and 50 000 South Africans were dying of hunger related diseases.⁵¹ One in four children under the age of six years (some 1.5 million) are stunted due to chronic malnutrition. Deficiencies in micro-nutrients such as Vitamin A and iron are widespread and have negative consequences for children's growth and development. The South African Health Review Report of 1996 found that 25% of South African women had iron deficiencies.

Food insecurity and malnutrition are highest in provinces with large rural populations. Based on statistics available in 1996, the highest stunting rates occur in the Northern Province (34.2%), the Eastern Cape (28.8%) and the Free State (28.7%). The three provinces of the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Northern Province house 52% of the country's children. An estimated 60% of all stunted children and two thirds of poor people live in these three provinces. In contrast, the Western Cape and Gauteng exhibit low stunting rates (11.5%) by international standards.⁵² The majority of rural South

⁴⁷ National food security is the availability of sufficient food at an aggregate level, supplied from domestic production and/or imports. Bernstein H, "Land and food in South Africa's Agrarian Question" in Levin R & Weiner D (eds.), No More Tears . . . Struggles for Land in Mpumalanga, South Africa, Africa World Press Inc., Asmara, Eritrea, 1997

⁴⁸ Hussain M.N, "Food Security and Adjustment Programmes: The Case of Sudan", Alternative Strategies for Africa, Volume 2, Suliman M (Ed.), IFAA, London, 1991

⁴⁹ For more on the implications of this particular definition see Bernstein H, "Land and food in South Africa's Agrarian Question" in Levin R & Weiner D (eds.), No More Tears . . . Struggles for Land in Mpumalanga, South Africa, Africa World Press Inc., Asmara, Eritrea, 1997. This definition is also particularly relevant to the discussion in section 2.7 in this chapter.

⁵⁰ Former Minister of Land Affairs, Derek Hanekom, Speech at the International Consultative Conference on Food Security and Nutrition as Human Rights, SAHRC, March, 1999

⁵¹ National Land Committee, "Few South Africans are Food Secure, February 1999

⁵² Derek Hanekom, Speech at the International Consultative Conference on Food Security and Nutrition as Human Rights, SAHRC, March, 1999

African households experience intermittent periods of hunger while a substantial minority never have enough to eat.⁵³

Food insecurity is, however, not limited to rural areas. For example, 5% of urban respondents reported hunger on a daily basis in a survey conducted in Gauteng in June 1998.⁵⁴ What is evident, is that there is a correlation between lack of access to land and food insecurity. For example, 70% of the population of Ceres (located in one of South Africa's most productive and profitable agricultural sectors in the Western Cape) experience hunger – particularly during the winter months, when seasonal work is scarce. Only 9% of the residents in Ceres have access to land for household food production and less than 1% have access to grazing land for livestock.⁵⁵

2.3. Food security is a human right.

Food security is recognised as a basic human right in the South African Constitution. Section 27(1)(b) of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) guarantees all South Africans “*the right to have access to sufficient food and water*”. In terms of Section 27(2), the state “*must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources to achieve the progressive realisation*” of this right. In addition, Sections 28(1)(c) and 35(2)(e) place a direct obligation on the state to ensure that children and detained persons enjoy basic and adequate nutrition. Sections 24 and 25 of the Bill of Rights, which deal with land ownership and environmental rights, are also indirectly relevant to the right to food. In essence, the role of the South African government and its organs in terms of Section 7(2) of the Constitution is to respect, promote, protect and fulfil the realisation of socio-economic rights, which include access to land and food.

The right to adequate food is also firmly established in international law. These rights flow from the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1996, the Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition in 1974, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1979, the Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1989 and the 1996 Rome Declaration on World Food Security.⁵⁶

2.4. Food security and South African land reform policies and programmes.

This section serves as a brief overview of the commitment (or lack thereof) to food security in South African land reform policies and programmes. These policies and programmes will be analysed and discussed much more thoroughly in subsequent

⁵³ Marcus T, "Demand for Land", Down to Earth, Marcus T, Eales K & Wildschut A (Eds.), Land and Agricultural Policy Centre, Indicator Press, Natal, March 1996, p. 6

⁵⁴ CASE, Monitoring Socio-Economic Rights in South Africa: Public Perceptions, June 1998

⁵⁵ Mail & Guardian, “Starving in Ceres”, March 14 – 19, 2003

⁵⁶ Weideman M, Food Security and Nutrition as Human Rights in South Africa: The need for and Integrated Approach, Report of the International Consultative Conference on Food Security and Nutrition as Human Rights, SAHRC, Johannesburg, 1999

chapters. It is, however, important to note (at this stage) that land reform policies and programmes in South Africa – and this includes the 1996 Green and 1997 White Papers on Land Reform Policy in South Africa – has paid scant attention to food security issues. Food security has been such a neglected aspect of land reform that the Department of Land Affairs was still unable to provide information on whether the poorest of the poor had improved levels of food security as a result of land reform in 1998.⁵⁷ In the absence of a discernible strategy to deal with food security and nutrition, the number of people who are food insecure will continue to grow.

More recent developments (as will be discussed in chapter seven) suggest an increased awareness of, and commitment to, food security. For example, in 1999, in its Strategic Directions the Department of Land Affairs committed “to improve household food security through expanded production and a more equitable distribution of resources”.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development Programme (discussed in chapter seven) aims to address food insecurity through its Food Safety Net Programme. The aim of the programme is to assist families or individuals to obtain access to small land areas in order to engage in small-scale or subsistence production and thereby improve household food security. It will be argued in chapter seven of this thesis, that this policy commitment, although laudable, is not likely to address food insecurity because the parameters of the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development programme are set to exclude the poorest of the poor.⁵⁹

An analysis (as contained in subsequent discussion) of the South African economic and political context and the land reform programmes, suggest that the following policies, programmes, strategies and approaches can enhance food security in South Africa. These include the provision of land for subsistence or small-scale production, increased agricultural productivity, equitable distribution of agricultural products, inter-governmental co-operation, subsidised food prices and social assistance - including grants, school feeding schemes and food fortification programmes. Furthermore, the discussion in chapter ten indicates that providing women with land is one of the most effective methods to promote food security and better nutrition.

2.5. Subsistence gardens and food security

*“Food security in rural communities needs to be examined within the perspective of local livelihood strategies aimed at ensuring household survival, together with the policy and institutional frameworks that impact on the ability to sustain food security at the household and community levels”.*⁶⁰

This section argues that land reform programmes that distribute small plots of land in urban and rural areas to individual and groups (especially women) who have the

⁵⁷ Land and Rural Digest, “A Seed not Sown”, Supplement, February 1999

⁵⁸ Bonti-Ankomah S, “Where is the beef in the new agricultural policy?”, Land and Rural Digest, February 1999

⁵⁹ See chapter 7

⁶⁰ Bob U, “Rural African women, food (in)security and agricultural production in the Ekuthuleni land redistribution project, KwaZulu-Natal”, Agenda, 51, 2002

necessary resources or support to utilise the land for small-scale or subsistence production can enhance food security in rural and urban areas.

Rural households engage in a wide range of income generating activities. The three major livelihood strategies are making claims against the incomes of migrant household members (38% of all households), employment in the secondary labour market (37%) and agricultural production. A fourth survival strategy is income from welfare claims and pensions.⁶¹ According to the National Land Committee, although agricultural production only makes up 10% of the income of rural African households (an average of R91 per month), it is the third most popular livelihood strategy and remains one of the few available to the very poor in rural areas. Small-scale agriculture therefore remains one of the main sources of livelihood in South Africa's rural areas – particularly for female-headed households.⁶² In a context of high unemployment rates and endemic poverty, access to food gardens is of particular importance in averting hunger. In addition, land demands in South Africa are often limited to a living space and a garden to supplement incomes and improve food security.⁶³ The average demand for land is 13.3 hectares, but this mean is skewed by the demands of a few individuals for large amounts of land. Many households demand one hectare or less and there is thus a substantial demand for subsistence plots or gardens.⁶⁴

Support for urban agriculture can also contribute to food security. Studies conducted in East Africa have shown that urban cultivation, practised largely by women, is both prevalent and vital to the livelihood of a significant portion of the population since, many urban households produce a considerable proportion of their own subsistence needs.⁶⁵ Urban agriculture can be an important survival mechanism for the very poor, women and the unemployed. It is a means to increase food security as well as an opportunity to earn a small cash income. Studies conducted among urban female farmers in Kenya show that urban farming is primarily seen (by 50% of participants) as a means to avert hunger.⁶⁶ The South African land reform programme should, therefore, incorporate urban agriculture into its policy ambit in an attempt to address malnutrition and hunger. The development of urban agriculture will be particularly beneficial to impoverished female-headed households.

2.6. Increased agricultural production and food security

A necessary, but not sufficient, condition for food security is adequate food supply - primarily through increased agricultural production. Therefore, a land reform programme

⁶¹ National Land Committee, Land Reform Policy Proposals, Braamfontein, August 1995

⁶² See chapter 10

⁶³ Marcus T, "Demand for Land", *Down to Earth*, Marcus T, Eales K & Wildschut A (Eds.), Land and Agricultural Policy Centre, Indicator Press, Natal, March 1996, p. 3

⁶⁴ Eales K, "Quantifying Rural Options", *Down to Earth*, Marcus T, Eales K & Wildschut A (Eds.), LAPC, Indicator Press, Natal, March 1996, p. 16

⁶⁵ Freeman D.B, "Survival Strategy or Business Training Ground? The Significance of Urban Agriculture for the Advancement of Women in African Cities", *African Studies Review*, Vol.36, No.5, December 1993

⁶⁶ Freeman D.B, "Survival Strategy or Business Training Ground? The Significance of Urban Agriculture for the Advancement of Women in African Cities", *African Studies Review*, Vol.36, No.5, December 1993

that contributes to increased agricultural production or general economic growth in the agricultural sector can contribute to greater food security in a number of ways. First, by increasing the overall food supply, (2) by increasing employment opportunities in rural areas and, consequently (3) increasing the wages/money available in rural areas to buy food or invest in other income-generating activities and/or education. Conversely, land reform programmes that undermine agricultural production or the agricultural sector will result in increased food insecurity. Cuba is an example of a country where the land reform programme contributed to increased food security. Examples where land reform contributed to increased food insecurity include Mexico and Zimbabwe.⁶⁷

In Cuba, for example, the government built an entirely new national food security system by means of increased agricultural production. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba was highly dependent on the Soviet block for agricultural imports including fertilisers, pesticides and petroleum. In 1989, 57% of goods necessary for human consumption in Cuba were imported.⁶⁸ With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba suddenly had to double agricultural production while external inputs had been halved.⁶⁹ In 1991, the Cuban government launched a programme to re-orient the entire agricultural production system towards organic agriculture, which required lower levels of external inputs⁷⁰. By 1993, food shortages had been significantly reduced and by 1996, vegetable production had increased by 25%.⁷¹

In Mexico, for example, the small-scale (ejido) agricultural sector had all but disintegrated by the early 1980s and Mexico's agricultural production went from providing ample foreign exchange to not being able to meet the food security needs of its own population. By 1990, Mexico had become one of the most malnourished countries in Latin America.⁷² The disintegration of the small-scale sector resulted, in part, from the fact that only 10% of the redistributed land was arable and that small-scale farmers did not have access to the necessary infrastructural support (i.e. irrigation, credit, extension services, capital and research).⁷³

Furthermore, Amin's⁷⁴ study of the small-scale/peasant agricultural sector in Zimbabwe shows that notwithstanding an "impressive"⁷⁵ increase in the sector's performance since the 1980s (measured in terms of its share of domestic production and marketed output for

⁶⁷ Note that this corresponds with Kinsey's findings that land reform in Zimbabwe's communal areas contributed to poverty alleviation, but did not improve child nutrition, discussed in section one of this chapter.

⁶⁸ Warnock K, "Feast or Famine", Panos Media Briefing, No.20, October 1996

⁶⁹ Warnock K, "Feast or Famine", Panos Media Briefing, No.20, October 1996

⁷⁰ For example animals instead of tractors. Chapter three expands this theme.

⁷¹ Warnock K, "Feast or Famine", Panos Media Briefing, No.20, October 1996

⁷² Otero G, "Agrarian Reform in Mexico: Capitalism and the State", Searching for Agrarian Reform in Latin America, Thiesenhusen W.C (Ed.), Unwin Hyman, 1989

⁷³ Otero G, "Agrarian Reform in Mexico: Capitalism and the State", Searching for Agrarian Reform in Latin America, Thiesenhusen W.C (Ed.), Unwin Hyman, 1989

⁷⁴ Amin N, "Peasant differentiation and food security in Zimbabwe", Working Paper no. 1, The Project for African Agriculture, Social Science Research Council, 1989, p. 1 - 7

⁷⁵ The annual maize intake, of the Grain Marketing Board, from the peasant sector increased from 8% in 1980/81 to 35% in 1986/87

maize and cotton) malnutrition among the rural population continues. Amin also found that only a relatively small portion of households was responsible for the increased sales, while the majority continued to face problems of food insecurity. A small-scale farming strategy can only succeed in a wider context of service provision and social and economic support – see chapter three for a discussion on the importance of support to land reform beneficiaries.

Any land reform programme in South Africa will have to address the “food supply” issue, because although South Africa has historically been self-sufficient in most basic food commodities, more recent history indicates a downward trend in food supply. Trends that emerged in the 1990s, indicate an increasing gap between production and consumption in, for example, wheat and other grains, potatoes, mutton, sunflower oil and citrus fruits.⁷⁶ This implies the need for increased agricultural production or food imports. During the early land reform policy formulation process, South African academics and World Bank representatives argued that redistributing agricultural land to small-scale producers would be the most effective method of increasing agricultural production and food security (i.e. small-scale/subsistence production).⁷⁷ The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations also promotes small-scale agriculture in its approach to increasing food security. Small-scale farmer paths are, however, not a panacea for agricultural production and food security (see section 2.5 of this chapter and, in particular, the small-scale versus large-scale efficiency debate in chapter three).

2.7. Inadequate distribution of agricultural products and food (in)security

The evidence from Mexico and Zimbabwe suggests that increased agricultural production does not guarantee food security. Other examples include the Indian Punjab where the introduction of high-yielding seed varieties resulted in a 120% increase in wheat production in 1955, a 174% increase in rice production in 1956 and an increase in grain production at twice the speed of population growth in 1981.⁷⁸ Yet, the proportion of people unable to afford minimum safe diets decreased slowly and there was almost no improvement in human nutrition.⁷⁹ Similarly, small-scale farmers in Zimbabwe were able to effect a mini-boom in cotton production and triple maize production in the 1980s, and yet, malnutrition remained the biggest killer of children aged between two and five years. Furthermore, 30% of school children in Zimbabwe were malnourished and the average daily calorie intake in 1988 was the same as in 1965.⁸⁰ (Some of this apparent contradiction between adequate supply and inadequate nutrition can be explained as a consequence of the exploitation of women in many societies – see chapter ten). Food

⁷⁶ Nomvete B.D, Maasdorp G.G & Thomas D (Eds.), Growth with Equity, Africa Institute for Policy Analysis and Economic Integration, Cape Town, 1997

⁷⁷ See section on small-scale vs. large-scale agricultural production in chapter three entitled Agriculture and Land Reform. Proponents of this argument include Lipton M, Binswanger H & Van Zyl J

⁷⁸ Lipton M, New Seeds and Poor People, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989

⁷⁹ Lipton M, New Seeds and Poor People, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989

⁸⁰ Rukuni M & Eicher C.K (Eds.), “Introduction”, Zimbabwe’s Agricultural Revolution, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1994

insecurity was particularly prevalent in Zimbabwe's low rainfall areas where many families are net purchasers of grain.⁸¹

In the 1980s, the World Bank argued that the food deficit crisis in Africa in the 1970s and 1980s was the result of stagnant and declining rates of agricultural production and increased population growth.⁸² This argument is based on Malthusian or neo-Malthusian approaches that stipulate that starvation results from a decline in aggregate food availability. The argument, however, fails to explain the occurrence of food insecurity in cases such as Zimbabwe in the 1980s and the Indian Punjab mentioned above, where adequate amounts of food are being produced. Two crucial factors are omitted in the food availability explanation, namely food distribution and the macro-economic context.⁸³

Distribution includes the actual distribution of food as well as the distribution of resources such as land, labour and capital. With regard to the distribution of resources, Watts⁸⁴ compares the experiences of Nigeria and the Ivory Coast between 1960 and 1980. Watts points out that these countries have similar geographies, both achieved impressive rates of industrial growth in the 1970s and both pursued broadly capitalist development strategies in which the state played an important role. According to Watts, Nigeria embarked on a state-led industrialisation programme while the Ivory Coast focussed on agrarian accumulation strategies. Nevertheless, both countries lost their ability to be food self-sufficient. In Nigeria, colonialism resulted in unequal development between regions and these inequalities were carried over and were increased in post-colonial Nigeria where policies focussed on industrialisation and oil production at the expense of agricultural production. In the Ivory Coast, government policies focussed on agriculture, but these policies were characterised by contradictions that contributed to food deficits in the long run. Export commodity producers were given many benefits such as extension services, transport and subsidies, while domestic food producers did not receive this support. This encouraged the production of export commodities like cotton at the expense of domestic food production (see 2.4. for further explanation). Watts therefore argues that there is no single explanation for African food deficits, and that growth in African agriculture will be determined by the "*struggle for land and resources within political and social contexts and economic policies that are very divergent*".⁸⁵

Finally, malnutrition and starvation often occur in the context of adequate food production for the very simple reason that either food (due to a lack of infrastructure) or the financial resources to purchase food are not distributed evenly throughout a country.

⁸¹ Stack J, "The Distributional Consequences of the Smallholder Maize Revolution", Rukuni M & Eicher C.K (Eds.), Zimbabwe's Agricultural Revolution, University of Zimbabwe Publications, 1994

⁸² Berry S.S, "The Food Crisis and Agrarian Change in Africa: A Review Essay", African Studies Review, Volume 27, no.2, June 1984

⁸³ Chattopadhyay R, "Zimbabwe: Structural Adjustment, Destitution and Food Insecurity", Review of the African Political Economy, 84, 2000

⁸⁴ Watts M. J & Bassett T.J, "Crisis and Change in African Agriculture: A comparative study of the Ivory Coast and Nigeria", African Studies Review, Volume 28, 1985

⁸⁵ The whole paragraph is based on Watts M. J & Bassett T.J, "Crisis and Change in African Agriculture: A comparative study of the Ivory Coast and Nigeria", African Studies Review, Volume 28, 1985

China, under Mao, is a case in point. The objectives of the land reform programme introduced under Mao's leadership in the late 1940s and early 1950s included attempts to find a balance between food supply and demand. This was a particularly serious issue, since China had experienced approximately 1 828 famines by 1946.⁸⁶ The land reform programme (based essentially on collectivisation) was complemented by policies aiming to limit population growth and rural to urban migration. By 1959, however, reports indicated that 15 million people were starving despite (or because of) land reform.⁸⁷ The point is that supply must be matched by the ability of a population to access and consume the produce.

2.8. Macro-economic policy

As has been suggested, a macro-economic policy emphasising export commodity production at the expense of domestic food production very often contributes to food insecurity, as was the case in the Indian Punjab and the Ivory Coast discussed above. Similarly, in China, the liberalisation of commercial industrial and agricultural activity in the early 1900s resulted in a significant increase in the production of high value cash crops for export (including food crops). In Chu Hsien, in Anhwei province, for example, estimates indicated that 50% of the rice harvested was exported. As a result, families were no longer food-sufficient. Food insecurity was further increased as small-scale farmers abandoned vegetable gardens for more profitable cash crop production.⁸⁸

Structural adjustment policies have also played a role in reducing food security by eroding purchasing power - Zimbabwe is a case in point. By the early 1990s, Zimbabwe's economy was virtually stagnant, unemployment had reached record levels and the government was faced with a large fiscal imbalance. Consequently, the five-year Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) was introduced in 1990. The Zimbabwean government cut back on social spending, encouraged free trade, introduced wage restraints and devalued the currency. This led to increases in food prices as well as the general cost of living. Zimbabwe's infant mortality increased from 49 per 1 000 in 1990 to 73 per 1 000 in 1998. Exacerbated by inflation, the grain price increased by 60% and maize by 21% in January 1998. By September 1998, the price of food and other basic commodities rose by another 40%. Calorific intake declined by 20% despite record harvests in 1997 and 1998 (i.e. inadequate distribution).⁸⁹

South Africa has implemented a macro-economic strategy, which closely resembles the economic prescriptions of global financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme (GEAR) of 1996 was implemented with the intent of integrating the South African economy into the global market and raising the potential for economic growth and development over the medium term. GEAR, which is based on a restrictive fiscal and

⁸⁶ Becker J, *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine*, John Murray, London, 1996

⁸⁷ Becker J, *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine*, John Murray, London, 1996

⁸⁸ Chinese example from Wolf E, *Peasant Wars of the 20th Century*, Faber & Faber, London, 1969, p. 129 - 130

⁸⁹ Zimbabwean example from Chattopadhyay R, "Zimbabwe: Structural Adjustment, Destitution and Food Insecurity", *Review of the African Political Economy*, 84, 2000

monetary policy, budgetary reform, a realistic market valued exchange rate, trade and industrial policy reform towards outward-orientation of the economy and financial market liberalisation, has not been implemented without criticism. Questions have been raised around policy prioritisation, and NGOs, unions and other organisations have called on the government to increase its social spending budget – to include support services for emerging farmers and to engage in a more supply-led land redistribution programme.⁹⁰

2.9. Food prices and food security

Related to calls for increased social spending and the development of macro-economic policies that prioritise resource allocation to the poor, are calls for controls on food prices from unions such as COSATU, community organisations and NGOs. This is because food insecurity is probably most adequately explained in terms of the relationship between food and entitlements.⁹¹ *“A person is reduced to starvation if a change in her endowments (for example, alienation of land, or loss of labour power due to ill health) or her exchange entitlement mapping (such as a fall in wages, rise in food prices, or a drop in the price of goods she sells) makes it impossible to acquire a commodity bundle with enough food”.*⁹² In other words, starvation and malnutrition have less to do with production and more to do with inequitable distribution of resources (i.e. land, employment, income and infrastructure). Consequently, particular sectors of society may be starving while there is abundant food available at national level, because particular groups do not have access to the endowments/entitlements required to access/purchase food.

In South Africa, the deregulation of the agricultural sector (that opened the door for speculation by maize producers) combined with food shortages in the Southern African region and the depreciation of the currency (23% since July 2001)⁹³ have resulted in soaring food prices – particularly in staple foods. According to Statistics South Africa, the food price component of the production price index rose 26.5% between July 2001 and July 2002.⁹⁴ These increases have had a very negative effect on the poor. Reports of malnutrition and hunger have increased over the last two years, while the upward spiral in food prices and inflation is expected to continue this year. Moreover, according to COSATU, food prices have risen twice as fast as other prices, implying that the inflation rate for the poor was over 13.5% in October 2002, compared to 11% for the rich.⁹⁵

2.10. The provision of welfare grants and other forms of assistance

⁹⁰ See chapter 7

⁹¹ For more on the issue of entitlements and in particular on the role of donors see Bernstein H, “Land and food in South Africa’s Agrarian Question” in Levin R & Weiner D (eds.), No More Tears . . . Struggles for Land in Mpumalanga, South Africa, Africa World Press Inc., Asmara, Eritrea, 1997

⁹² Chattopadhyay R, “Zimbabwe: Structural Adjustment, Destitution and Food Insecurity”, Review of the African Political Economy, 84, 2000

⁹³ These figures are for late 2002 and early 2003, before the currency gained strength in April 2003

⁹⁴ Mail & Guardian, “Food prices rocket out of control”, September 13 – 19, 2002

⁹⁵ COSATU press statement, “COSATU demand strong action on food prices”, available at <http://www.cosatu.org.za>, October, 2002

Addressing food security extends to the provision of welfare, including childcare grants, nutrition programmes at schools, food fortification policies and a basic income grant. Section 27(1)(c) of the 1996 Constitution of South Africa guarantees all South Africans the right to social assistance. As discussed, this places a core obligation on the government to ensure that all South Africans have access to adequate food supplies.

In the late 1990s, the Departments of Health and Education introduced the Primary School Nutrition Programme (PSNP), which was a crucial step in ensuring basic nutrition for children from impoverished and disadvantaged families. The PSNP targeted approximately 6 271 712 pupils in 17 603 schools during 1997 and 1998. By October 1997, the programme had reached 14 239 schools. The number of children benefiting from the scheme stood at 4.8 million. This represents 78% of the targeted number of primary school children and 81% of the targeted number of primary schools. The PSNP has also resulted in improved school attendance, decreased school dropouts, improved concentration levels in classrooms and the improvement of the general health of children who were part of the programme.⁹⁶

Though commendable, the PSNP had a number of shortcomings that need to be addressed. The Community Agency on Social Enquiry has pointed to the poor nutritional quality of the food provided, ineffective delivery systems, corruption (especially in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga) and other capacity constraints that have undermined the objectives of the PSNP. The Agency has also pointed out that the programme does not reach some of the most needy segments of the population, which include children attending secondary schools and, that there are no contingency plans for school holiday periods.⁹⁷ There is also a need for the development of community-based nutrition projects. Such initiatives are crucial since, in order to be really effective, feeding schemes need to reach children during the crucial development years before school going age. Food Fortification Programmes and micro-nutrient supplementation, which fortify staple foods with essential nutrients such as Vitamin A and iron, can aid in ensuring maximum benefit for the at-risk groups in South Africa. The Department of Health, in collaboration with UNICEF, has embarked on the development and implementation of a Food Fortification Programme – which will only be beneficial if impoverished households can afford to purchase fortified foods.

2.11. Inter-governmental co-operation

Unlike the case for all other socio-economic rights, there is no dedicated government department in charge of the right to food. This limits the capacity of the government to meet its obligations in terms of the provision of food security and nutrition to the South African population. Furthermore, malnutrition cannot be addressed on the basis of food provision alone. Programmes and policies should include and take account of, for example, access to water (Department of Water Affairs), housing (Department of Housing), land (DLA), agricultural support and training (National Department of Agriculture), education (Department of Education), social security (Department of

⁹⁶ Department of Education, Annual Report, 1997

⁹⁷ CASE, Report on the South African Poverty Hearings, 1998

Welfare), adequate budgets for socio-economic rights programmes (Department of Finance) and infrastructure. The attainment of food security, therefore, requires inter-governmental consolidation and co-ordination, as well as capacity building within government departments.

2.12. Land reform, women and food security

The relationship between gender equity and household food security is discussed in more detail in chapter ten. It is, however, important to emphasise here that to a large extent, women are the ones who are producing food in South Africa's former homeland areas (and this is true of Africa in general).⁹⁸ Therefore, if land reform policies are not developed and implemented with women as the intended beneficiaries, such policies are not likely to contribute to greater food security. Furthermore, land or agrarian reform policies that target women also have to take account of the patriarchal nature of rural (and urban) societies in South Africa (and elsewhere). Women's ability to produce food for their families or to earn an income from marketing and selling agricultural produce will be limited as long as they lack secure access to land, and are unable to exert control over their resources, their labour, their bodies and their minds (e.g. decision-making).

Chapter ten of this thesis also highlights that even when women are able to control food production (i.e. are able to produce sufficient amounts of food for household consumption or for profitable sale), they often do not have control over food distribution. Examples discussed in chapter ten include male relatives forcing the sale of produce to the extent that insufficient amounts are left for household consumption and cases where women are so busy producing food that they do not "have time to feed their families". Levin et al found (in a case study conducted in Marite Village) that men often eat first, so that there are higher levels of malnutrition among women and girls than among men and boys within households (the authors cite international evidence to support this argument - India).⁹⁹

3. Environmental sustainability

The inequitable distribution of wealth/land in South Africa contributes to environmental degradation. As Turner¹⁰⁰ explains, "*the minority of South Africans who enjoy first world living standards do so at an environmental cost similar to that caused by rich Westerners. The majority of South Africans who live in poverty often have no choice but to use natural resources in unsustainable ways*". Land reform programmes (that promote more equitable access to land) can, therefore, contribute to environmental sustainability as well as generate incomes for impoverished communities through eco-

⁹⁸ For more on the "feminisation of subsistence agriculture" see Levin R, Russon R & Weiner D, "Class, Gender and the Politics of Rural Land Reform" in Levin R & Weiner D (eds.), No More Tears . . . Struggles for Land in Mpumalanga, South Africa, Africa World Press Inc., Asmara, Eritrea, 1997

⁹⁹ See Levin R, Russon R & Weiner D, "Class, Gender and the Politics of Rural Land Reform" in Levin R & Weiner D (eds.), No More Tears . . . Struggles for Land in Mpumalanga, South Africa, Africa World Press Inc., Asmara, Eritrea, 1997

¹⁰⁰ Turner S, "Sustainable development: what's land got to do with it?", Policy Brief, no.2, PLAAS, November 2001

tourism projects. On the other hand, there is ample international evidence to indicate that inappropriate land reform programmes (or programmes that do not provide adequate support to resettled communities) contribute to environmental destruction.

3.1. South Africa's natural resource base

South Africa's total land area is 122 million hectares, the soil is fragile, low in organic matter and is susceptible to high rates of erosion.¹⁰¹ According to a United Nations report in 1998, more than 90% of South Africa's land is vulnerable to soil erosion and degradation.¹⁰² In 1998, only three percent (four million hectares of South Africa's land surface could be considered high-potential agricultural land.¹⁰³

South Africa is an arid country¹⁰⁴ with sparse and erratic rainfall patterns – about 65% of the country has an average annual rainfall of less than 500mm.¹⁰⁵ Over a 30-year period, as much as 27% of the country was drought-stricken for more than 50% of the time.¹⁰⁶ South Africa has poor irrigation potential that is further constrained by the limited and unpredictable supply of water.¹⁰⁷ In 1996, 1.2 million hectares of land were under irrigation, while an additional 250 000 hectares (2% of all farmland) could be brought under irrigation.¹⁰⁸ Access to water in South Africa is characterised by the same inequities as access to land, as a result of climatic conditions and patterns of allocation that favoured white agriculture, industry and domestic use.¹⁰⁹ Agriculture is the largest user of water, consuming as much as 50% of the total demand.¹¹⁰ In 1998, white or corporate farmers controlled more than 70% of irrigated land.¹¹¹ At the same time, case

¹⁰¹ Van Zyl J, McKenzie C & Kirsten J, "Natural Resource Management Issues in Rural South Africa", Agricultural Land Reform in South Africa, Van Zyl J, Kirsten J & Binswanger H (Eds.), Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1996, p.243 - 245

¹⁰² Earthaction, Protect the Soil: Protect Your Future, The Environmental Monitoring Group, December 5 1998

¹⁰³ May J, Poverty and inequality in South Africa: poverty and inequality report to the Office of the Deputy President, Praxis, Durban, 1998

¹⁰⁴ For maps that show the physiography, rainfall patterns and main biomes of South Africa as well as an investigation into the causes and effects of the degradation of South Africa's water resources see chapter two, pages 13 – 20 of Hoffman T & Ashwell A, Nature Divided: Land degradation in South Africa, University of Cape Town Press, Lansdowne, 2001

¹⁰⁵ Cowling R, "Options for rural land use in Southern Africa: An Ecological Perspective", in A Harvest of Discontent: The Land Question in South Africa, De Klerk M (Ed.), Idasa, Cape Town, 1991, p. 12

¹⁰⁶ Scotney D.M, "The Agricultural Areas of Southern Africa", South African National Programme Report, CSIR, Pretoria, 1988

¹⁰⁷ Cowling R, "Options for rural land use in Southern Africa: An Ecological Perspective", in A Harvest of Discontent: The Land Question in South Africa, De Klerk M (Ed.), Idasa, Cape Town, 1991, p. 15 & 16

¹⁰⁸ Van Zyl J, McKenzie C & Kirsten J, "Natural Resource Management Issues in Rural South Africa", Agricultural Land Reform in South Africa, Van Zyl J, Kirsten J & Binswanger H (Eds.), Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1996, p. 244

¹⁰⁹ Eales K, "Resource Management", Down to Earth, Marcus T, Eales K & Wildshut A (Eds.), LAPC, Indicator Press, Natal, March 1996, p. 113 - 121

¹¹⁰ Van Zyl J, McKenzie C & Kirsten J, "Natural Resource Management Issues in Rural South Africa", Agricultural Land Reform in South Africa, Van Zyl J, Kirsten J & Binswanger H (Eds.), Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1996, p. 251

¹¹¹ May J, Poverty and inequality in South Africa: poverty and inequality report to the Office of the Deputy President, Praxis, Durban, 1998

studies have indicated that access to water is a priority for the rural poor and land reform beneficiaries.

The current global species loss is estimated to be 10 000 times the rate before human intervention. South Africa, with its rich bio-diversity, is no exception. It is estimated that 1 000 plant species in South Africa are threatened with extinction.¹¹²

Land and agricultural policies under consecutive white governments have contributed to environmental degradation in both the white commercial agricultural sector and the former homeland areas. In the white commercial areas, price supports encouraged extensive grain production on marginal land. The Department of Agriculture stated in 1996 that at least 9 million hectares of arable land and 21 million hectares of grazing land in the white agricultural sector were subject to wind/water erosion.¹¹³ Improper irrigation has led to soil salinisation (approximately 100 000 hectares) and acidification.¹¹⁴ Intensive mechanisation and use of chemicals (e.g. pesticides) have damaged bio-systems in many areas. Annual soil losses are estimated at 400 million tons and approximately 60% of veld is in poor condition.¹¹⁵ The environmentally destructive agricultural practices of large-scale commercial farmers are not unique to South Africa. Over the last three decades Honduras has, for example, experienced massive-scale environmental destruction as a result of the investment patterns of large landowners and the displacement and concentration of the rural poor in economically fragile areas.¹¹⁶

In the former homeland areas of South Africa, policies such as influx control and forced resettlement led to over-crowding and consequent environmental degradation – soil erosion, deforestation and depletion of water resources. It is estimated that there are about four million hectares of seriously degraded land in the former homeland areas.¹¹⁷ Estimates in 1998 were that at least 20% of the former homeland areas are severely degraded and a further 40% moderately degraded.¹¹⁸

Environmental sustainability, however, is a precondition for successful land reform and poverty alleviation. The majority of South Africa's population (particularly in rural areas) will continue to depend on the natural resource base for their economic survival.

¹¹² Wilson E.O, *Bio-diversity*, National Academy Press, Washington, 1988

¹¹³ Kirsten J & Van Zyl J, "The Contemporary agricultural policy environment: undoing the legacy of the past", *Agricultural Land Reform in South Africa*, Van Zyl J, Kirsten J & Binswanger H (Eds.), Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1996, p. 222

¹¹⁴ Cowling R, "Options for rural land use in Southern Africa: An Ecological Perspective", in *A Harvest of Discontent: The Land Question in South Africa*, De Klerk M (Ed.), Idasa, Cape Town, 1991, p. 16

¹¹⁵ Cowling R, "Options for rural land use in Southern Africa: An Ecological Perspective", in *A Harvest of Discontent: The Land Question in South Africa*, De Klerk M (Ed.), Idasa, Cape Town, 1991, p. 16

¹¹⁶ De Walt B.R, Stonich S.C & Hamilton S.L, "Honduras: Population, Inequality and Resource Destruction", *Population and Land Use in Developing Countries*, Jelly C.L & Torrey B.B (Eds.), National Academy Press, Washington D.C, 1993

¹¹⁷ Cooper D, Salem Fakir M & Bramley D, "Land reform and management of environmental impact", *Agricultural Land Reform in South Africa*, Van Zyl J, Kirsten J & Binswanger H (Eds.), Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1996, p. 589 - 601

¹¹⁸ May J, *Poverty and inequality in South Africa: poverty and inequality report to the Office of the Deputy President*, Praxis, Durban, 1998

Kepe & Cousins¹¹⁹ have, for example, estimated the value of land-based livelihoods in communal areas as follows (indicating the importance of access to natural resources in livelihood strategies).

- Cropping: R1 543 per household per annum and R3.70 billion aggregate value per annum.
- Livestock: R1 200 per household per annum and R2.88 billion aggregate value per annum.
- Natural Resources: R2 792 per household per annum and R6.70 billion aggregate value per annum
- Total: R5 535 per household per annum and R13.28 billion aggregate value per annum.

In addition, Cross et al conducted fieldwork in KwaZulu-Natal's rural midlands and the densely populated peri-urban areas around Durban in 1995 and found that the poorest sectors of rural communities were most dependent on the natural resource base for their economic survival.¹²⁰ This class dimension to resource needs has undermined resource management and conservation and contributed to resource degradation. The study indicates that there are links, between poverty, power, and access to and management of natural resources, which need to be understood if land reform policies are to achieve environmental sustainability.

3.2. The environmental impact of land reform policies

In the early 1990s, land reform policy debates included concerns about the potential impact of land reform on the environment, conservation and sustainable land use. Land reform detractors argued that land redistribution would lead to environmental degradation. Experiences in Brazil (deforestation), Ecuador¹²¹ and Peru (among others) provided support for these arguments.

On the other hand, land reform activists argued that redistribution could prevent further, and reduce existing, environmental damage and form the basis for a sustainable land use policy. Examples include Brazil (2001) and Zimbabwe, where a lack of land reform arguably led to environmental degradation.

Recent evidence from Brazil indicates that switching to environmentally sound production methods can increase production and profits and reduce food insecurity. Despite being one of the world's biggest producers of food, a third of the Brazilian population was food insecure in 2001. Under the auspices of the MST, small-scale farmers in Brazil have shifted from the use of chemical fertilisers and expensive machinery and technology to cheaper and "environmentally friendly" methods of

¹¹⁹ Kepe T & Cousins B, "Radical land reform is key to sustainable rural development in South Africa", Policy Brief, no.3, PLAAS, August 2002

¹²⁰ Cross C, Mngadi T, Sibanda S & Jama V, "Making a living under land reform: weighing up the chances in KwaZulu-Natal", Land, Labour and Livelihoods in Rural South Africa, Volume 2, Lipton M, Ellis F & Lipton M (Eds.) Indicator Press, December, 1996

¹²¹ Zevallos J.V, "Agrarian Reform and Structural Change: Ecuador since 1964", Searching for Agrarian Reform in Latin America, Thiesenhusen W.C (Ed.), Unwin Hyman, London, 1989

production. Small-scale farmers also reduced the amount of land under cash-crop production in favour of crops for household consumption. The positive results include lower input costs, better health, better soil quality and increased food security.¹²²

In addition, the absence of an effective land reform programme may leave the landless with no option other than to invade land, including conservation areas. In August 2000, for example, the Save Valley conservancy in Zimbabwe was invaded resulting in the loss of wildlife worth \$1 million.¹²³ By August 2002, up to 60% of wildlife on privately owned game ranches and conservancies in Zimbabwe had been slaughtered since the advent of the 2000 land invasions, according to Voiceless Victims of Zimbabwe.¹²⁴

More importantly, land reform activists argued that in the former homeland areas of South Africa, land reform could diminish environmental degradation and natural resource destruction by reducing population pressure on the land and by injecting funds for rural development programmes based on sustainable resource use. This argument was based on the belief that poverty and related conflict over scarce resources are the primary causes of environmental and natural resource destruction. Poverty leads to over-crowding and the eventual exhaustion of natural resources. The redistribution of natural resources (land) could, therefore, reduce both conflict and poverty. It was further argued that redistribution of resources could raise income levels and encourage investment in the protection of the natural resource base.¹²⁵ Activists also argued that a land reform programme granting ownership rights or tenure security could provide the incentive to protect natural resources, since insecure tenure rights discouraged conservation, because there was no guarantee that the benefits of conservation would accrue to the investors.¹²⁶

The inequitable pattern of land allocation in South Africa has resulted in environmental deterioration (as discussed above) and mismanagement of natural resources. At the same time, the livelihoods of many of South Africa's rural poor are closely tied to the sustainability of the natural resource base. Therefore, rural development is intrinsically linked to effective natural resource management and a more efficient and just distribution of land resources. This is evidenced by the Tanzanian experience where one of the primary factors undermining sustainable rural development is ecological degradation.¹²⁷ In sum, environmental destruction is the result of unequal resource distribution and the consequent unequal patterns of development. Examples include experiences in Honduras and South Africa.

3.3. Environmental sustainability in South Africa's land reform policy

¹²² Mail & Guardian, "Food for thought", July 5 – 11, 2002

¹²³ Buckle C, African Tears, Covos Day, South Africa, 2001

¹²⁴ Mail & Guardian, "Zimbabwean land reform decimates game", August 16 – 22, 2002

¹²⁵ Eales K, "Resource Management", Down to Earth, Marcus T, Eales K & Wildshut A (Eds.), LAPC, Indicator Press, Natal, March 1996, p. 113 - 115

¹²⁶ Timberlake L, Africa in Crisis, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, 1986

¹²⁷ Banyikwa W.F, "Construction on Subsistence Use of Natural Resources in Tanzania", Alternative Strategies for Africa Volume 2, Suliman M (Ed.), IFAA, London, 1991, p. 96 - 105

With the commencement of land reform under the National Party government in 1991, environmental concerns were accorded low priority. The 1991 White Paper on Land Reform lacked an overall ecological vision and did not contain any guidelines for natural resource conservation. At the time, the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act 43 of 1983 was the primary piece of legislation pertaining to natural resource conservation. The object of the Act is to conserve natural agricultural resources, to protect fauna, and to prevent soil erosion, damage to water resources and the spread of invader species.¹²⁸

The ANC's 1992 land policy document called for the development of policies to protect the environment and for conservation policies that would involve and benefit communities who were negatively affected by the establishment of conservation areas.¹²⁹ This sentiment was carried forward into policy formation in the early 1990s and is reflected in the 1996 Constitution. Section 2(24) of the Constitution states that: *"Everyone has the right (a) to an environment that is not harmful to their health and well-being; 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."* The Constitution also includes provisions for legislation such as the National Environmental Management Act, with which the Department of Land Affairs aligns itself. The Act requires that all government departments draw up an Environmental Implementation and Management Plan and sets out national principles for environmental and sustainable development, which the DLA has incorporated into its environmental planning guidelines.¹³⁰ The Consultative Environmental Policy Process of the early 1990s culminated in a White Paper on Environmental Management Policy that represented a paradigm shift from narrow conservation to people-centred sustainable development.¹³¹

The apparent shift towards a focus on environmental rights and sustainability was not carried forward into the 1996 Green Paper on Land Reform, which omitted issues such as soil acidification, compaction and erosion.¹³² The 1997 White Paper on Land Reform reflects a greater awareness of environmental and natural resource management issues. The paper acknowledges that the lack of effective integrated environmental management, landlessness, overcrowding in the former homeland areas and inappropriate farming methods in commercial agricultural areas have resulted in land degradation. It calls for an "environmentally sustainable" land reform process and argues that poverty alleviation will contribute to more effective natural resource protection.

¹²⁸ Lyne M & Lima Rural Development Foundation, "Options for Government's Settlement/ Land Acquisition Grant", Research Paper for the National Land Committee, July 1998

¹²⁹ ANC, 1992 Land Policy Document, Education Section, April, 1992

¹³⁰ Turner S, Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa: A status report, 2002, Research Report no. 12, PLAAS, August 2002

¹³¹ Turner S & Ibsen H, "Land and agrarian reform in South Africa: A Status Report", Occasional Paper Series, PLAAS, UWC, November, 2000, p. 30 - 33

¹³² National Land Committee, Submission on the Green Paper on Land Reform, unpublished paper, April 9 1996

The focus of all this environmental concern has been the Redistribution Programme.¹³³ Applicants for the Settlement/Land Acquisition Grant (which will be discussed in chapter seven) are required to submit a feasibility and environmental impact assessment study to the DLA. Commitments to environmentally sustainable land reform do not appear to be incorporated into the Restitution Programme (see chapter six). The Land Claims Commission (by 2002) had not made environmental criteria part of the requirements for restitution (see chapter six). Nevertheless, all land reform projects legally have to comply with the environmental impact assessment requirements of the Environmental Conservation Act as well as satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Management Act.¹³⁴ In 1998, the DLA launched a programme aimed at heightening awareness and piloting more effective action to ensure that proper attention would be paid to environmental impact and sustainability in land reform.¹³⁵ Judging by the 2001 Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development Programme, however, the 1998 attempts were not very successful (see chapter seven). Although the LRAD programme mentions sustainable land use, environmental sustainability is not identified as a key strategic area in the LRAD Strategic Plan for 2001 and 2002.

3.4. Policy debates around environmental sustainability

3.4.1. Small-scale farmers and environmental sustainability

During the early stages of the land reform policy debates, land reform detractors often argued that small-scale farmers would be less assiduous custodians of the environment than large-scale farmers and that converting land to the former type of land use was a recipe for environmental disaster. This “mindset” was the result of a particular historical context (see chapter three). A government Commission of Inquiry in the 1970s identified large farms with better land use practices and legally entrenched this “mindset” by means of the Subdivision of Agricultural Land Act.¹³⁶ Recent experiences in Brazil indicate that this argument is not indefensible. A Brazilian government report, issued in 1998, states that agrarian reform has led to increased deforestation in large areas of the Amazon. The report states that the activities of small-scale farmers, on land distributed to them by the Brazilian government, have been the major reason for the deforestation of the Amazon in recent years. The report continues that 60% of the total deforested area is under small-scale cultivation.¹³⁷ World Bank representatives and a number of South African academics argued, on the other hand, that sufficient international evidence existed in

¹³³ Turner S & Ibsen H, “Land and agrarian reform in South Africa: A Status Report”, Occasional Paper Series, PLAAS, UWC, November, 2000, p. 30 - 33

¹³⁴ Turner S, Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa: A status report, 2002, Research Report no. 12, PLAAS, August 2002

¹³⁵ Turner S & Ibsen H, “Land and agrarian reform in South Africa: A Status Report”, Occasional Paper Series, PLAAS, UWC, November, 2000

¹³⁶ Cooper D, Salem Fakir M & Bramley D, “Land reform and management of environmental impact”, Agricultural land Reform in South Africa, Van Zyl J, Kirsten J & Binswanger H (Eds.), Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1996, p. 590 - 595

¹³⁷ World News, “Environment Brazil: Agrarian Reforms Increase Deforestation”, March 13, 1998

support of the argument that small-scale farmers' methods were just as environmentally sustainable (if not more) than those employed by large-scale farmers.¹³⁸

3.4.2. Communal grazing, livestock farming and the environment

In the early stages of policy development, many participants expressed fears about the environmental impact of group-based tenure systems. This was based on the view that communal grazing and livestock production systems were key contributing factors to desertification¹³⁹ as a result of overgrazing (as witnessed in the former homeland areas). Such fears are not unreasonable given the United Nations' estimates that 35% of the planet's land surface is at risk of desertification, that 75% of the world's drylands are already affected, and that the livelihoods of 850 million people are directly threatened by desertification.¹⁴⁰

Although desertification has four primary causes – over-cultivation, overgrazing, deforestation and poor irrigation – others have argued that desertification should not be seen as an entirely ecological phenomenon, but rather as a product of economic and political processes.¹⁴¹ The higher stocking ratios among South Africa's communal farmers, for example, do not signify irrational overgrazing as is often alleged.¹⁴² Rather, it is a rational response to political and economic factors such as artificially restricted access to land under apartheid, artificially induced rapid population growth due to forced resettlement and herd accretion in favourable phases of the weather cycle to prevent herd wipe-out in periods of drought.¹⁴³ Higher stocking rates are also a response to an environment with limited opportunities for income generation. Hatch argues that communal grazers act rationally, not in the strict sense of profit maximisation but, rather by attempting to balance sustainable production levels and risk. Based on case studies conducted in two pastoral areas in Kenya, Hogg¹⁴⁴ argues that desertification is the result

¹³⁸ Binswanger H.P, *Agricultural and Rural Development: Painful Lessons*, World Bank Workshop, September, 1994. Turner S & Ibsen H, "Land and agrarian reform in South Africa: A Status Report", Occasional Paper Series, PLAAS, UWC, November, 2000. Hatch G, "Livestock and Rural Livelihoods in KwaZulu-Natal", *Land, Labour and Livelihoods in Rural South Africa*, Volume 2, Lipton M, Ellis F & Lipton M (Eds.), Indicator Press, December, 1996. Moolman H & Lambrechts J, "Physical Land Use Resources Affecting the Long-term Environmental Sustainability of Agriculture in the Western Cape", *Land, Labour and Livelihoods in Rural South Africa*, Volume 1, Lipton M, Ellis F & Lipton M (Eds.), Indicator Press, December, 1996.

¹³⁹ An intensification of desert-like conditions and a decline in biological productivity. For a more scientifically accurate definition of desertification and examples see Hoffman T & Ashwell A, *Nature Divided: Land degradation in South Africa*, University of Cape Town Press, Lansdowne, 2001

¹⁴⁰ Timberlake L, *Africa in Crisis*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, 1986

¹⁴¹ Timberlake L, *Africa in Crisis*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, 1986

¹⁴² For a more "scientific" explanation see Vetter S, *Rangelands of Equilibrium and non-equilibrium: Recent developments in the Debate around Rangeland Ecology and Management*, PLAAS, Rhodes University and the Leslie Hill Institute for Plant Conservation, Durban, July 2003

¹⁴³ Rhode R.F, Benjaminsen T.A & Hoffman M.T, *Land Reform in Namaqualand: Poverty alleviation, stepping stones and economic units*, PLAAS, UWC, 2001. Hatch G, "Livestock and Rural Livelihoods in KwaZulu-Natal", *Land, Labour and Livelihoods in Rural South Africa*, Volume 2, Lipton M, Ellis F & Lipton M (Eds.), Indicator Press, December, 1996

¹⁴⁴ Hogg R, "Development in Kenya: Drought, Desertification and Food Scarcity", *African Affairs*, 86, 1987

of ill-conceived development programmes that encourage population and livestock concentration in villages and towns and discourage nomadic pastoralism. As a result of these policies, large areas of rangeland in Kenya are now permanently deserted of stock and people, while small areas are overgrazed and subject to extreme population pressure.

Experiences in South Africa and Kenya suggest that environmental degradation is the result of lack of access to land, rather than the result of overgrazing. If this argument is accepted, it stands to reason that the redistribution of land would contribute to conservation.¹⁴⁵

3.5. Land reform and conservation

In 1996, South Africa's national protection system included 178 protected areas, of which 18 are national parks, comprising 5% of the total land area.¹⁴⁶ Apartheid policies such as forced removals and social dislocation have contributed to the fairly widely held view that conservation is a reflection of white interests and, in some cases, an attempt to hem in land reform.¹⁴⁷

Recent developments have placed a heavy emphasis on community involvement and the income generation potential of community based eco-tourism projects. It is argued that eco-tourism has direct and indirect benefits to the economy in terms of job creation, rural development, and the emergence of secondary industries involving local communities. In 1988 (when tourism was the fifth largest earner of foreign exchange), 36% of foreign tourists to South Africa reported visiting the country for its natural resources.¹⁴⁸ The South African National Parks Board (SANP), for example, has adopted an economic empowerment policy that seeks to open up economic opportunities for communities situated close to the 18 national parks.

Eco-tourism is a rapidly growing industry the world over. Ecuador and Kenya, for example, respectively earn \$100 million a year from eco-tourism.¹⁴⁹ The United Nations declared 2002 the year of eco-tourism and in May 2002 a world summit on eco-tourism was held in Canada. Conservationists at the summit argued that eco-tourism "*offers a way to fund environmental protection, stimulate the incomes of the poor and encourage cultural exchange*".¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ For more on this debate see Hoffman T & Ashwell A, Nature Divided: Land degradation in South Africa, University of Cape Town Press, Lansdowne, 2001

¹⁴⁶ Van Zyl J, McKenzie C & Kirsten J, "Natural Resource Management Issue in Rural South Africa", Agricultural Land Reform in South Africa, Van Zyl J, Kirsten J & Binswanger H (Eds.), Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1996, p. 243 & 248

¹⁴⁷ Turner S & Ibsen H, "Land and agrarian reform in South Africa: A Status Report", Occasional Paper Series, PLAAS, UWC, November, 2000, p. 30 - 33

¹⁴⁸ Cowling R, "Options for rural land use in Southern Africa: An Ecological Perspective", in A Harvest of Discontent: The Land Question in South Africa, De Klerk M (Ed.), Idasa, Cape Town, 1991, p. 18

¹⁴⁹ Mail & Guardian, "Visiting disaster", June 21 - 27, 2002

¹⁵⁰ Mail & Guardian, "Visiting disaster", June 21 - 27, 2002

It was in this context that a land claim that could have taken away an important part of the Kruger National Park (KNP) was resolved in a manner beneficial to both the Makuleke community (forcibly removed in 1969) and the KNP. The Makuleke community lodged the claim in December 1996 and, after two years of negotiation, finally received title to the 25 000 hectares of land in November 1999. The claim was against the northern part of the KNP and a small conservation area near the Madimbo corridor. By including this second piece of land in the deal, the KNP was effectively increased by 2 300 hectares.¹⁵¹ Under the deal, the land will be transferred back to the Makuleke. However, instead of reoccupying the land, they have agreed to turn it into a contractual national park in the belief that greater returns can be made from eco-tourism than from farming.¹⁵² The agreement leaves the land under the conservation management of the KNP. It also specifies that the land will be managed by a Joint Management Board (JMB) that has real and final decision-making power pertaining to the Makuleke region of the KNP.¹⁵³ Exclusive research and tourism development rights are given to the Makuleke community and the “sustainable use” clause makes provision for “traditional” resource use which includes commercial and consumptive use of the region’s wildlife resources.¹⁵⁴

Other examples of land reform/eco-tourism projects in South Africa include the Mdluli community, the Richtersveld contractual national park agreement and the Xhomi San who received 35 000 hectares of land in and adjacent to the Kalahari Gemsbok Park.¹⁵⁵ The Mdluli community, who were forcibly removed from their 850 hectare property in 1969, have now closed a deal that will make them partners in a R85 million Hilton International Hotel near the KNP’s Numbi gate. The Mdluli community will receive 30 to 40% of the net profit and preferential employment. They will also be given first option on spin-off business opportunities.¹⁵⁶ The 1991 Richtersveld contractual national park agreement gave the Richtersveld community grazing and residential land as well as the right to conduct small-scale tourism operations on adjacent SANP land. The community also receives an annual lease fee, preferential employment and benefits from commercial activities launched by the SANP.¹⁵⁷

3.6. The limits of conservation

There are questions around the accountability and representativeness of community leadership structures.¹⁵⁸ At Amboseli National Park in Kenya, a committee decides how the Masai community’s resources generated by eco-tourism projects are allocated. In

¹⁵¹ Steenkamp C. I. The Makuleke land claim: An Environmental Conflict, PhD Thesis, unpublished, University of Witwatersrand, 2001

¹⁵² Financial Mail, March 27, 1998

¹⁵³ Steenkamp C. I. The Makuleke land claim: An Environmental Conflict, PhD Thesis, unpublished, University of Witwatersrand, 2001

¹⁵⁴ Steenkamp C. I. The Makuleke land claim: An Environmental Conflict, PhD Thesis, unpublished, University of Witwatersrand, 2001

¹⁵⁵ Beeld, March 18, 1999

¹⁵⁶ Mail & Guardian, October 16 – 22, 1998

¹⁵⁷ Steenkamp C. I. The Makuleke land claim: An Environmental Conflict, PhD Thesis, unpublished, University of Witwatersrand, 2001

¹⁵⁸ See section on Communal Property Associations in Chapter seven for more examples.

March 2001, the community alleged that there was widespread corruption and reported that they did not know how much they were earning, nor how the resources were spent.¹⁵⁹ In Mpumalanga, the provincial government's plan to turn lake Matsamo and the Matsamo tribal district into a resort as part of the land claim settlement project has resulted in power and leadership struggles developing among the beneficiary (Shongwe) community. At the time of writing, these disputes remain unresolved.¹⁶⁰

There are a number of Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) initiatives in Africa. The level of community participation and control remains questionable. Based on an international survey of co-management conservation projects, Steenkamp¹⁶¹ concludes that: *“with the exception of a few pilot studies and independent and progressive initiatives, CBNRM programmes have not yet ceded key management responsibilities to local communities. The implication is that what was passed off as local participation or community based nature conservation was generally characterised by top-down decision making with local communities participating only in the implementation of decisions that have already been made”*.

These agreements are also products of political and economic processes that influence the balance of power during negotiations. The Richtersveld agreement, for example, was only reached after the community gained the upper hand in a lengthy legal battle and community mobilisation was sufficient to generate political pressure. During my fieldwork with the Sheba community, it emerged that in the late 1990s, the SANP threatened the Sheba community near Baberton in Mpumalanga with eviction. The eviction was prevented only because the Rural Action Committee (TRAC) became involved.¹⁶² Even in the case of the Makuleke agreement, Steenkamp argues that the acceptance of the contractual national park agreement was not voluntary *“but flowed from a context in which a balance of sorts was found”* between the SANP and the community. The SANP's change of attitude only came about as a result of a public relations exercise in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. Pressure from former Minister of Land Affairs, Derek Hanekom, who threatened that cattle would be allowed to graze in the KNP unless agreements that benefited neighbouring communities could be reached, also contributed to this changed approach.¹⁶³

The argument that people will act to sustain natural resources once they have benefited from conservation projects is also questionable. Masai landowners in the Naimino Enkryo Forest, for example, are not investing their income from eco-tourism into natural resource conservation.¹⁶⁴ In Mpumalanga, environmentalists have expressed concern that the Kaapsehoop restitution project could result in the extinction of the endangered blue swallow – the birds have been obliterated in the rest of the country as a result of

¹⁵⁹ Berger D & Ntati P, “Maasai Land – milking the wild herd”, Land and Rural Digest, March/April 2001

¹⁶⁰ Sunday Independent, “Tourists welcome: but first we want the land”, October 31, 1999

¹⁶¹ Steenkamp C. I. The Makuleke land claim: An Environmental Conflict, PhD Thesis, unpublished, University of Witwatersrand, 2001

¹⁶² Interview with Mezzy Fakude (Sheba community), June 25, 2001

¹⁶³ Steenkamp C. I. The Makuleke land claim: An Environmental Conflict, PhD Thesis, unpublished, University of Witwatersrand, 2001

¹⁶⁴ Berger D & Ntati P, “Maasai Land – milking the wild herd”, Land and Rural Digest, March/April 2001

agricultural activities and the remaining few all nest at Kaapschehoop. At the time of writing, the beneficiaries had no plans or policies regarding the preservation of the birds.¹⁶⁵

More fundamentally, the case for the employment creation and income generating potential of eco-tourism projects appears to be over stated. Tourism is an intermittent and not always reliable source of income. In the Makuleke case, the SANP has expressed concerns that the community has over-estimated the income and employment generating potential of the agreement. The SANP has pointed to the region's high temperatures, the prevalence of diseases like malaria and anthrax and the low rate of game-spotting as factors that may inhibit tourism developments.¹⁶⁶

There is also ample evidence, both locally and internationally, indicating that profitable eco-tourism projects are resulting in the impoverishment of communities and, in some cases, in dispossession and forced relocation. Eco-tourism is a hugely profitable industry and many poor or indigenous communities are living in prime eco-tourism areas. In Mpumalanga, the tendency observed in the last three or four years to convert maize and cattle farms into conservancies and trout farms has led to large-scale loss of employment as well as evictions.¹⁶⁷ In early 2002, 250 Filipinos were evicted from their lake village of Ambulong and had their houses bulldozed to make way for an eco-tourism venture.¹⁶⁸ In 1996, the Botswana government began to forcibly remove the San communities from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (despite land grants made to them in the 1960s) and resettling these communities outside the game reserve.¹⁶⁹ The last few hundred remaining individuals were removed from the game reserve in February 2002.¹⁷⁰ At the same time, in northern Namibia, the San community that had been evicted from the Etosha National Park staged a demonstration at the gates of the park and were tear-gassed and imprisoned.¹⁷¹ Further examples include the Moulvibaza district of Bangladesh, where approximately 1 000 families face eviction from their ancestral lands for the development of a 610 hectare eco-park. In Brazil, the inhabitants of two fishing villages recently lost their land in a dubious deal to construct a 5 000 hectare ecological resort catering for 1 500 potential tourists. The Asian Development Bank is funding a \$1.2 billion eco-tourism project in South East Asia, which could lead to the dispossession of many mountain communities. Finally, the World Bank is funding the establishment of an eco-park in India's Karnataka State that involves a land rights dispute with indigenous communities.¹⁷² It is, therefore, hardly surprising that various studies conducted in the

¹⁶⁵ Mail & Guardian, "Feathers fly over blue swallows", October 18 – 24, 2002

¹⁶⁶ Steenkamp C. I. The Makuleke land claim: An Environmental Conflict, PhD Thesis, unpublished, University of Witwatersrand, 2001

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Chris Williams (Director of TRAC Mpumalanga), May 24, 2001

¹⁶⁸ Mail & Guardian, "Visiting disaster", June 21 – 27, 2002

¹⁶⁹ Isaacson R, The Healing Land, Jonathan Bull Publishers, UK, 2001

¹⁷⁰ Mail & Guardian, "Last of the first", August 23 – 29, 2002

¹⁷¹ Isaacson R, The Healing Land, Jonathan Bull Publishers, UK, 2001

¹⁷² The Bangladesh, South East Asian, Indian and Brazilian examples from Mail & Guardian, "Visiting disaster", June 21 – 27, 2002

1980s, in South Africa, indicated a negative attitude towards conservation among African people, as well as a perception that national parks are linked to white elitism.¹⁷³

4. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed some of the reasons – poverty alleviation, enhancing food security and reducing and preventing environmental degradation - (as identified in the White Paper on South African Land Policy) for undertaking land reform and emphasised the complexities around these. The chapter emphasised the extent of poverty, food insecurity and environmental degradation in South Africa as well as the positive correlation between lack of access to land and the prevalence of the above. The discussion also shows (based on local and international evidence) that land redistribution and agricultural reform can contribute to poverty alleviation, increased food security and environmental sustainability, if certain other conditions are met.

Poverty is widespread in South Africa and has skewed racial, gender and rural dimensions. The demographics also suggest a correlation (though not necessarily causal) between being landless and being poor. Further, the majority of people in South Africa's rural areas (predominantly women) continue to depend on access to land and natural resources for their economic and social survival. Accordingly, land reform presents a unique opportunity to alleviate poverty in South Africa's rural areas. In addition, because of the history of oppression culminating in apartheid, if land reform contributes to poverty alleviation it will also have positive economic and social justice results.

The discussion in this chapter indicates that land reform programmes, if designed and implemented with *adequate input from the intended (and impoverished) beneficiaries*, can alleviate poverty. For example, land reform programmes can result in growth in the agricultural sector, which could result in an increase of employment opportunities in rural areas (i.e. generate incomes) and contribute to lower food prices for consumers. In Zimbabwe, China, Cuba, South Korea and Kerala in India, land reform alleviated poverty. However, as the Kenyan, Indian, Brazilian and Mexican case studies suggest¹⁷⁴, land reform programmes are only likely to alleviate poverty if certain other conditions also obtain. Land reform/ agricultural development/ subsistence farming programmes are not likely to succeed without *substantial financial and infrastructural support from the state and/or the private sector* – this should include transport, extension services, education, health care and employment creation.

It is important to note, however, that there is no single explanation why land reform programmes sometimes contribute to poverty alleviation and sometimes do not. This is because land reform programmes are shaped and influenced by multiple factors and interests (see chapter five). Evidence from the case studies listed above point to a host of other influential factors. In particular, the discussions on South Korea, Malaysia and Indonesia suggest that *strictly market-based land reform programmes are not likely to*

¹⁷³ Steenkamp C. I. The Makuleke land claim: An Environmental Conflict, PhD Thesis, unpublished, University of Witwatersrand, 2001

¹⁷⁴ Also see chapter three.

alleviate poverty – which is, of course, related to the requirement for significant state investment in and support for land reform beneficiaries, discussed above. Finally, even if all the above conditions obtain, land reform programmes will only address the structural nature of poverty if *adequate amounts of wealth* (i.e. land and economic opportunities) are *redistributed*.

The evidence presented in this chapter shows that food insecurity is prevalent in South Africa. Although it seems clear that poverty (and food insecurity) is more prevalent in rural areas, it is by no means a rural phenomenon. The evidence also suggests that there is a correlation (not necessarily causal) between food insecurity and not having access to land.¹⁷⁵ Therefore (and as the discussion indicated) a land reform programme that redistributes small pieces/plots of land in rural and urban areas to small-scale/subsistence farmers can contribute to food security by increasing the supply of food to impoverished households (e.g. Brazil, Ivory Coast, India and China). (However, as the next chapter will show, earning sufficient income from agriculture is very difficult, more so if you are poor, and is probably only possible with significant state support). Furthermore, a land reform programme that contributes to increased agricultural production and the general growth of the agricultural sector, by, for example, redistributing land to more productive farmers, and/or supporting current small-scale farmers to increase production and sales, can contribute to food security in three basic ways. First, it will increase the amount of food available for consumption. Second, it will increase employment opportunities in rural areas, which, thirdly, will increase income in rural areas, which in turn can be invested in education or other income generating economic activities.

However, the analysis in this chapter also points to the fact that food supply is only one of the factors that contribute to food security (for example the discussion on Zimbabwe in the 1980s in section 2.7). At least two other factors affect food security – food distribution (for example China) and the macro-economic context. In addition, distribution refers not only to the distribution of food, but also to the distribution of economic and social resources (i.e. land, labour and capital). In other words, there should be an adequate supply of food, but this must be matched by people's ability to access the food. For example, having the resources to purchase the food, or having the power to control/keep one's produce or choose what to produce – referring, for example, to cases where women are forced to produce cash crops or are forced by husbands or male relatives to sell their produce.¹⁷⁶

As suggested by the above-mentioned example, a macro-economic policy that emphasises export commodity production at the expense of domestic food production sometimes contributes to food insecurity. Importantly, the discussion on food security (see section 2.6) also highlighted the importance of state support. Support should include

¹⁷⁵ For a similar argument see Bernstein H, "Land and food in South Africa's Agrarian Question" in Levin R & Weiner D (eds.), *No More Tears . . . Struggles for Land in Mpumalanga, South Africa*, Africa World Press Inc., Asmara, Eritrea, 1997

¹⁷⁶ See chapter 10. There is a strong relationship between gender equity and food security. Land reform policies that are not developed in accordance with the needs of women and, which do not take account of skewed power relations and discrimination against women are not likely to contribute to food security.

(at least) the provision of basic infrastructure (i.e. irrigation, credit, extension services, capital, electricity and household water supply).

What these factors suggest is that land reform can improve food security directly by, for example, redistributing land to poor women in rural areas who are then able to farm the land and eat/sell the produce. However, food insecurity is a complex phenomenon with multiple causes and land reform is only one aspect of, what should be, a broader economic and policy framework to enhance food security. This includes controls on food prices, food supply, food distribution, distribution of wealth, agricultural policies, employment opportunities in rural areas, education, basic income grants, school-feeding schemes and the development of urban agriculture. As May explains, “*while access to land may be an important condition for supplementing the livelihoods of the rural poor, the success of such a programme will depend on complementary measures*”.¹⁷⁷

A land reform programme that is not environmentally sustainable is by definition a failed programme. Food security, poverty and even urban migration are all factors that are related to land degradation (mostly as consequences of land degradation).¹⁷⁸ Environmental destruction in South Africa (and elsewhere) is partly the result of inequitable access to land and other economic resources. It stands to reason that addressing these inequities through land redistribution will contribute to environmental sustainability (Kenya provides a similar example). The land reform programme in South Africa should therefore emphasise extending the land area of the former homelands in order to alleviate overcrowding (a major cause of environmental degradation). Agricultural market liberalisation and the removal of economic distortions should promote environmental sustainability in the commercial farming areas, where previous agricultural policies contributed to natural resource mismanagement.

In addition, environmentally sustainable policies may result in income generating opportunities for impoverished rural communities. Although there does not seem to be many successful international examples of eco-tourism projects, the South African land reform programme includes a number of eco-tourism projects (Makuleke and Mdluli in the Kruger National Park, for example). These projects have the potential to meet the two objectives of environmental sustainability and income generation for the poor. Finally, land management and environmental policies should not be limited to rural areas given the huge demand for land in South Africa’s urban areas

On the other hand, there is ample international evidence (e.g. Brazil, Ecuador and Peru) to indicate that inappropriate land reform programmes (i.e. programmes that do not provide sufficient support for resettled communities or land reform beneficiaries, or land reform programmes that are not adequately planned) contribute to environmental destruction.

¹⁷⁷ May J, “The structure and composition of rural poverty and livelihoods in South Africa”, in Cousins B (ed.), *At the Crossroads: Land and Agrarian Reform in South Africa into the 21st Century*, PLAAS, UWC, 2000

¹⁷⁸ See especially Hoffman T & Ashwell A, *Nature Divided: Land degradation in South Africa*, University of Cape Town Press, Lansdowne, 2001

An important factor in this regard is that it is the poorest sections of South African society that are most dependent on the natural resource base (i.e. land). There are links between poverty, power and access to economic resources (e.g. land) that should be analysed and understood if land reform programmes are to contribute to environmental sustainability. Further, it should be acknowledged that land reform is not limited to agricultural and/or rural land, and has urban and residential components (e.g. Restitution and Tenure Reform) that have different implications for environmental sustainability. Finally, current institutional inefficiency (in South Africa) is likely to lead to ineffective environmental policies.

Lessons for South Africa's Land Reform Programme

A number lessons emerge from the analysis in this chapter, which should inform South African land reform policy formulation and implementation.

- All the international examples discussed (whether with regard to poverty alleviation, food security or environmental sustainability) suggest that successful land reform programmes feature strong state support for land reform beneficiaries as well as accompanying investments in supportive infrastructure and social facilities.
- The “poorest” and “most marginalised” sectors of society will be excluded from the benefits of a land reform programme that requires an “own contribution”, or which is demand-led (i.e. requiring certain minimum levels of organisation and literacy, for example).
- In order to alleviate poverty the land reform programme(s) must receive significant financial and infrastructural support from the state and/or the private sector.
- A salient theme, which relates to policies designed to alleviate poverty, enhance food security and ensure environmental sustainability, is the necessity for policy developers and implementers to take socio-economic differentiation into account. The rural population of South Africa (or anywhere else for that matter) is not homogenous. Policy developers, implementers and analysts must, therefore, consider the impact of differentiation and variety. In chapter ten, for example, the discussion illustrates how neglecting to incorporate the voices of women into the policy development process, resulted in the failure of subsequent land reform processes. The same arguments apply to different classes or interests and to poverty alleviation, environmental or food security programmes.