

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme and Food Insecurity: A case of Zimbabwe from 1992 to the present

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Abstract

The usurpation of land and displacement of black people during the colonial era created serious imbalances in terms of land ownership between black and white people in Zimbabwe. This presentation discusses the road to the Fast Track Land Reform Programme which was kick-started in the quest to redress the skewed land ownership patterns that characterised the colonial era. It discusses the impact of major policy shifts from the market-based “willing seller –willing buyer” principle to the Fast Track Land Reform Programme on Zimbabwe’s food security. It is evident from the findings that the implementation of the FTLRP, in 2000 had adverse effects on agricultural production which culminated into food insecurity. As a result of the FTLRP the country was unable to feed its people. It concludes that there is utmost need for policy reflection with a vein desire to depart from detrimental scenarios which have endangered the capability of the country to produce enough food crops. The presentation makes recommendations to policy formulators and implementers in a drive towards rebuilding the country’s image as the bread basket of Southern Africa.

Introduction

Following the failure to get the expected mineral deposits the Whites turned to land seizures. The height of the land usurpations was the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 which divided the country into Black and White areas where the later occupied prime arable land. This led to the rise of the Black people during the Anglo-Ndebele War 1893-4, the First Chimurenga 1896-7 and the Second Chimurenga 1964 to 1980 when Zimbabwe regained her independence from colonial domination. Even then the reallocation of land was guided by the biased 1979 Lancaster House Conference’s willing seller-willing buyer standard. The skewed willing seller-willing buyer principle had a ten year time lag and after its expiry the Black government had no financial resources to continue the resettlement of the land hungry Zimbabweans. The government was pressured by people who were affected by the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme 1991-1999 including the impoverished war veterans. The situation became grim in the country following the payment of the unbudgeted gratuities to the war veterans in 1997. Secondly, it was worsened by the involvement of the Zimbabwe Defence Forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo civil war in 1998 and the refusal by Britain and allies to finance the land reform in the absence of an audit on the government of Zimbabwe’s handling of the past land reform.

The economic environment declined rapidly when Zimbabwe was sidelined from further funding by the Bretton Woods institutions. The ZANU-PF government was challenged by the rise of a vibrant political party the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999. Afraid of losing the electorate the government authorised the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) which arguably was the main culprit towards the country’s increased food insecurity since the year 2000. It is evident from the presentation that the implementation of the FTLRP, in 2000 had adverse effects on agricultural production which culminated into food insecurity. Overall, given the food insecurity in the country, there is utmost need for policy reflection with a vein desire to depart from detrimental scenarios which have endangered the capability of the country to produce enough food crops for its citizen and even to regain its popularity as the bread basket of Southern Africa.

Historical Land Imbalances

The violent seizure of land from Blacks by Whites was central to the Black Zimbabweans' economic dislocation. Inequalities in land allocation were calculatingly fashioned in the colonial era from 1890 to 1980. The methodical dispossession of land and the disproportion in the allotment of all resources were all propagated by racial politics carried by consecutive White minority administrations of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Having conquered the Blacks in the anti colonialism resistances of 1893-4 (Anglo-Ndebele war) and 1896-97 (The First *Chimurenga/Umvukela*), more land was appropriated by the colonial government. By 1914, 23 730 White settlers owned 19 032 320 acres of land, while about 752 000 Blacks were located on 21 390 080 acres of land (Report of the Presidential Review Committee 2003:13). Following the granting of a 'responsible' government status to Southern Rhodesia in 1923, a new land strategy was devised under stipulations and terms of reference of the Morris Carter Commission of 1925.

The notion of separation informed by the result of the Carter Commission and its suggestions were promulgated in the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. The Land Apportionment Act of 1930 divided the country into black and white areas. It empowered the whites to occupy much of the productive land at the expense of the Blacks who were confined to poor marginal soils (communal areas). Ranger (1985) argues that the Land Apportionment Act legalised the allocation of 189,539 square kilometres of mainly prime agricultural land to 50,000 whites, and 117,602 square kilometres to 1,080 000 Africans. The remaining 74,859 square kilometres was set aside for national parks, forestry and other forms of state land ownership. In other words, the figures reveal that when combined the Native Reserves land and Native Purchase area allocation, accessible to Blacks was then 28 591 606 acres or 29.8 percent for a population estimated at 1 081 000 in 1930 (Palmer 1977: 38-43). Evidently, this reduced the Black people's farming economy to survival levels by late 1930s. Additional land was impounded from Blacks in particular after 1945, and this was chiefly intended to create room for new White settlers who were escaping from post Second World War poverty in Europe. In 1969, White control over land was then regulated by the Land Tenure Act of 1969 which substituted the 1930 Land Apportionment Act.

The Land Tenure Act was supposed to have divided the land in such a way that 44.9 million acres were allocated to each race (Moyo 1987:33-49). Nonetheless, the undeniable truth of this alleged 'equal allocation' of land was that Blacks were allocated land in areas unfit for reasonable agricultural practices whereas, Whites occupied 80 percent of rich arable agricultural land. These strategies culminated into overstocking, exceedingly high population densities, severe environmental damage, reduced agricultural output and poverty in the Black communal areas. It was this racially skewed land imbalances used by the main Black Nationalists parties (the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU)) to rally millions of land needy and deprived Black people to wage a bloody liberation war against the racist Rhodesian government in the 1960s (Mamdani 2008: 2). The utilisation of the *Mwana wevhu/Umntwana womuhlabathi* (child of soil) conception by Black Nationalists was a rallying issue for the Black people to unite and fight for their land and signifies that the liberation struggle revolved around the land question. It further indicated that any Government that was to rule the country needed to handle the land challenge to finality.

The land issue was pivotal to any programme and negotiations that were designed to end the conflict. In fact, land was the major factor why all pre-Lancaster House Conference negotiations including the 1976 Geneva and 1978 Malta talks' collapsed (Report of the Presidential review Committee 2003: 10). In addition, the land challenge was central to the almost failure of the talks at Lancaster in 1979 which ultimately gave way to independence in 1980. This racially skewed imbalance in land ownership remained a hotly contested issue in Zimbabwean politics. The land redistribution after independence in 1980 was guided by the defective 1979 Lancaster House Constitution. In this regard, Palmer (1994) noted that the 1979 constitution, among other considerations, provided that commercial land could not be acquired by the state for resettlement except on a *willing seller-willing buyer* basis unless if it was under utilised.

At the attainment of independence in 1980, approximately 15, 5 million hectares of land was occupied for large scale commercial farming by about 6,000 White farmers, which can be translated to an average land holding size of 2,600 hectares. Equitable land transfer failed to materialise with many critics citing the Lancaster House Constitution as the main culprit (Raftopoulos 2003:156). This was due to the fact that, embedded in the constitution, was a free market approach in land redistribution strategy based on a *willing seller-willing buyer* principle, an inclusion that derailed the speedy land transfer from the Whites to the Blacks. The 1979 constitution was resultantly castigated as a strategy designed to ensure continued land domination by the Whites.

Road to the Fast Track Land Reform Programme

In the process of redistributing land to the blacks in 1985, the government passed the Land Acquisition Act which gave it the first option to purchase land that was put on the market (World Bank Report 2003). The government strategy of getting the first option to purchase land was dogged by resource constraints and consequently it failed to meet the set targets on its land transfer agenda. Consequently, the Whites continued to dominate land ownership in Zimbabwe until the expiry of the ten year duration stipulated by the Lancaster House Constitution. In an effort to address the land distribution inequalities, the government of Zimbabwe enacted an Act of Parliament leading to the adoption of the Land Acquisition Act of 1992. The Act was primarily designed to empower the government to acquire any piece of land it requires for national interest.

The persistent quest for land acquisition by blacks increased at an alarming tempo beyond the capacity of the government. This presented a challenge to the government which wanted to remain politically relevant. Accordingly, any strategy at the government's disposal had to be employed in an effort to get the land regardless of its repercussions. The government was in a dilemma given the active involvement of the war veterans who demanded that more land be acquired. This forced the government to amend the constitution so that it could legalise the compulsory acquisition of land from commercial farmers compensating only for improvements done on the land. The acquisition process was kick-started under the chaotic Fast Track Land Reform Programme officially launched in July 2000 leading to the subsequent eviction of a considerable number of white commercial farmers and approximately 3,000 farms were designated.

The Lancaster House agreement authorised a gradual land transfer hinged on the *willing seller-willing buyer* principle. Moyo (2006: 4) noted that between 1980 and 1996, very little land was transferred to the land hungry Zimbabweans evidenced by only 3.3 million hectares transferred to 70,000 households and 800 medium scale black commercial farms which were set up. Among other factors, the process was slowed by the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) when the distribution of land and the capacity to support small scale farmers' agricultural production declined. Resultantly, a significant number of questions were raised about the government's capacity and willingness to implement a realistic Land Reform Programme. This position was reached by some observers who claim that in the 1980s, land was not the only issue in Zimbabwe as previously thought (Hellum and Derman 2005). On the contrary, such a position was opposed to the goals that were previously set by the ZANU PF when it came into power over the pace and size of land to be redistributed. Expressing the desires or aspirations of the post independence Zimbabwe, Masiwa (2005: 217), argues that the government set itself a target to acquire 8.3 million hectares from white commercial farmers to resettle black families during the 1983-1985. The desired target was not fulfilled because only 2.1 million hectares were acquired where landless families were resettled. Among other reasons, the government cited constitutional restrictions and financial challenges to cope with the sudden rise in land prices. For example, Palmer (1990: 163) noted that the land prices shot up seriously from ZW\$15.67 per hectare, between 1980 and 1981 to ZW\$92.24 per hectare, from 1987 to 1988. Such a development of rapid price increase meant that a significant number of blacks were excluded from the economic mainstream.

Furthermore, there were notable failures by stakeholders especially given the then prevailing *willing seller-willing buyer* strategy. Among other things, the stakeholders did not provide enough funds to support the government's Land Reform Programme. A plausible example is when the British government, promised 75 million pounds but 10 years down the line, Zimbabwe had received only about 40% of the promised funds (Masiwa 2005: 218). In spite of the lack of funding for the Zimbabwean land empowerment programme, the British government was sponsoring the Kenyan Land Restoration and Resettlement Process to the cost of 50 million pounds. Worse still, the US government pledged \$500 million while the World Bank (WB), the European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom (UK) Overseas Development Institute (ODI) promised to assist in financing the Land Reform Programme, but to no avail.

In support of this, Masiwa concluded that the donor willingness to fund the land reform in Zimbabwe was dramatised at the Harare Donors Conference of September 1998 where the government unveiled a US\$1.9 billion (about ZW\$42 billion) fund for its Phase II of the land reform programme. In practice, the government of Zimbabwe only received ZW\$7.339 billion, which fell below what the donor community had pledged. This evidence reveals lack of commitment by the donor community towards land redistribution in Zimbabwe.

It is highly likely that the donor reluctance was caused by growing suspicion over the passing of the Land Acquisition Act of 1992 which empowered the government to compulsorily acquire land (Tshuma, 1997). Accordingly, the British Government was ready to only support a well-planned, legal land reform that would improve the lives of the poor in Zimbabwe rather than state-motivated programme only intended for political gains. Even at a time when the country had exceptionally excellent yields in the early 1990s Zimbabwe's food condition was pigeonholed by an alarming contradiction of unceasing food insecurity in the midst of food abundance (Jayne, Chisvo, Rukuni 1994). In reaction to this and other public sector deficits, the government of Zimbabwe adopted and implemented the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991, which culminated into the removal of agricultural financial assistance and food security subsidies. In addition, it led to an end to the GMB domination in the marketing of grain crops and the GMB failed to battle with the private grain buyers who offered farmers improved prices and imbursement situations. At national level, this ruined food security and the calculated grain reserve projects. The government pricing plan to guarantee food security emaciated leading to an increase in grain and maize meal prices exacerbating the food insecurity situation in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, the country's declining economy and growing employment losses seriously reduced the poor Zimbabwean's disposable incomes thereby restraining their access to food.

In addition, the ESAP had a strong impact to a more directly free market strategy on the land reform that culminated in deepening the gulf between the rich and the poor. Entrenched in ESAP was the stabilisation and liberalisation of the economy which resultantly influenced 'land markets deregulation in the form of land taxation, land subdivisions, variants of land titling among others' (World Bank, 1991; Rukuni Commission, 1994) and export expansion within existing land ownership and economic structures. ESAP era reduced the tempo of the land reform process in Zimbabwe. This is so because, rapid and exorbitant increase in land prices were beyond the reach of the government, in particular, and the general public who were settled in poor, marginal soils called Native Reserves. More-so, ESAP had detrimental effects on the country's economy including the closure of industries (especially those that depended on agricultural inputs), severe retrenchment records due to drastic down-sizing of government expenditure, reduced national and agricultural income, wealth disparities and extreme poverty levels which incapacitated the government's capability to effectively implement its land reform program.

ESAP led to unintended results such as the increase in the demand for land in communal areas, among the urban retrenchees and poor, and the land seeking indigenous elites (Moyo 2000: 5). The economic challenges experienced by Zimbabweans during the ESAP influenced the affected people to demand for land from the government. In response the government was forced to take urgent actions meant to redress the colonial land imbalances for the benefit of the majority land hungry Zimbabweans without compensating the former white occupiers. In support of this, Moyo (2000) admits that there was a steady growing inclination in acknowledging the significance of the land reform as a poverty reduction strategy. This development presented numerous warning signs of the impending land occupation such as isolated squatting on unused land.

According to Masiwa (2006: 218), squatting was a tactic of protesting by villagers against clandestine selection criterion which prioritised politicians and business people who, by then, could afford the exorbitant land prices. The government tried to promptly react to the problem of squatting by evicting the 'squatters' thereby sending a signal that it was against the invasions or squatting as a strategy of speeding the land redistribution process. This strategy did not work out given the fact that people had been severely affected and emboldened by the hardships caused by ESAP. Therefore, instead of frightening the people into submission, the ESAP hardened the land seeking discontented Zimbabweans to coerce the government into action towards accomplishing their demands. The government was forced to act in order to fulfill the wishes of the people but was heavily slammed regionally and internationally for violating the rule of law, corruption and political interference in handling the land issue. Internally, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Union (ZCTU) managed to mobilise the urban population and resisted the controversial "war veterans" levy in 1997. The following year, food riots broke out in the capital city and Chitungwiza.

In 1999 a vibrant and widely supported opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was launched. The formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in September 1999 and its fearsome challenge to the previously uncontested ZANU-PF supremacy produced a feeling of alarm within the then ruling party and culminated into pitiless attempts to bulldoze the opposition, plus extensive use of brutality. Certain that the MDC was a disguise for white driven motives, ZANU-PF responded with the Fast-Track Land Reform dubbed the *Third Chimurenga*- economic war.

In February 2000, the then newly formed National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) managed to rally the people against a government draft constitution seeking to legalise the compulsory land acquisition without due compensation to the white occupiers for the developments carried out on the land. The *No vote* against the draft constitution in 2000 shocked the government and sent a clear message that a significant number of Zimbabweans was no longer in support of the ZANU PF party. In fact, it was concluded that ZANU-PF used the referendum as a thermometer to measure its support base. It was evident to the ZANU-PF party that its support base was waning hastily. In response the government abolished the existing *willing seller-willing buyer* principle and legalised the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). Largely behind the implementation of this policy were the war veterans who were viewed as central to the forceful land acquisition. Furthermore, this marked a sudden departure from a well-planned and systematic Land Resettlement Programme of the early 1980s to a more radical FTLRP. In fact the unplanned land reform was in response to a number of decades of colonial subjugation and came seventeen years after the attainment of independence when the appetite for land grew tense culminating into the Fast Track Land Reform Programme. In support of this point of view, Raftopoulos et al (2003) noted that the FTLRP was due to the unjustified persistence of racial imbalances in land distribution and use in Zimbabwe, prior to 2000. The programme aimed at invalidating the racially skewed distribution pattern and its central objective was to accelerate both land acquisition and redistribution processes targeting at least five million hectares of land for resettlement.

Following the FTLRP, an estimated 80% of large agricultural land holdings were seized by blacks in 2004 with different patterns of access, heterogeneous capacities to use land and of their support requirements (Moyo, 2006: 5). Resultantly, approximately 140 866 families were given (A1) land holdings, whereas commercial (A2) beneficiaries totaled 14 500 new farmers, on 4, 2 and 2-3 million hectares correspondingly. This development changed the sub-sectoral distribution of land management where small-scale-farmers controlled 70% of agriculture, while a large number of small to medium scale farmers, as well as fewer large farmers would then control 30% of the land. Arguably, the FTLRP largely contributed to the decline of cancerous poverty, environmental degradation and overpopulation by resettling about 213,000 households on 14, 9 million hectares of land that was previously controlled by whites (The Herald, 22 September 2011). The government assisted the resettled farmers with credit and loan facilities, farming equipment and agricultural inputs such as fertilisers, seeds and chemicals. These were distributed through the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) - a parastatal that centrally controls Grain reserves in Zimbabwe. The noble scheme to assist the farmers was dogged by corruption when some prominent politicians looted the inputs for reselling in and outside Zimbabwe. More-over, some pretender farmers got the inputs such as fuel and equipment which they sold on the black market. In the process capable farmers were excluded from the input and equipment scheme.

During the FTLRP, the government introduced measures against drought, land degradation and desertification after realising that these jeopardised environmental sustainability. Efforts towards environmental sustainability were initiated after President Mugabe announced that “my government has since put in place a National Action Plan for desertification control, land degradation, mitigation and adaptation” (Herald, 22 September 2011). Furthermore, the government implemented reclamation projects in the driest regions of the country through national programmes such as *The Million Tree Campaigns*, in which five million trees were planted in 2010 alone in different parts of the country in order to reduce the rate of soil erosion, rehabilitate, reclaim and restore degraded land (The Herald, 22 September 2011). Practically very little was done to fulfill the drive towards environmental preservation. If the above measures are accorded the seriousness they deserve, sustainable development can be achieved where the present generation benefits from the available land resource which should be used taking into consideration the needs of the future generations.

The Fast Track Land Reform Programme and Food Insecurity in Zimbabwe

At this juncture, allow us to focus on the meaning of food security. According to World Bank (1986), “food security” entails access by all people at all times to enough food for an active and health life. More-so, the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) defines food security as ‘a situation existing when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and food preferences for an active and health life.’ Therefore, food security refers to a situation where everyone in the country can access sufficient and descent food stuffs for their normal well-being. Until 2000, Zimbabwe regularly produced surplus grain for export and this earned the country a title of breadbasket of Southern Africa.

Subsequently, the country was able to generate the treasured foreign currency which boosted the economy. The country's food production levels significantly declined during the FTLRP. Before the FTLRP in 2000, Zimbabwe from a national standpoint was food secure, with farmers producing adequate grain to fulfil the country's requirements in good years. On the contrary, the food surpluses obtained before 2000 shrouded the food insecurity confronted by the poor. With the dawn of independence in 1980, the Government of Zimbabwe launched strategies to increase the grain out of relocated farmers and communal grain producers.

These strategies included the increase in agricultural extension services coverage and ameliorated producer prices for maize. Government controlled organisations, such as the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) and outlined situations for increasing maize output in the communal localities. It increased the number of collection centres and depots to 37 in 1991 from 3 in 1987 and it made known producer prices in advance of the harvest time. On the contrary, the price control by the government on food crops compelled large scale commercial farmers to diversify their industrious land away from the controlled food crops such as maize, to crops such as tobacco, soya beans, and with the beginning of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991, farmers turned to horticulture and game ranching. At this point, maize production was still enough to fulfil the needs of the population at national level. To this end, food security was analysed in a national milieu guided by the total amount of grains obtainable in the country in a particular era in relation to the demand (Moyo, 2002).

Rohrbach et al (1990) argue that between 1985 and 1990 commercial maize production went down by further than 40%. This was largely due to the reduced production of maize by a reasonable number of commercial farmers. Sachikonye (2000) confirmed that varied business by farmers stepped up in 1992 as large commercial farmers only planted 78 000 hectares of maize as compared to 1991 when 125 000 hectares were under the maize crop. The departure from grain crops was apparent as the drive to food 'self sufficient' became increasingly the preserve of farmers in the more vulnerable communal lands. A large number of these farmers were drawn from the farming areas in Mashonaland. On the contrary, when the communal farmers were supplying adequate maize for the whole country, some districts were consistently unable to meet local food needs leading to unending malnutrition which continued to be a significant challenge in the areas experiencing food shortages. What was disturbing was the fact that during the same period, the GMB was able to stock more than 3 years of food security reserves of maize. Accordingly, in the 1980s the country received international commendation for its agricultural policies and grain surpluses, against the back-drop of growing malnutrition which was blamed on the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare.

In spite of its attempts to redress the long standing racially skewed land ownership in Zimbabwe; the FTLRP is blamed for negatively affecting food production in the country. Accordingly, the FTLRP coincided with an abrupt fall in agricultural production leading to food insecurity in the country. In fact, the implementation of the FTLRP triggered food shortages in the country thereby forcing the government to purchase food from its neighbours and depend on the donor community. To this end, it would be correct to conclude that the post 2000 era was characterised by: inadequacy of food and absence of food on the market, lack of supply with variations and shortage from one season to another, un-affordability and poor quality of the available food. Even the UNDP (2002) acknowledged the impact of the land reform when it asserted that, 'the FTLRP posed a threat to national agricultural production and food security in the short term, and made the provision of essential public infrastructure for settlers impossible to achieve within a reasonable timeframe.' Consequently, Zimbabwe violated its obligation to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1991 (to which she is a signatory) which enshrines the right to food.

Wolmer (2009: 188), further asserts that events in 2000 in Zimbabwe was negatively popularised for its volatile land question. In this case, the government was accused of its radical and seemingly racial prejudiced strategy it used to tackle the land question. In the process, the FTLRP neglected the rights and interests of the former farm workers who lived on the commercial farms which were seized. The land reform programme and subsequent eviction of commercial white farmers had adverse effects on agricultural production. It could have been tactical for government to exclude the commercial farms which employed huge numbers of workers. Such a strategy could have averted pushing huge numbers into the world of wide spread unemployment and abject poverty. More-so, this approach reduced food production. This was coupled with failure by the new occupiers to just inherit and maintain production tonnage levels which were achieved by the white farmers or for that matter, protect and service the farm equipment they inherited on the farms.

To aggravate the situation, a significant number of the occupiers of the commercial farming areas did not take farming seriously leading to a decline in food production. Kojo et al (2008: 78) assert that agricultural production tumbled as a result of the inter-connected decline of the macro-economic situations and their effects on the agricultural input provisions. Furthermore, food security was affected by the reduced production from the seized commercial farmland, recurrent droughts, economic sanctions and the reluctance of some commercial farmers to produce in the down sized land holdings. Evidence reveals that, among other critical factors, a fall in private farming was due 'to negative credit threat ratings, the alleged insecurity of the leasehold land tenure, and macro-economic insecurity were accountable for food shortages in the country' (Ibid).

In spite of the role of other factors towards food security, the FTLRP was the main culprit towards the decline in food production because the government explicitly operated outside the law and this created a lot of insecurity and uncertainty. Accordingly, one can conclude that the government bore the full brunt towards increased food insecurity. Bernstein (2002) further asserts that the recent comparative political analysis of land redistribution plans have also tended to treat the Zimbabwe FTLRP as an odd abnormality, machinated for narrow political ambitions or electoral dominance reasons.

The way in which the government led FTLRP was implemented was a significant inhibiting factor on domestic food production and the ability of millions of people in Zimbabwe to access adequate food. Instead of ensuring a speedy land transfer to the blacks, it posed detrimental effects on the country's food security. According to Moyo (2002), the government of Zimbabwe used the unplanned land reform as a strategy for political expediency because 'the FTLRP was launched shortly after the ZANU PF government which has been in power since independence in 1980 experienced its first major defeat in a national referendum held to change the constitution.'

As such, the government was forced to further its political interests of re-invigorating its support base at the expense of socio-economic objectives which include poverty alleviation. Besides the impact of the FTLRP on Zimbabwe's food security, the World Food Programme (WFP) and FAO identified climatic factors, HIV/AIDS pandemic and economic decline as other contributors to food insecurity. In fact, government policies and strategies in the implementation stage of the FTLRP had a strong negative impact on the food security because it tarnished the image of Zimbabwe in the eyes of the international community. More-so, Theron (2011) asserts that the 'land reform was characterised by rapid reduction in output since 2001 for commodities produced primarily by commercial farmers with outputs remaining at around a third of pre-2001 levels in 2004.'

Furthermore, the FTLRP was hurriedly kick-started ahead of a well organised plan (Phase 11 of the land reform programme). The Land Audit Report by Utete (2003) reveals that the major shortcomings were a result of inadequate institutional capacity to implement the FTLRP. These manifested themselves in lack of; land use planning, land use demarcation, development of basic infrastructure, settler selection and placement, provision of inputs and other forms of assistance to enable settlers to make a meaningful contribution on their new plots. In reality, Utete (2003) argues that, FTLRP resulted in manifold-farm possession by leaders who had limited knowledge of farming.

The challenge was further worsened by the obliteration or vandalism of infrastructure during the forcible removal of white farmers such as irrigation equipment and building structures among others. More-so, erratic power supply especially in small and large scale commercial farming areas were a daunting factor that continued to disrupt irrigation schedules. Shortage of electricity affected winter cropping over the previous decade culminating in reduced wheat production. In 2000, maize output was over 2 million tons but there after, production drastically plummeted far below the country's requirements. A rainfall deficit also contributed to grain production deficit and was noticeable through a substantially reduced commercial output fluctuating at less than 100 000 tons for several years (Theron 2011). Consequently, the country seized to be self-reliant in food production.

In 2001, a large maize crop of 314 000 tons was produced but in 2009 only 18 000 tons were produced (Mid-Year Fiscal Policy Review, 2011). The soya beans, 2001 production level was 175 000 tons, at the same time in 2010, the output dropped beyond 75% to around 40 000 tons. The same applies to milk production which fell to 50 million litres in 2010 from 187 million litres in 2000. Despite a steady rise since 2009, Maize, wheat and other basic food stuffs production by 2012 remained far below the pre-2000 production levels thereby derailing all efforts towards food security in the country.

According to the Finance Minister ‘maize yields, for example, averaging 0,7 tons per hectare lag far behind the best international yields of 8-12 tons per hectare. The same applies to wheat yields of 3 tons per hectare which is far behind the yield of about 5.4 tons per hectare and international yields of 8 tons per hectare’ (Mid-Year Fiscal Review of 2011). The above production levels are evidence of food insecurity in Zimbabwe which was largely ignited by the unplanned commencement of the FTLRP. Food insecurity can also be widened to encompass loss of employment ignited by the eviction of commercial farmers together with their workers from farms. In addition, industries which rely on agricultural produce such as tobacco and cotton were heavily affected with most of them compelled by shortage of raw materials to shut down. Subsequently, most ordinary people were left susceptible because they had no sustainable sources of income and were therefore unable to buy food from the market.

A dramatic fall in agricultural production in Zimbabwe cannot be wholly burdened on the Fast Track Land Reform policies and implementation alone. Food insecurity was further aggravated by prolonged droughts that regularly rocked Zimbabwe. Added to this, the marketing of the main food crops, notably maize and wheat, was monopolised by the Grain Marketing Board which priced food crops at unsustainable and un-realistic prices which were not commensurate with the rapidly increasing costs of inputs and servicing of farm equipment. Put differently, these prices were quite inelastic against a run-away inflationary milieu which forced farmers to operate at a loss. In response to the challenges which confronted them, most farmers turned to selling their grain on black market for profiteering beyond the reach of many Zimbabweans hence confirming food insecurity in the country. In support of this development, Sithole (2006) noted that, in 2006, those farmers who had produced Zimbabweans’ staple food-maize, refused to sell it through the GMB because the Z\$33,000 (US\$132) per metric ton offered by the marketing board was not profitable and as a result they preferred to sell on the black market for better prices.

There was poor timing in the distribution of agricultural inputs by GMB. It became the norm that farmers received their farming inputs late into the rain season with serious negative effects on production capacity. The GMB blamed the government’s delays to avail financial resources needed to procure and allocate agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, seeds, chemicals to farmers on time. Zakaria (2012) echoed the same sentiments with the GMB when he acknowledged that most farmers received inputs well after the recommended planting dates and part of this was caused by lack of consultation among farmers’ organisations which were not well co-ordinated. He added that the situation was worsened by the fact that the government faced critical resource challenges to sufficiently assist the newly resettled farmers in the form of farming inputs and infrastructure development such as irrigation, roads and dams among other needs necessary to ensure increased production. Indeed, the beneficiaries of land reform required more than just land in order to be productive. Some of the farmers were confronted by shortages of seed, draught power, compound D and top dressing fertilisers.

The shortages were caused by the reduction of agro-industry capacity to supply inputs, largely due to the scarcity of foreign currency and price controls (Kojo 2008:78). To make matters worse, the government’s agricultural subsidies and other interventions were limited by resource incapacity, deficiency of foreign currency and lack of monitoring and evaluation policy. Even where resources were made available, there were distribution challenges by GMB which excluded the most deserving farmers (Nyakazeya, 2012). A plausible example is that of A2 farmers who only received inputs that covered 50% of their hectares; 1,25 tons of seed and 400 bags of basal and top dressing fertilisers respectively (The Sunday Mail 15-21 January, 2012). In cases where the inputs were found on the market they were too expensive and at times sold by undeserving farmers leading to failure to reach the anticipated production levels in food crops.

The GMB partly failed to distribute agricultural inputs as a result of interference by corrupt politicians. The inputs obtained by corrupt politicians found their way back on the black market at exorbitant prices. Other inputs were allegedly exported to neighbouring countries such as Mozambique and Zambia. Lack of computerisation at the GMB led to multiple entries by some corrupt individuals who received huge quantities of inputs which they did not fully utilise. Most of the fertile lands previously owned by white commercial farmers were occupied by influential government officials who were dubbed cellular-phone farmers because of their lack of commitment to farming. This was evident from Sithole (2006) who pointed out that “---most of the resettled farmers under the FTLRP are called cell phone farmers because they visit their farms only at weekends of braais or barbecues; they sell their subsidised cheap government fuel on the black market for huge profit. Instead of powering tractors and producing food, they sell it for quick and easy profits---.”

It was largely corruption that affected the effective execution of the GMB mandate over the years. For example in Guruve, communal farmers complained of rampant corruption in the distribution of fertilisers at their GMB depot. It was reported that many influential people clandestinely collected as much as 300 bags of fertiliser per person and when the distribution became public, each ward was getting 50 bags (The Sunday Mail, January 8-12, 2012). There was no consideration of the size of the land under cultivation and accordingly, farmers with about 27 hectares got two bags of Compound D fertilizers per head. Furthermore, those that usually benefited from the government farming inputs plan sold them for quicker profits. Some people just got the fertilisers for selling. For example in Guruve, a bag of fertiliser was sold at US\$10.

There was colossal corruption by the distributors of agricultural inputs. A memorable incident was when an army truck carried fertilisers purportedly for no payment to *Nyautare* Area, Ward 8. Despite the fact that the diesel was free of charge and was from the army, villagers were made to pay between US\$4.00 and US\$5.00 per 50kg for transportation of fertilisers (Mwonzora, 2009). In addition, party functionaries masquerading as private transporters in *Chapatarongo*, *Katerere* and *Kazozo* areas, forced people to pay US\$10.00 per bag as transport cost. Subsequently, the cheated villagers who were unable to source the money were asked to give up their livestock as payment. Any individual who was unable to pay such as *Ambuya* Maria in Buseta Village in Nyamapara, were not given the inputs (Ibid). Furthermore, people were discriminated on the basis of political affiliation by distributors who were expected to be apolitical. For that reason, dishonesty, partiality, opaqueness and uncertainty characterised the input distribution programme in Zimbabwe. This resulted in the poor rural farmers being deprived of inputs. Rampant corruption on the distribution of agricultural inputs compelled Brig-Gen Douglas Nyikayaramba, then in charge of logistics of the "Champion Farmers" programme, to conclude that "We will soon reveal the names of the members of the August House who have been caught up in the scam. This is tantamount to corruption and the culprits will be charged accordingly." No serious action followed his remarks largely because there are many heavy weights in government who were involved in the scam over agricultural inputs. The efforts towards food security was also punctuated by poor record keeping system on what was allocated to; a particular constituency, each ward, each transporter and there was no record of how much transporters delivered to the people. More-over, there were no records kept capturing the identity of each beneficiary including the quantities given to a given beneficiary. Put differently there was no monitoring and evaluating mechanism to ensure checks and balances.

More-so, the unplanned, hurried implementation nature of the FTLRP in Zimbabwe created a fertile ground for corruption and wrong choice of beneficiaries with no farming knowledge and skills. It was because of these among other weaknesses that the FTLRP was viewed as a merely a political gimmick for ZANU PF. The strategy lacked proper planning which could have increased production in the long term. It was due to these among other challenges that, Amnesty International (2004), concluded that the political thinking behind land invasions appears to have been to, "... occupy first, worry about production later." In this scenario, Mass Public Opinion Institute (MPOI) observed that, Zimbabweans believe that the land reform was flawed, hurriedly done and unplanned.

The moment land was usurped without compensation, financial institutions stopped giving value to farming land due to the nature of the land ownership system. This was apparent in the huge number of A2 farmers who possessed offer letters which were not received by financial institutions as collateral security (Zakaria, 2012). In fact, this means that the farmers did not have title deeds to their land which could act as collateral security required by banks and other private financial institutions before they could provide loans to the farmers. Given this quagmire, farmers went without enough inputs thereby reducing production of food crops and other farming produces.

Before the advent of the FTLRP, the donor community contributed immensely to increased food production. The implementation of the strategy soured relations between the donors and the government of Zimbabwe. Donors criticised the government for human rights violations associated with human torture, intimidation and deaths during the ad-hoc or unplanned land reform programme. Consequently, access to aid from development partners in farming and food aid was negatively affected as the donors suspended or scaled down operations in Zimbabwe. The government accused the donors for meddling into the country's internal affairs and begun to closely monitor their operations with fear that they were threatening national sovereignty. The climax of the antagonism between the donors and the government was on the 4th of June 2008 when Care International, among other humanitarian agencies, were suspended from their field relief services on the accusation of political activism.

Policy Strategic considerations

A deeper examination of Zimbabwe's food insecurity challenge reveals that it was ignited by political involvement. This being the case, it means a solution can be obtained by confronting the very political challenges which led to the decline of food production in the country. Subsequently, without the correct political solutions, food insecurity problems in Zimbabwe will persist. To overcome the challenges, a policy framework should be initiated in order to promote a sustainable food production system in Zimbabwe. There is utmost need to address the situation through:

- Designing an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the procurement, distribution, use and reimbursement of agricultural inputs by qualified agricultural extension officers. The extension officers must be empowered and protected from unscrupulous politicians.
- Carrying out a comprehensive land audit process which must be completed in order to instill proper tactics for supporting deserving beneficiaries of the land reform programme with the capacity for agricultural production. It must be taken seriously that not every Zimbabwean can be a farmer and hence those people with other skills can be supported in other areas of the economy such as mining and transportation.
- Completing the FTLRP with the transparency and urgency it deserves. This is vital because the dire food shortages were worsened by this strategy. Therefore for the country to recover its status as the bread basket of Southern Africa, it is imperative to conclude the programme but take into consideration the emotiveness of the land issue so that efforts to invalidate the land reform could be averted.
- Empowering the GMB on its monopoly on grain reserves for the country but allow it to charge realistic prices for grain and other inputs. It must be encouraged to desist from corrupt tendencies in the distribution of inputs to farmers. There is utmost need to design policies that ensure the availability of inputs and credits for deserving hard working farmers beyond political party affiliations for Zimbabwe to regain its food security status. Corruption especially by politicians who are aware of their obligation to protect the people they represent, require serious punishment such as dismissal without benefits followed by imprisonment. Computerised distribution modalities for inputs and food may be effective in ending rampant problems of corruption that have been linked to multiple entries by politician-farmers at the expense of other farmers.
- Ensuring timely and adequate delivery of inputs to farmers so that they have enough time to plan ahead of the planting season. This can be achieved if agriculture is highly prioritised on the national budget allocations.
- Kick-starting capacity building workshops for politicians in a drive to help bury their political differences and direct their concerted efforts towards crafting nation-driven policies aimed at reviving the agricultural sector. There is need to prioritise the country before party politics. Political interference should end since it is a threat towards transparency, accountability and integrity in the distribution of grain and other inputs to farmers.
- Strengthening farmers' organisations such as; Farmers Union, Agricultural, Technical and Extension Services, Training and Development critical for empowering the relocated farmers with farming knowledge in a drive to increase agricultural production in the country.
- Providing infrastructure as a pre-condition for farmers' increased land utilisation in the agricultural industry focusing on the provision of; irrigation, roads, dams, research, training and extension services, markets and marketing information.
- Making land a crucial collateral security and empowering financial institutions to transparently and professional handle delinquent farmers in order to create access to loans and credit.
- Ending the decade-long soured relationship between the government and the international community in an effort to liberate farmers and the general public from further suffering due to food shortages and the impact of sanctions imposed by the USA, Australia, Britain and their western allies. Accordingly this will assist in harnessing donor food aid in such a way that do not create food dependency syndrome. It is imperative to note that donor provided food aid if not properly handled may dampen efforts towards increased food production.
- Improving the prevailing political environment in a drive to encourage investor confidence which may in turn ameliorate employment creation which is a vital source of income for buying food on the market.

- Encouraging all stakeholders to be proactive in reducing the impact of climatic transformations which culminated into food insecurity in the country. Empowering Zimbabweans with sustainable practices including the growing of drought resistant and short seasoned crop varieties and environmental conservation tactics.

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